

Daily Excelsior, 1 February 2006

Rs 1 lakh in Poonch, Baramulla; Rs 6,000 in other J&K areas (Sanjeev Pargal)

JAMMU, Jan 31: Incredible it may sound but it's a fact that there are two categories of relief being distributed among the victims of devastating October 8 earthquake in the State. While in Poonch and Baramulla districts, which bore the brunt of deadly temblors, the relief is being distributed at the rate of Rs one lakh for fully damaged houses and Rs 30,000 for partially damaged houses, in other parts of Jammu region, the relief is being distributed at the rate of Rs 6,000 for a fully damaged house and Rs 800 for a partially damaged house. Confirming the rates, a senior officer of the civil administration told the Excelsior that he had written four letters to the State Government seeking clarification on distribution of relief but the response hasn't been forthcoming. When contacted, Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, B R Sharma said the relief is being distributed at the existing rates in the absence of fresh instructions from the Government.

The Indian Express, 1 February 2006

Six Bangladeshis arrested in J&K

Jammu, January 31: Six Bangladesh nationals were arrested early today while trying to cross over to Pakistan along the Line of Control in Akhnoor area of Jammu and Kashmir, official sources said here. Alert troops observed movement near the LoC in Parawal area of Akhnoor tehsil in Jammu district this morning, they said. The six persons were arrested when they tried to escape despite being asked to stop, the sources said. They have been identified as Sabu Din, Rafiq, Kamaal, Seraj, Hadi and Kamal-ud-Din, they said.

Daily Excelsior, 1 February 2006

NC leader's PSO among 4 militants arrested

JAMMU, Jan 31: Four militants of Hizbul Mujahideen outfit including a Personal Security Officer (PSO) of a National Conference leader were arrested by security forces and police from Bhaderwah and Ramban tehsils today. Arms and explosives were recovered from their possession. Official sources said security forces and police today arrested two Special Police Officers (SPOs), who were working for Hizbul Mujahideen outfit in Ramban tehsil. They have been identified as Mohd Iqbal, a resident of Rajgarh, Ramban and Irshad Ahmed R/o Kurgi Mangat in Banihal tehsil. Irshad was a surrendered militant and had later been recruited as SPO. Sources said Mohd Iqbal was posted as PSO with National Conference leader Amrit Varsha, who had unsuccessfully contested Assembly election from Ramban constituency in 1996 as a Congress leader.

Daily Excelsior, 1 February 2006

Militant killed in Budgam, 3 escape

Srinagar, Jan 31: One militant was killed in an encounter at Brenwa village in central Kashmir district of Budgam, while as three of his accomplices managed to escape from there. A civilian injured yesterday succumbed in a hospital while as another civilian was shot at and injured in a shoot out in Bijbehara, today. According to sources, troopers of 53 RR and SOG Budgam after receiving a tip off, launched a joint cordon and search operation in Brenwa village in Budgam. Sources said that the militants, hiding in the residential house of one Jamal-ud-din Najjar, attempted to break the cordon and opened fire on the security forces, which was returned triggering an encounter. One militant got killed in the encounter while as three others managed to escape from the encounter site. Identity of the slain militant was being ascertained.

Greater Kashmir, 1 February 2006

SHARMA-BAKAYA FIGHT IT OUT IN CABINET (SHAFAT RASOOL)

Srinagar, Jan 31: Minister for transport Mangat Ram Sharma and state chief secretary Vijay Bakaya exchanged heated arguments in Tuesday's state cabinet meet in Jammu over the issue of separation of seniority for faculties in medical colleges of Srinagar and Jammu. Sources said the argument started when Sharma enquired from the chief secretary the status of the issue to which Bakaya replied, "We are examining it." Not satisfied with the answer, an annoyed Sharma snubbed Bakaya. "You are only a clerk," the chief secretary was told. "I am not your servant," Bakaya retorted. A cabinet member told Greater Kashmir that the chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad intervened at the moment and expressed his displeasure over the argument. "While a chief minister heads the legislature, the chief secretary

Greater Kashmir, 1 February 2006

JKLF calls for shutdown on Feb 11

Srinagar, Jan 31: Pro-independence Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) has called for a shutdown on February 11 to mark the 22nd anniversary of the party founder Muhammad Maqbool Bhat who was hanged in Delhi's Tihar Jail. The JKLF has also decided to observe February 11 to highlight the fact that Kashmiris are "real masters of Jammu and Kashmir State and principal party to the 58-year-old dispute." Bhat, a resident of Trehgam village in north Kashmir's Kupwara district, was hanged on February 11, 1984, on the charges of hijacking an Indian airliner and abducting and subsequently murdering an Indian diplomat in United Kingdom. He was buried

within the premises of Tihar jail. "Maqbool Bhat was the first Kashmiri leader who preached about the need for launching an agitation for self-determination and independence.

Daily Excelsior, 3 February 2006

HM ultra's remand extended

AJMER, Feb 1: A local court has extended the police remand of top Hizbul Mujahideen militant Mujeeb Ahmed till February three. Ahmed, Hizbul's group commander for south, was brought from Hyderabad on January 20. He had been arrested on information provided by Shabir Ahmed, a Hizbul Mujahideen ultra, who was arrested here on December 27 while transporting a consignment of arms and ammunition in his truck to Hyderabad. Judicial Magistrate Himankini Gour today extended Ahmed's police remand so that he can be interrogated on the information disclosed by Shabir Ahmed. Shabir, who is in judicial custody, will be taken soon to Ahmedabad for brain mapping and narco test on February nine at Gandhinagar Forensic laboratory, according to official sources. (PTI)

The Indian Express, 3 February 2006

Pandits expect little from Mirwaiz (Neeraj Santoshi)

Jammu, February 1: "We will welcome Hurriyat leaders, but we don't trust them. They are responsible for our exodus and present plight". Rakesh Kaul, an unemployed Kashmiri Pandit youth from Purkhoo migrant camp, summed up the angst of the displaced community as he expressed his apprehensions about the proposed talks. Like Rakesh Kaul, many others in the migrant camps here expressed similar views about moderate Hurriyat leader Mirwaiz Umer Farooq's first visit to Jammu to hold talks with Kashmiri Pandits. He will arrive here tomorrow afternoon for a four-day visit and will address a public rally at the Shahidhi Chowk in the late afternoon. Most of the Kashmiri Pandits in the migrant camps said they did not have any expectations from the talks with the Hurriyat.

Daily Excelsior, 3 February 2006

Two militants killed in Valley

Srinagar, Feb 1: Two militants including a top Hizbul Mujahideen commander were killed in an encounter today at Pattan in north Kashmir, while as a soldier was also hurt in the exchange of fire in Kangan. Defence sources said that troopers of 29 RR after being tipped off about the presence of militants in Nihalpora village in Pattan launched a search and cordon operation early on Wednesday. The militants after learning that they were surrounded by the troopers attempted to break the cordon and opened fire. The fire was effectively returned and in the ensuing gun battle two militants of Hizbul Mujahideen were killed. The slain militants were identified as Hilal Ahmad Magray, HM battalion commander, son of Gulam Ahmed of Tilgam and his deputy Riyaz Ahmad Bhat, son of Mohammad Akbar of Aglar, Sumbal. One AK assault rifle, one pistol and four magazines with ammunition were recovered from the slain militants.

The Indian Express, 3 February 2006

Five-year jail term for Pak militant

Jammu, February 1: A Special Designated Court today has awarded five years' imprisonment to a Pak militant for spreading terrorism. The court has also directed the militant to a fine of Rs 2,000. The Presiding Officer, Special Designated Court under TADA/POTA/Third Additional Sessions Judge Jammu, N D Wani, convicted and sentenced Abdul Rashid Sheikh son of Sonallah and a resident of Iran Bandipora district Baramulla. Rashid was apprehended by the Army near INDO-PAK Border Chakroi during an encounter in which the associate terrorists died. According to the prosecution case accused Abdul Rashid Sheikh apprehended by the army men when they found some suspicious moment of unidentified persons in the fields of Chakroi area near the INDO-PAK Border.

Daily Excelsior, 3 February 2006

ARC chairman lauds Azad's campaign against corruption

Jammu, Feb 1: Chairman Administrative Reforms Commission, (ARC) M Veerappa Moily has appreciated the role of Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad for launching vigorous campaign against corruption. Addressing a press conference here today, the chairman ARC, Government of India, said that the Ghulam Nabi Azad has proved trendsetter by introducing Legislature in Jammu and Kashmir under which properties of convicted corrupt officials shall be confiscated. He said that this law can be introduced in other parts of the country as well. He said these stringent laws will definitely prove beneficial in bringing down the level of corruption and raise the GDP growth of State and the country.

Greater Kashmir, 3 February 2006

Landslides multiply woes of quake-hit in Tanghdar (ZULFIKAR MAJID)

Srinagar, Feb 1: Recent heavy snowfall in earthquake ravaged Karnah and Tanghdar tehsils of north Kashmir's Kupwara district has triggered landslides in many areas adding to the miseries of people already reeling under huge problems. Reports said dozens of villages remain cut off for the past one-month due to the landslides. "The landslides are occurring from three sides in our village which has made our lives miserable. A slight aftershock can bury the entire village of 200 people under the hill," Arif Hussain Shah, a resident of Surma Pari in Karnah told Greater Kashmir. Arif said the hills had softened due to the tremors, and heavy snowfall is triggering landslides.

Greater Kashmir, 3 February 2006

8 held in Valley

Srinagar: Troops arrested eight persons during separate raids across the state since Tuesday evening, reports said Wednesday. Reports said troops of 42 Rashtriya Rifles (RR) arrested Showkat Ahmad Wani son of Asadullah Wani of Nagi Pathri Tral in Pulwama district on Tuesday. Troops arrested a released militant Muhammad Maqbool Ganai during a raid at Bonigam Shopian on Tuesday. Troops of 12 RR arrested Ghulam Nabi Dar son of Abdur Rehman Dar at Laman Safapora on Wednesday. Reports said two SPOs, allegedly working with militants, were arrested from Ramban area of Jammu's Doda district. They have been identified as Muhammad Iqbal of Raj Garh Ramban and Irshad Ahmad of Kargi Mangat Banihal. Irshad, according to reports, was a surrendered militant who had been employed as an SPO while Iqbal was working as a security guard with a National Conference leader.

The Indian Express, 3 February 2006

Arrests bring SPO-militant nexus in focus yet again (Anand Bodh)

Jammu, February 1: Monday's arrest of two Special Police Officers (SPOs) from Ramban area by the Jammu-Kashmir Police has once again exposed the nexus between militants and some police officials in the state. Since both are surrendered militants, their arrests have once again brought under scanner the credibility of all surrendered militants now recruited as SPOs. At present there are around 27,000 SPOs working with the state police, of whom a sizeable number are surrendered militants. However, the case is not an aberration. There have been instances when surrendered militants working as SPOs have been arrested for links with militants. Also, there have been incidents when such SPOs have returned to militancy.

Greater Kashmir, 3 February 2006

Unable to decode 'self-rule', PDP for debate on 52 position (RIYAZ MASROOR)

Srinagar, Feb 1: In a place where people have long been fed on slogans, Peoples Democratic Party is desperately searching for one. But it has a grouse about the people not getting what the party exactly stands for. Following a war of words, through newspaper headlines, between PDP President Mahbooba Mufti and Muzaffar Hussain Baig who happens to be the Deputy Chief Minister, about self-rule proposal, the party chose to issue a "white paper" in the shape of advertisement Wednesday. It opens with a complaint: "During the past few days, an attempt has been made by various quarters to present the Peoples Democratic Party's stand on the proposal of self-rule in a distorted manner.

Greater Kashmir, 3 February 2006

2 militants killed, soldier wounded

Srinagar, Feb 1: Two militants of Hizbul Mujahideen were killed and a soldier was wounded in separate incidents across the state since Tuesday evening, police said Wednesday. Police said two militants of Hizbul Mujahideen including a battalion commander were killed by troops during an encounter at Nihalopra Pattan on Wednesday. Police said the troops of 29 RR after receiving specific information regarding the presence of militants cordoned off the area. The militants present in the area tried to break the cordon and opened indiscriminate firing on the troops, triggering an encounter in which two militants were killed. The slain militants have been identified as Hilal Ahmad Magray alias Dilawar Ahmad of Talagam and Riyaz Ahmad Bhat son of Muhammad Akbar Bhat of Aglar Sumbal.

Daily Excelsior, 3 February 2006

Crime Branch cracks JKBL fraud case (Sanjeev Pargal)

JAMMU, Feb 1: Crime Branch, Jammu, has cracked the much publicised Rs 32 lakh worth scam in Jammu and Kashmir Bank Ltd's Shalamar branch establishing the charges of fraud against seven persons including a leading Advocate, a Chartered Accountant and Jammu-based dealer of a prominent car company. The fraud had been committed on the name of Vinod Bhalla, brother of MLA Gandhi Nagar, Raman Bhalla, former Minister of State for Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution and Transport. However, when the Excelsior had first exposed the fraud in its edition dated August 7, 2005, Raman Bhalla had disowned his brother. Official sources told the Excelsior that sensational fraud, in which Fiat Company's three cars including one Sienna and two Palio had been financed on the name of Vinod Bhalla and his two relatives besides some other persons, has been worked out during five

months hectic investigations carried out under the supervision of SSP Crime and Railways Sunil Sharma by two Investigating Officers Yashpal Singh and Shakeel Ahmed.

The Indian Express, 3 February 2006

Yasin asserts he has not met Manmohan since he became PM (Riyaz Wani)

Srinagar, February 2: A day after Prime Minister Manmohan Singh said that he met JKLF supremo Yasin Malik as part of the ongoing peace process, Malik today called a press conference to say he didn't meet the PM. "I have not met Manmohan Singh since he became the Prime Minister. All this talk of our meeting circulating in the media is nonsense," Malik said. He talked about the details of his two earlier meetings with Singh when the latter was in the Opposition. "I have met Dr Manmohan Singh twice. Once in 2001 and later in March 2003 for an informal chat". On the defensive, in the wake of the claims about his clandestine meeting with the Prime Minister, Malik disclosed with great precision even the specifics of what he termed as the "previous meetings" with Singh.

Greater Kashmir, 3 February 2006

PMO CLARIFIES

New Delhi: The Centre today said it is possible that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will meet JKLF Chief Yaseen Malik and other Kashmiri leaders in the future. PM's Media Advisor Sanjaya Baru was clarifying the response of the Prime Minister to a question at the national press conference yesterday as to his meetings with various leaders from Kashmir. The Prime Minister had mentioned various names including that of Yaseen Malik. "This reference is to his meetings with various representatives of groups in Kashmir including Malik before he became the Prime Minister," Baru said.

The Indian Express, 3 February 2006

Mirwaiz woos Jammu with a common strategy

Jammu, February 2: Like his first-ever visit to Jammu, Mirwaiz Umer Farooq's rally in the City of Temples here also made history of sorts when he called for a "common minimum strategy" involving people from all the three regions of the state for a final settlement of the Kashmir issue. Addressing people in an area traditionally hostile to its agenda, the moderate Hurriyat leader said that Kashmir issue had now entered the "resolution phase" and the need of the hour is to develop a "Common Minimum Strategy", involving the people of Jammu, Kashmir, Ladakh and Kashmiri Pandits for the final settlement. Stressing that Kashmir is a political issue, Mirwaiz said that it is not an economic, religious or the election related issue and no amount of doles from the Centre in the shape of multi-crore packages will resolve it.

Greater Kashmir, 3 February 2006

Inland Water Transport on Jhelum still on papers-I (ARIF SHAFI WANI)

Srinagar, Feb 2: An ambitious project to develop an Inland Water Transport (IWT) system on river Jhelum—lifeline of Srinagar city—is still to see the light of the day despite eight years of its formulation. To lessen traffic problems in the summer capital and prevent pollution in the Jhelum, Government made a proposal in 1996 to launch public transport system on the 27-km river stretch from Pampore to Chattabal. It would have incurred Rs 9 crore in the first phase—total cost of the project, including its expansion till 2017 was estimated at Rs 40 crore. Government through Housing and Urban Development employed the services of RITES, a Central Government enterprise, to make a Detailed Project Report (DPR) for development of the IWT system on the Jhelum.

The Indian Express, 3 February 2006

JKLF chief denies secret meeting with PM

New Delhi, February 2: Maintaining that JKLF was not against dialogue process, its chief Yaseen Malik today said he would consult his colleagues as and when an invitation from the Centre about meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh comes for talks on Kashmir issue. Official sources had indicated that Malik, who has eschewed violence after his release in mid-90s and adopted Gandhian way, would be called for talks by the Centre in line with its commitment to broaden the Kashmir dialogue process. Responding to this, Malik told PTI from Srinagar that he was in favour of a dialogue and would consult his party men after an invitation from the Centre on holding the dialogue with the Centre. He denied having any meeting with the Prime Minister 'secretly' and said the reports about the same were totally baseless.

Greater Kashmir, 3 February 2006

2 militants killed in Poonch

Srinagar, Feb 2: Troops killed two militants in Jammu's Poonch district on Wednesday night, police said Thursday. Police said the troops intercepted a group of militants trying to infiltrate into Poonch at Kojara Top and engaged them in gunbattle. In the ensuing encounter two militants were killed. The identity of the slain militants is being ascertained, the police added. A grenade lying near Fire & Emergency services Sopur was detected and diffused by police on Thursday.

Daily Excelsior, 4 February 2006

5000 Kashmiri youth languishing in

PoK camps, willing to return

JAMMU, Feb 3: More than 5,000 Kashmiri youth are languishing in training camps in Pak occupied Kashmir and majority of them are willing to return and reunite with their family members. Six local youth, who were picked up by ultras on way to their school several years back and forced them to militancy, managed to flee a training camp in PoK and landed in this part of the Line of Control. They made the startling revelations about their nightmarish experience and claimed that many Kashmiri youth were languishing in PoK camps and wanted to reunite with their families and join national mainstream. Out of the six, three of them were hardly 12-13 years old when they were picked up by the militants and taken to Pak occupied Kashmir for training. They are Mohd Altaf Safi, Aijaz Ahmed Khoja, Jahangir Wani, Mohd Ashraf Baba, Mohd Sultan Pyar and Sannaulla Mir.

Greater Kashmir, 4 February 2006

Tral villagers allege molestation of women, beating, forced labour (HILAL AHMAD/ZULFIKAR MAJID)

Dudkulian (Tral), Feb 3: A three kilometers exhausting back-breaking uphill climb on a rocky track leads to Dudkulian village. On either side of the track are denuded Walnut trees and terraced maize fields. In the overcast sky, the landscape was eerie and not a single bird hovered in sky or took a flight from naked trees. A group of soldiers accompanied by three policemen were descending from the village. In combat dresses, black hair bands, and carrying AK-47 rifles, the soldiers asked a Gujjar youth, who was carrying another teenaged Gujjar boy on his shoulders, to hurry up. The boy being carried on the shoulders had a swollen face, his legs had given up. He had been severely thrashed outside his home in the village on the suspicion of working for militants and now he was being handed over to police.

Daily Excelsior, 4 February 2006

Bring self rule resolution in Assembly: Omar to PDP

JAMMU, Feb 3: Lambasting Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) for propagating the proposal of 'self-governance' without any clear concept, just to exploit sentiments of the people, president of National Conference, Omar Abdullah today said that Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's party is in crisis to find a political agenda. "With full page signed advertisement and green border line, PDP has been claiming to solve decades of old vexed Kashmir problem", he satirically said but hastened to add, "with this advertisement PDP leadership on the one hand has tried to exploit sentiments of people while on the other hand it has tried to contain dissent voices with the party". Addressing a press conference here this morning, Omar Abdullah said, "first time in my life I have seen a signed advertisement".

Greater Kashmir, 4 February 2006

DAY AFTER PDP AD, NC FIRES SALVO ON MUFTIS, BAIG (ARIF HALEEM)

Jammu, Feb 3: A day after Peoples Democratic Party tried to clarify its stand on self-rule through advertisements in various newspapers of the state, the opposition National Conference came out with a scathing attack on the PDP top brass. The NC president Omar Abdullah described the PDP as a party with no ideology and accused its patron and former Chief Minister Mufti Muhammad Sayeed and Deputy Chief Minister Muzaffar Hussian Baig of eroding special status of Jammu and Kashmir. "It is first time I have seen an advertisement signed by Deputy Chief Minister Muzaffar Hussian Beig. And I started wondering what it was all about and realized that signs were taken so that signatories will not deny it later. It clearly indicates a division in a party once called PDP," Omar Abdullah told reporters here Friday.

Daily Excelsior, 4 February 2006

5000 Kashmiri youth languishing in PoK camps, willing to return

JAMMU, Feb 3: More than 5,000 Kashmiri youth are languishing in training camps in Pak occupied Kashmir and majority of them are willing to return and reunite with their family members. Six local youth, who were picked up by ultras on way to their school several years back and forced them to militancy, managed to flee a training camp in PoK and landed in this part of the Line of Control. They made the startling revelations about their nightmarish experience and claimed that many Kashmiri youth were languishing in PoK camps and wanted to reunite with their families and join national mainstream. Out of the six, three of them were hardly 12-13 years old when they were picked up by the militants and taken to Pak occupied Kashmir for training.

Greater Kashmir, 4 February 2006

Return of KPs should not be linked with dispute: Mirwaiz (NASEER A GANAI)

Jammu, Feb 3: Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, chairman of a faction of Hurriyat Conference on Friday talked about "alternative negotiative settlement" for finding solution to Kashmir dispute and said return of Kashmiri Pandit migrants to Valley should not be linked with Kashmir dispute. Addressing people at Jamia Masjid Jammu, Mirwaiz said "we should think beyond stated positions and explore other options to solve the Kashmir issue keeping in

view stands of the concerned parties." He said concerns of India and Pakistan should be taken in consideration and that sentiment of people of Jammu and Kashmir should not be ignored. He however said Kashmir dispute should not be sidelined. "If India and Pakistan will go for trade and cricket matches, we will not oppose it, but not at the altar of Kashmir dispute," he warned.

Greater Kashmir, 4 February 2006

3 militants killed in State

Srinagar, Feb 3: Three militants were killed in separate incidents across the State since Thursday evening, police said Friday. Police said two militants were killed in an encounter in Rajouri district of Jammu on Thursday night. The encounter broke out after troops launched a cordon and search operation at village Karyote Thanamandi. The militants present there fired upon the troops triggering a fierce encounter. In the ensuing gunfight, the two militants were killed. Two AK rifles, five magazines, 41 rounds of ammunition, two IEDs and a grenade were claimed to have recovered from the encounter site. Police said a militant of Lashker-e-Toiba (LeT) outfit was killed in an encounter in Doda district of Jammu on Friday. The slain militant was identified as Abu Hamza of Pakistan. An AK rifle, two magazines and 10 rounds of ammunition were claimed to have recovered from the encounter site.

Daily Excelsior, 4 February 2006

PM's migrant package implementation in 18 months: CM

JAMMU, Feb 3: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today chaired two high level meetings wherein Prime Minister's reconstruction plan package for rehabilitation of Khour migrants and Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna (PMGSY) were reviewed. At a meeting wherein the rehabilitation of Khour migrants was reviewed, the Chief Minister said that the PM's package for the purpose would be implemented within 18 months covering all the affected families. Speaker Legislative Assembly Tara Chand, Deputy Chief Minister Muzaffar Hussain Baig, Madan Lal Sharma, MP, Chief Secretary Vijay Bakaya, Financial Commissioner Home S B Mathur, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Anil Goswami, Divisional Commissioner Jammu B R Sharma and GOC Maj Gen B S Jaswal also participated in this meeting.

Daily Excelsior, 6 February 2006

15,000 troops moved out of J&K

NEW DELHI, Feb 5 : Army has thinned down presence in Jammu and Kashmir by 15,000 men in an unannounced move apparently as part of Confidence Building Measures. Army has moved out a brigade plus troops from the Valley back to their original position in the Eastern Front, according to highly placed Army sources here. The sources said some more elements had also been moved out. These formations were in Jammu and Kashmir since "Operation Vijay" in 1999 and apparently they had now been shifted back to their static formations. The sources explained that this was a normal rotation of troops which was undertaken. (PTI)

The Indian Express, 6 February 2006

Pak refugees demand citizenship rights

Jammu, February 5: WEST Pakistani Refugee Action Committee (WPRAC) organised a rally at Gandhi Park, RS Pura, to put pressure on the government to grant citizenship rights to the 1947 refugees. BJP state president Dr Nirmal Singh, while addressing the gathering on this occasion, expressed grave concern over the failure of the successive governments in the state for not granting citizenship rights to the people who migrated to this part of the state in 1947. He said that today even after 58 years of Independence, thousands of people from west Pakistan, who left everything and opted to come and settle in J&K, had not even got the right to vote.

Greater Kashmir, 6 February 2006

Fed up of Govt lies, KPs pin return hope on Hurriyat (NASEER A GANAI)

Jammu, Feb 5: Kashmir Hindu migrants Sunday accused state government of hampering their return to Valley and described Kashmir as a dispute which requires political solution. "Government woos tourists to Kashmir by saying that normalcy has returned. But when we ask for our return, it says situation has not changed. It means they don't want our return," said Bihari Lal Kaw, vice-president All Migrant Camp Coordination Committee (AMCCC) during an interaction session with Hurriyat Conference chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq. The meet between migrants living in camps and the Hurriyat was organised by AMCCC. Kaw related an incident of 2005 when 23 families, according to him, had expressed desire to return to Valley and settle in quarters at Budgam.

Daily Excelsior, 6 February 2006

India to take up issue of spread of terror outfits

NEW DELHI, Feb 5: Concerned over the spread of activities of Pak-based terrorist outfits in India, Government is going to take up the issue during the Home Secretary level talks scheduled for next month in Islamabad. Besides cross-broder terrorism, New Delhi will vociferously take up the issue of drug trafficking with its neighbour, highly

placed sources said here today. The recent terror attacks in various parts of country like Bangalore and Ayodhya shows the spread of these networks beyond Jammu and Kashmir and the fact that those who were apprehended belonged to outfits based in Pakistan only shows its continued support in protecting and sheltering these outfits, the sources said. Though there was a decrease in terrorism activities in J&K, the activities have spread to other parts of the country, a senior official said.

The Indian Express, 6 February 2006

The Pak terror tap still flows (Anand Bodh)

Jammu, February 4: Despite the Indo-Pak thaw and a slew of Confidence Building Measures, Pakistan is yet to turn off its terror tap. Six militants who surrendered before the Army on Friday revealed that thousands of militants are undergoing training at camps in Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir. The six militants had decided to lay down arms after their families established contacts with senior Army officials in the Jammu division and sought their help in absorbing them back into the mainstream. With more families approaching the Army to facilitate the surrender of misguided youth, Army officials are not ruling out the possibility of more surrenders of Kashmiri youths in near future. The six Kashmiri youths who surrendered on Friday belong to a lesser-known militant outfit called Kashmir Freedom Force.

Daily Excelsior, 6 February 2006

Lot needs to be done to remove misunderstanding, says Mirwaiz

JAMMU, Feb 5: Exuding confidence that relations among various ethnic groups of State will be improved, chairman of the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) Mirwaiz Umar Farooq today admitted that lot needed to be done to remove the mis-understanding among different regions. Talking to the EXCELSIOR, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who will return to Srinagar tomorrow, after his four day Jammu visit, expressed satisfaction over his first ever interaction with cross sections of the people of this region. "Without any hesitation I admit that there are mis-understanding which needed to be removed for better future of the people of this State", the Mirwaiz said, adding, "during my day stay here ,I interacted with cross sections of the society so as to inquire about their aspirations and wishes". "As there is lot of mis-understanding it is high time that we have to re-define our inter-regional relations", he argued and hoped that people of Jammu will also come forward and seize this historical opportunity.

Daily Excelsior, 6 February 2006

7 killed, 19 hurt in bus accident near Mendhar

JAMMU, Feb 5: Seven persons including an infant were killed and 19 others were injured when a heavily overloaded bus went down into a gorge from a curve at village Machka in Galuta area of Mendhar in Poonch district late this afternoon. The bus No. 6455 JK02D was on way from Jammu to Loran Mandi. Driver of the bus lost control over the vehicle as it was heavily over-loaded carrying over 70 passengers as against the seating capacity of 42 while negotiating a curve at Machka, about one km from Bhimber Gali at 2.30 pm today, official sources said. The bus went down about 150 feet deep into the gorge. The passengers travelling on roof of the bus survived with bruises as they jumped to safety when the bus rolled down.

Greater Kashmir, 7 February 2006

KASHMIR PROTESTS BLASPHEMY

Srinagar, Feb 6: A complete shutdown to protest publication of cartoons depicting Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAW) in European newspapers crippled life across the Kashmir Valley on Monday. Protest demonstrations were also held in this summer capital of the state and other major towns of the Valley, witnesses told Greater Kashmir. They said slogan-shouting youths came out on roads at many places in old city and some parts of civil lines, burning tyres and pelting stones on police and vehicles. The angry youths were shouting slogans in favour of Islam and the Holy Prophet (SAW). Shops, business establishments, government offices, banks and courts across the Valley remained closed in response to the shutdown called by Kashmir High Court Bar Association to protest the blasphemous cartoons by a Danish newspaper and subsequently by a French and other European newspapers.

The Indian Express, 7 February 2006

LeT ultra held: Attempt to strike in Jammu foiled

Jammu, February 6: With the arrest of one Lashkar-e-Toiba militant from Gujjar Nagar area, who was wanted in many cases of IED blasts and killings in Valley, police today foiled militants attempt to strike in Jammu. Based on specific information about the presence of a militant provided by intelligence, a joint operation was carried out by J&K Police and troops of Tiger Division in Gujjar Nagar area. During search operation, a joint team succeeded in arresting one militant identified as Noor Mohammad son of Mohammad Yousaf of Chiri village in Kokernag of Anantnag district, said SSP Jammu Mukesh Singh. "He was wanted in five cases of IED blasts and killings in Valley. On December 2003, one IED was planted near CRPF bunker at Kokernag in which one CRPF personnel was killed, while in January 2004 around four army personnel were killed in an IED blast planted by him in Magam

Morh," SSP added.

Greater Kashmir, 7 February 2006

Luring youth with jobs in army futile: UJC

Srinagar: United Jihad Council (UJC) today said that India had lost its war on military front in Kashmir and it was now luring Kashmiri youth with jobs in Army, BSF, CRPF, Territorial Force and STF as its last weapon. "But history is witness to the fact that India's every war tactic during last 15 years met with failure in Jammu and Kashmir and its last weapon of recruiting youth in army and other security agencies will meet the same end," said a UJC spokesman in a statement today. The spokesman said, "How can a Kashmiri youth join Indian armed forces when he knows that they are killing innocent and inoffensive Kashmiris every day? However, those joining the Indian military services and making a sell-out of their faith and self-respect for petty interests will be declared and treated as enemies like Indian armed forces."

The Indian Express, 7 February 2006

Naushera Day celebrated

Jammu, February 6: To commemorate the sacrifices made by valiant soldiers and civilians to defeat the nefarious designs of Pakistan during 1947-48 operations at Tain Dhar in Naushera sector, the Indian Army today celebrated Naushera Day at Brigade Headquarters in Naushera. The stoic and brave defence of Naushera was the turning point for the entire battle in J&K during 1947-48 operations. The valiant Army and civil comrades had fought together to ward off the Pakistan Army. The celebration also commemorates the supreme sacrifice made by Naik Yadunath Singh (Param Vir Chakra) during the operation. The day was celebrated with pomp and splendour by military and civil personnel of Naushera tehsil at the Brigade Headquarters.

The Indian Express, 7 February 2006

'More troops can be moved out of Kashmir'

New Delhi, February 6: The Army has moved out 5,000 troops from Jammu and Kashmir following "much improvement" in the situation there and more could be "redeployed" if violence further decreases, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said on Monday. "It is not withdrawal but redeployment of forces from J&K to the north-east, as violence level has come down," he said on the sidelines of an Army Conference. To queries from reporters whether the exercise was timed to coincide with the visit of US President George W Bush to the country, Mukherjee said it is a "routine exercise. The redeployment is a regular exercise undertaken after review of the situation in the state. Last year, we had reduced troops voluntarily."

Greater Kashmir, 7 February 2006

Situation improves, troops being withdrawn: Pranab Mukherjee

New Delhi, Feb 6: An Army brigade was being withdrawn from Jammu and Kashmir following "improvement in situation" there, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said today. The Defence Minister told mediapersons on the sidelines of an Army conference here that a brigade withdrawn from Jammu and Kashmir would be re-deployed in the northeast where a number of separatist insurgencies still exist. Pointing out that redeployment was "a routine exercise" undertaken after review of the situation in the northern state, Minister Mukherjee said last year the troops were withdrawn voluntarily. Earlier in the day, a Government official on condition of anonymity had said that as many as 15,000 troops were to be withdrawn from Jammu and Kashmir in a phased manner.

Daily Excelsior, 7 February 2006

J&K to emerge as Silicon State of India : Azad

JAMMU, Feb 6: Expressing optimism over a great future and potential of the Information Technology sector in Jammu and Kashmir, Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad has said that he has seen a dream of converting this State into the 'Silicon State' of India. Addressing students, their parents and faculty members of the NIIT at an annual convocation function held here today, the Chief Minister said that J&K is sure to emerge as the future destination of the Information Technology hub after Bangalore or Hyderabad in the country. He said that there was a great scope of IT sector in Jammu and Kashmir as he had seen vast talent among the students.

Greater Kashmir, 7 February 2006

State Minority Commission to be set up in JK

New Delhi, Feb 6: A State Minority Commission will soon be set up in Jammu and Kashmir, National Commission for Minorities (NCM) chairman Tarlochan Singh said Monday. "The long-standing proposal to set up the State Minority Commission in Jammu and Kashmir has been accepted in principal by Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad...we had raised the issue with successive governments," Singh told UNI. He said the state needs the minority commission to ensure the rights of the minorities due to prevailing situation in the insurgency-torn state. Singh said he received a communication from Azad saying instructions had been issued to authorities concerned

to prepare a proposal in this regard. Welcoming the move, the NCM chairman said the demand of minorities in the state to be recognised will now be fulfilled.

Greater Kashmir, 7 February 2006

Protest in Kargil against disrespect to Quran

Srinagar: Thousands of people today took to streets at Kargil in protest against showing disrespect to the holy Quran by some miscreants at village Kharboo. Inspector General of Police (Kashmir range) K Rajinder Kumar told UNI that a case has been registered and investigation had been started into the incident. Official sources said people took to streets this morning after news spread that some pages of Holy Quran were seen on the roadside at village Kharboo. The demonstrators clashed with the police at several places in the border district in which a number of persons were injured. They were demanding action against the culprits, sources said. Kumar said the situation was under control. People protested as their sentiments were hurt due to unfortunate action of some miscreants, he said. (UNI)

Daily Excelsior, 8 February 2006

IED on highway defused

SRINAGAR, Feb 8: Security forces today averted a major tragedy when they detected and defused a powerful Improvised Explosive Device (IED) planted by militants on the 300-km-long Srinagar-Jammu national highway. A Defence Ministry spokesman said a highway domination party detected a powerful IED at Lower Monda on the highway planted by militants to target security force convoy. Traffic on the highway, only road linking Kashmir valley with the rest of the country, was suspended and bomb disposal squad summoned to defuse the IED. He said militants had been making attempts to target security forces and other vehicles by triggering IED at crowded places and other important routes. More than 20 people, mostly security personnel have lost their lives in the mine blasts and fidayeen attacks in the Kashmir valley during the past six months. (UNI)

Greater Kashmir, 8 February 2006

MUHARRAM PROCESSION DISPERSED WITH FORCE

Srinagar, Feb 7: About 150 mourners were taken into custody and 30 others injured when police used batons and teargas canisters to disperse a Muharram procession here Tuesday. Meanwhile, prominent Shia leader and former chairman of Hurriyat Conference Moulana Abbas Ansari was put under house arrest. Dozens of Shia mourners tried to take out a procession from Maisuma, Budshah Chowk and Regal Chowk after defying the prohibitory orders imposed in the city, witnesses said. Chanting pro-Islam and anti-American slogans, the mourners pelted stones on police personnel and passing vehicles. Police retaliated with batons and lobbed scores of teargas canisters to disperse the processionists, injuring at least 30 of them. Police took into custody about 80 persons from Regal Chowk, Moulana Azad road and Abi Guzar.

Daily Excelsior, 8 February 2006

BSF, Rangers discuss security aspects

WAGAH, Feb 7: Senior officers of the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Pakistan Rangers who met here today resolved to "maintain peace and tranquility" along the 553-km stretch of the Punjab border. The meeting held in a cordial atmosphere took place on the Indian side of this Joint Check Post. The 12-member Rangers delegation was led by Col Nazim Tarim while the BSF team was headed by DIG (Ferozpur sector) Harish Kashyap. According to official sources the two sides agreed to continue with the implementation of the joint agreement reached between the two countries to "maintain peace" along the Indo-Pakistan border in the last bi-annual meeting between the BSF and the Rangers held at Chandigarh in November last year.

Greater Kashmir, 8 February 2006

OIC: JK on our agenda

Jeddah, Feb 7: Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, secretary-general of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), has described Kashmir as "one of the most important issues on the OIC agenda." Speaking at a function at the residence of Pakistan Consul General Masood Akhtar, Ihsanoglu reiterated the stand on the Kashmir issue that the OIC had been pleading since its inception and said as a personal commitment he was also supporting the "just cause of Kashmir." "Developments taking place for the last few years between India and Pakistan will surely help resolve the problem amicably," he said. "The OIC is launching a campaign to stop the publishing of the blasphemous caricature and is pursuing the matter with the UN, and European and Islamic countries," Ihsanoglu said. Syed Ali Geelani, leader of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference, said it was a good sign to show solidarity with the people of Jammu and Kashmir who were suffering for the last 57 years.

The Indian Express, 8 February 2006

LeT ultra held: Attempt to strike in Jammu foiled

Jammu, February 6: With the arrest of one Lashkar-e-Toiba militant from Gujjar Nagar area, who was wanted in

many cases of IED blasts and killings in Valley, police today foiled militants attempt to strike in Jammu. Based on specific information about the presence of a militant provided by intelligence, a joint operation was carried out by J&K Police and troops of Tiger Division in Gujjar Nagar area. During search operation, a joint team succeeded in arresting one militant identified as Noor Mohammad son of Mohammad Yousaf of Chiri village in Kokernag of Anantnag district, said SSP Jammu Mukesh Singh. "He was wanted in five cases of IED blasts and killings in Valley. On December 2003, one IED was planted near CRPF bunker at Kokernag in which one CRPF personnel was killed, while in January 2004 around four army personnel were killed in an IED blast planted by him in Magam Morh," SSP added.

Daily Excelsior, 8 February 2006

CM for immediate execution of 29 hydel projects

Jammu, Feb 7: Underscoring the importance of exploring available hydro electric power potential of the State to give impetus to overall development, Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today stressed for removing all hurdles and procedural delays and taking up for execution all mini and micro hydel projects pending for last over a decade. Mr Azad was presiding over a high-level meeting convened here today to review the power development sector. The meeting was attended by Financial Commissioner Power B R Kundal, Principal Secretary Revenue S V Bhave, Principal Secretary to Chief Minister Anil Goswami, Commissioner/Secretary Forests Najamus Saqib, Commissioner/Secretary Law Akhtar Kochak, Managing Director Power Development Corporation Muzaffar Ahmad Bhat besides independent power producers.

Daily Excelsior, 8 February 2006

10,000 youth turn up during first phase (Sarwar Kashani)

Srinagar, Feb 7: Despite strong bullying by the militant outfits and certain separatist organizations, the recruitment drive initiated by Army has started receiving overwhelming response and, as per rough calculations, around ten thousand youth today turned out to test their luck for the jobs with Army during the first phase of recruitment in Langate. Not enough! The eagerness for the employment can also be made out from the fact that residents of border district of Kupwara on Tuesday staged a massive protest demonstration to express their resentment against what they said "discrimination meted" out to them during the recruitment drive for absorbing Kashmir youth in the armed forces. The ground reality of the modern socio-economic scenario that the youth in the post modern era looks for economic freedom ahead of the political one has of late come to the fore as thousands of unemployed youth turned out to test their fate for jobs with Army.

The Indian Express, 8 February 2006

Grenade attack on former minister's house

Jammu, February 7: The house of former minister and legislator Majid Wani was attacked by grenade in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir late last night in which four policemen were injured, official sources said today. The grenade thrown by unidentified militants exploded in the compound of the house in Bharat area, damaging window panes, they told reporters here. However, Wani and his family members were not at home at the time of the attack, the sources said. The injured cops have been hospitalised in Doda, they added.

The News, 8 February 2006

Red alert as Lahore fears suicide hits (Salman Aslam)

LAHORE: Law-enforcement agencies have declared a red alert in Lahore following intelligence reports about the threat of suicide attacks. Sources told The News that the Lahore city was the target as terrorists might hit there, particularly on Ashura. Meanwhile, the Capital City Police have not only tightened the security in view of these intelligence reports but also launched a crackdown on the suspects, arresting at least 54 of them from various City localities on Tuesday. The police carried out raids at Mughalpura, Nishat Colony, Shahdara, Bund Road, Shera Kot, Shadbagh, Shah Pur Kanjran, Manga Mandi and Moaza Pajian Raiwind to arrest the suspects.

Daily Times, 8 February 2006

Religious parties to launch campaign against caricatures

LAHORE: Religious groups of Pakistan have decided to launch a campaign against the blasphemous caricatures of Holy Prophet published in newspapers of Denmark, France, Norway and other European countries. A meeting of representatives of the Jamaatud Dawa (JD), Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI), Jamiat Ahle Hadith (JAH), Jamiat Mashaikh-e-Ahle Sunnat (JMAS), Muttahida Jamiat Ahle Hadith (MJAH), Hizbul Ahnaf (HA), Jamaat-e-Ahle Hadith (JAH), Majlis-e-Ahrar (MA), International Khatam-e-Nabuwat (IKN) and others was held at a hotel on Tuesday, which was presided over by JD leader Amir Hamza. The meeting decided to hold a national conference for consultation on February 11.

The News, 8 February 2006

300 Indian commandos to be deployed in Kandahar (Muhammad Saleh Zaafir)

ISLAMABAD: India is urgently dispatching 300 commandos to Afghanistan on the pretext of providing security to the Indian workers present in the war-ravaged country. The Indian commandos will be deployed in southern Afghanistan between Kandahar and the Iranian border. The Pakistani authorities have credible evidence about the active Indian assistance with money and weaponry to the disgruntled elements in Balochistan. President Gen Pervez Musharraf has already hinted at the external involvement in the Balochistan situation without referring to India. Pakistan has expressed grave concern over deployment of Indian troops close to its border.

Daily Times, 8 February 2006

Army destroying peace in Balochistan, says HRCP

LAHORE: The Pakistan Army is ruining peace in Balochistan to exploit its resources and is trying to create misunderstanding among Pakistanis with regard to the province, Asma Jehangir, Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) chairman, said on Tuesday. She told a seminar that the government was conducting a military operation in the province and that Dera Bugti looked like a ghost town. "The area is surrounded by Frontier Corps personnel and people arrested by intelligence personnel are disappearing, which is a violation of human rights," she said. The Labour Party Pakistan (LLP) arranged the seminar titled 'Basha Dam, arrests and human rights' to condemn the arrests of Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) leaders who were protesting against Basha Dam. Asma alleged that corrupt government politicians were supporting General Pervez Musharraf.

The News, 8 February 2006

Sindhis, Baloch protest at Pak embassy in Washington

WASHINGTON: The Sindhis and the Baloch from across the United States have criticised the "military action in Balochistan" and the government's insistence on construction of dams on the Indus river. Several representatives of Sindhi organisations rallied in front of the Pakistan Embassy here late on Monday under the auspices of the World Sindhi Institute in collaboration with the Sindhi Association of North America, the World Sindhi Congress, the Global Pushtun Institute, the Baloch Society of North America, the Baloch Human Rights International and the Torture Abolition Survivors Supports Coalition International. Wearing symbolic Sindhi Ajrak, the rally delivered a memorandum to the Embassy of Pakistan, outlining their concerns and demands.

Dawn, 8 February 2006

Meeting on defence ties with UK (Arshad Sharif)

LONDON, Feb 7: Senior defence officials of Pakistan and the United Kingdom will be meeting here this week to explore avenues for closer cooperation in the defence field, Dawn has learnt. Officials from Pakistan's Ministry of Defence Production and organizers of the Ideas 2006 defence exhibition will meet officials of the British defence ministry, UK Defence Exports Services Organization, Defence Manufacturers Association and representatives of the defence industry. The meeting is aimed to "update and brief companies on the growing defence equipment relationship between Pakistan and the UK, to discuss export opportunities and to share experience of doing business in the market". When contacted, Pakistan's High Commissioner to the United Kingdom, Dr Maleeha Lodhi, said the high commission would also be participating in the meeting.

Daily Times, 8 February 2006

Terrorist training camps might exist in UK

LONDON: Police say that they uncovered evidence of terrorist training camps in Britain after raiding Muslim cleric Abu Hamza al-Masri's north London mosque, which they believe was a global magnet for Islamic militants. Police said that they have had evidence of the camps for years, but it could not be disclosed until Tuesday after the end of a trial at which the cleric was convicted of 11 charges, including soliciting murder and possessing a terrorist training manual. In January 2003, about 150 British police staged a dramatic raid on Finsbury Park Mosque as part of their investigation into a plot to make the deadly poison ricin at a nearby north London apartment.

Daily Excelsior, 10 February 2006

SPO, woman killed in Kishtwar

JAMMU, Feb 9: A Special Police Officer (SPO) and a woman were killed in an encounter with the militants at village Kither in Kishtwar tehsil of Doda district today while a police head constable was injured in an IED blast on Gool-Ramban road. Official sources said a police party from Gandoh and Bunjwah had gone to Kither last night to launch a search operation following reports regarding movement of the militants. This morning, the militants opened firing from the forest area killed SPO Noor Mohd of Chanyas, Gandoh and injuring a woman Naseema Begum, 38, wife of Bashir Ahmed R/o Kither. The woman later succumbed to her injuries. Police party retaliated but the militants managed to escape. A truck of Indian Reserve Police (IRP) bearing number 6105 JK02Q was blown up under the impact of an IED blast at Manjal, about 35 kms from Ramban on Gool-Ramban road at 6 pm today. A head constable Ghulam Hassan was injured in the blast. He has been admitted in the Emergency Hospital, Ramban.

The Indian Express, 10 February 2006

Army out in Leh after clashes (MIR EHSAN)

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 9: The Army today held a flag march in Buddhist-dominated Leh town in J-K, where curfew has been in place since Monday after clashes erupted between Buddhists and Muslims. Sensing that things might take a turn for the worse, the district administration today sought the help of the Army to ensure peace is not shattered, sources said. The Ladakh Buddhist Association and the members of Muslim groups had engaged in street fights in Leh town earlier, leading the administration to clamp curfew. Trouble has since been brewing. In spite of the curfew, Muslims were today allowed to take out a Muharram procession in the town, but at some places stones were pelted at the procession, sources said. Last night, SHO, Leh, Padma Dorje and three of his guards were injured when some people pelted stones at his official vehicle. The SHO suffered serious injuries in the face and eye and has been shifted to Delhi for treatment.

Greater Kashmir, 10 February 2006

Azad orders inquiry

Srinagar, Feb 9: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today ordered a high-level inquiry into the attack on Greater Kashmir, by the activists of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF-Nanaji Group) led by convenor Javed Ahmed Mir. An official spokesman said that immediately after receiving news of the incident, the Chief Minister asked Director General of Police Gopal Sharma and other authorities concerned to take necessary action against the culprits involved in the attack. The spokesman expressed anguish over the cowardly attack by the JKLF-Nanaji activists who forcibly entered the Greater Kashmir office and manhandled the staff. He said Deputy Inspector General of Police, Kashmir Faoq Ahmed, the SSP Srinagar, the DSP and the SHO Kothi Bagh Police Station immediately rushed to the spot. An FIR has been lodged against all those involved in the attack, he added.

Daily Excelsior, 10 February 2006

RJD MP has links with Hizb: Police

SRINAGAR, Feb 9: The problems for RJD MP Shahabuddin seem to be far from over as the police in Jammu and Kashmir are likely to question him for his alleged links with pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen. Shahabuddin, who has been in judicial custody after his arrest last year in connection with various cases including murder and abductions, could face tough questions as the State Police claims that he had received two consignments of arms from Kupwara in early 2000 which included deadily AK rifles as well, official sources said. They said they had earlier asked the Bihar police to help in tracing the MP but could not manage to get him. "We were conveyed by our Bihar counterparts that the MP was not traceable," a senior officer, engaged with the investigation, said. After his arrest last year following recovery of some arms, the Jammu and Kashmir Police were now preparing grounds for questioning him after a militant of the Hizbul Mujahideen outfit said during interrogation that he had supplied AK rifles and pistols to him in Delhi. A report of this had also been sent to the Union Home Ministry.

The Indian Express, 10 February 2006

Hurriyat sees ray of hope with Indo-Pak talks

Jammu, February 9: Hurriyat Conference chief Mirwaiz Umer Farooq has said Pakistan is not comfortable with the idea of an independent Jammu and Kashmir and appreciated the stand of Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad that aspirations of people of all the regions of the state need to be taken care of while deciding the Kashmir issue. "Why only India? Even Pakistan is not comfortable with the concept of an independent Kashmir," Mirwaiz told PTI when asked to react on the reported statement of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf in Davos recently where he had stated that independent Kashmir was not viable. Mirwaiz, who was here in an attempt to woo Kashmiri Pandits to the idea of self-rule and explore their possible return to the Valley, said, however, there was a certain flexibility on the part of the establishment in Islamabad and wanted New Delhi to pursue the path of dialogue earnestly.

Daily Excelsior, 10 February 2006

Thousands participate in Ashoora procession

SRINAGAR, Feb 9: Scores of Alam, Tazia and Zuljanah processions were taken out in Kashmir valley today on occasion of the 10th Muharram (Ashoora)---martyrdom anniversary of Hazrat Imam Hussain and his associates at Karbala in Iraq over 1300 years ago. The largest Zuljanah procession came out in Jan Mohalla of Lal Bazar area at 1030 hours. Official as well as unofficial estimates put the number of the participants between 50,000 and 70,000. Shia mourners chanted hymns in praise of Prophet Mohammad and his grandson, Hazrat Imam Hussain, besides 72 martyrs of Karbala who had laid down their lives for protection of the faith. Several groups of the bare-footed mourners practiced self-flagellation and inflicted wounds over their own bodies while using sharp-edged knives. Others recited Nowha and Marsiya to pay tributes to the martyrs of Karbala.

Daily Excelsior, 11 February 2006

Cop killed, TA soldier shot at

SRINAGAR, Feb 10: A personal guard of a Gujjar and Bakerwal Committee member was killed in a shootout in Qazigund this evening while as a Territorial Army trooper was shot at by militants at Bandipore in north Kashmir. Police recovered a body of a ten year old kid from Hallan in south Kashmir. According to the sources a soldier from Territorial Army identified as Abdul Rasheed Ganie, son of Ali Mohammad was shot at by the suspected militants at main market Bandipore in north Kashmir last night. Injured Rasheed was moved to hospital, where, according to sources, his condition was stated to be critical.

Daily Excelsior, 11 February 2006

DySP's house torched, ADC among 12 injured

KARGIL, Feb 10: Notwithstanding some feeble indications of reassurance in the disturbed district headquarters of Leh, communal tension spread to the Muslim-dominated Kargil district, forcing authorities to impose curfew today. District Magistrate Isfandyar Khan lost no time in announcing prohibitory orders after a mob of over 6,000 people resorted to stone-pelting on the Headquarters of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council of Kargil and the official residence of DySP Headquarters was set on fire. Even as the Muharram processions had passed and ended peacefully here on the occasion of Ashoora yesterday, over 6,000 people belonging to the majority Muslim community converged on the main streets in town.

The Indian Express, 11 February 2006

Dukhtaran-e-Millat activists burn Valentine's Day cards in Kashmir

Srinagar, February 10: Nearly two dozen black-veiled Muslim women stormed gift and stationery shops Friday in Kashmir, burning Valentine's Day cards and posters to protest a holiday they say imposes Western values on Muslim youth. No one was hurt in the half-dozen or so incidents, and police cordoned off the area to prevent the women from marching through Srinagar's main shopping district to continue their ransacking. The women were from the Kashmiri Islamic group Dukhtaran-e-Millat, or Daughters of the Community, Kashmir's only women's separatist group, whose members are also known for their fiercely conservative social views. "We will not let anyone sell these cards or celebrate Valentine's Day," said Asiya Andrabi, the group's leader, as she held a burning poster in her hand. "These Western gimmicks are corrupting our kids and taking them away from their roots."

Daily Excelsior, 11 February 2006

Azad to attend CMs meet, discuss Cabinet expansion

NEW DELHI, Feb 10: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad arrived here today to attend a meeting of the Chief Ministers, Finance Minister and Power Ministers of all States, convened by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, on February 13. Besides attending the conference in which he is expected to take up the issue of seeking Salal power project to the State, Mr Azad will also avail the opportunity to discuss and finalise the Cabinet expansion in the State with the party high command. According to authoritative sources, the Cabinet expansion in Jammu and Kashmir is likely to be undertaken in two phases. While first phase of the expansion is likely to be taken up by 18th of this month, the second round would be held after budget session of the Assembly.

Greater Kashmir, 11 February 2006

Clashes a conspiracy: NC

Srinagar: The main opposition party in the Jammu and Kashmir, National Conference (NC) today alleged that the recent communal clashes in Buddhist dominated Leh was a deep rooted conspiracy to divide people on communal lines. Expressing deep concern over the incident, the NC General secretary Sheikh Nazir Ahmad said some people having vested interests are trying to divide Buddhist and Muslims on religious lines. He appealed to Buddhist and Muslims to maintain centuries old communal harmony in the town and frustrate the attempts of those who wanted to create misunderstanding between the two communities. Nazir urged the administration to identify the culprits and bring them to book immediately. He condemned the miscreants who showed disrespect to Holy Quran at Kharboo village recently.

Greater Kashmir, 11 February 2006

FIR against CRPF for Maisuma excesses

Srinagar, Feb 10: The Jammu and Kashmir police has registered a case against the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) following complaints of alleged atrocities by the force on the residents of Maisuma area here. Residents of Maisuma had staged a protest demonstration against the alleged atrocities being committed by the CRPF personnel in the area. The trouble erupted after personnel of the CRPF's 131 battalion had allegedly beaten a 12th class student, identified as Mohsin Hakeem, without any provocation. Hakeem was dragged inside the bunker and beaten up. As soon as the news of the youth being beaten up spread in the area, residents took to roads and staged a massive demonstration. The protestors later pelted stones on the vehicles and staged a demonstration in front of the CRPF bunker. The demonstrators alleged that the CRPF personnel deployed near

the Akhada building here have made "their life miserable."

Daily Excelsior, 12 February 2006

Centre will soon invite Malik, Shah for talks: Soz

NEW DELHI, Union Water Resources Minister Saifuddin Soz today said the Centre will soon invite Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chief Yaseen Malik and Democratic Freedom party head Shabir Shah for talks and resume the dialogue with the Moderate Hurriyat Conference on the Kashmir issue. "Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has welcomed all groups for talks and the invite will very soon be sent to Yaseen Malik and Shabir Shah," Prof Soz told UNI in an exclusive interview. Prof Soz, who brokered the first round of talks between the Centre and the moderate Hurriyat Conference last year, said it was necessary to seek opinion of all shades to arrive at a broad-based consensus. "The Prime Minister recently met Peoples Conference chief Sajjad Lone... The others including the Kashmiri Pandits will also be called soon. We have to take all section together on the issue," he reiterated.

Greater Kashmir, 12 February 2006

3 militants, 2 soldiers killed

Srinagar, Feb 11: Three militants, two soldiers and a civilian were killed in separate incidents across the state since Friday evening, police said Saturday. Police said two soldiers and a militant were killed in an encounter in Udhampur district of Jammu on Friday night. The encounter broke out after troops launched a cordon- and-search operation at Reasi. The militants present there fired upon the troops triggering a fierce encounter. In the ensuing gunfight that continued for hours, two soldiers Veerpal Singh and Kirori Mal, and a militant, Muhammad Iqbal son of Makhana Kund were killed. Army claimed recovery of an AK rifle, two magazines and 22 rounds of ammunition from the encounter site. Police said two militants of Hizb were killed in an encounter in Doda district on Friday.

Daily Excelsior, 12 February 2006

Solution to Kashmir lies in 'how', not 'when': Abdullah

NEW DELHI, Praising the Centre for initiating the peace process in Kashmir, National Conference president Omar Abdullah has said that the issue needs a "means-based" solution. "It is not a question of 'when' but a question of 'how' we bring peace in Kashmir. If our 'how' is right, 'when' would follow soon," Abdullah said at a seminar 'Peace in Kashmir-When and How' organised by an NGO here recently. While maintaining that his party was not against holding talks with separatist groups, Abdullah said the Centre should also hold discussions with the elected representatives as well. Echoing this need to broaden the scope of the talks, Panun Kashmir Chairman Ajay Charangoo said, "a broad debate which seeks representation of every section of society in Jammu and Kashmir is necessary".

Greater Kashmir, 12 February 2006

Kashmiri woman filmmaker denied rights on her film (HILAL AHMAD)

Srinagar, Feb 11: A Kashmiri woman filmmaker and a freelance journalist who directed and co-produced a video documentary on half-widows of Kashmir over a period of three years is being denied of intellectual and other rights over the film by a Delhi based owner of a production house who is proclaiming to be its director. The film "Waiting" recently banned by the Central Board of Film Certification depicts the ordeal of several thousand women whose husbands have disappeared in the custody of different security agencies. Shabnam Ara, the young Kashmiri director of the film says that she conceived the idea of making film on half-widows in 2002 after interacting with the bereaved women, their families, and human rights activists engaged in the fight against Enforced Custodial Disappearances.

Daily Excelsior, 12 February 2006

Aman Setu replaced by bailey bridge

KAMAN POST, Feb 11: In a major step towards facilitation of trade links between India and Pakistan via the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road, Army engineers today replaced the damaged Aman Setu (peace bridge) here by a strong bailey bridge. Commanding Officer of 6 Engineers Col Dharmendra Singh, who supervised the relaunch of the bridge, told reporters that the earlier bridge had suffered extensive damage during the massive earthquake on October 8 last year. The Indian side built the bridge in a record time of four hours as per the mutual agreement between the two armies and after Pakistan engineers expressing their inability to relay the bridge because of the massive damage on their side, Singh said. "We have requested Pakistani engineers to construct a retaining wall on their side of the bridge so that in the event of landslides they do not fall on the bridge," he said. He said the competent bailey bridge will be fit for traffic within three days.

Daily Excelsior, 12 February 2006

Dul Hasti project to be completed by July (Mohinder Verma)

JAMMU, Feb 11: After so many hiccups for the last over a decade, the 390-Mega Watts (MWs) Dul Hasti Hydro-Electric Project in Kishtwar tehsil of Doda district is all set to be completed by July this year. In this regard, a team of Directors of the National Hydroelectric Project Corporation (NHPC) from New Delhi visited the project site for the last three days and concluded their technical review this afternoon. Authoritative sources told the EXCELSIOR that Jai Parkash Industries, which is also executing work at Baglihar Hydro-Electric Project at Chanderkot, is in the final stage of completing the civil works at the tunnel of the Dul Hasti Project and everything would be in the state of readiness by July this year.

The Indian Express, 12 February 2006

Situation tense but under control in Kargil and Leh

Srinagar, February 11: The situation was tense but under control in twin districts of Kargil and Leh, which witnessed widespread violence following reports of alleged desecration of Quran at a mosque, and there was no relaxation in curfew imposed since Thursday, official sources said. No untoward incidents were reported since last evening in Leh and Kargil and curfew continued in both towns, the sources said adding civil and police officials were monitoring the situation continuously. Kargil town was brought under curfew yesterday after an irate mob set ablaze the residence of a deputy superintendent of police. Violence erupted in the Ladakh region early this week following allegations of desecration of the Quran in Bodh Kharboo area of Kargil district on Monday. Buddhists and Muslims clashed at several places in both Leh and Kargil towns, forcing the authorities to seek help of Army, ITBP and CRPF in maintaining law and order.

Greater Kashmir, 12 February 2006

Jameel bags SAFMA award

Srinagar, Feb 11: Yusuf Jameel, veteran Kashmiri journalist has won the best journalist of the South Asian region award for his outstanding reporting from Pakistan and Pakistani Kashmir during a visit across the Line of Control last year. He was among a dozen journalists from Jammu and Kashmir who joined the return visit to Pakistan and Pakistani Kashmir of the South Asian journalists and during the visit and on his return wrote a series of articles on his observations and the engagements across in Greater Kashmir's Urdu weekly Kashmir Uzma and The Asian Age. Jameel's reports were judged as the best and won him the first best journalist award instituted by the South Asian Free Media Association (SAFMA).

The Indian Express, 12 February 2006

100 days later, CM looks back

Jammu, February 11: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad says there has been no custodial killing during first 100 days of his government's rule while his drive against corruption in state administration has taken off smoothly. Azad, who took over in November last year, had asked the top brass of security personnel to religiously follow four principles -- ensuring zero custodial deaths, not using local population during anti-militancy operations, not setting any house on fire where militants are holed up and have a bullet-for-bullet policy for militants. "This is reaping rich dividends as there has been no custodial killing ever since I have taken over as the Chief Minister," Azad told PTI here in an interview. Azad, whose government would be completing 100 days tomorrow, said he had made a statement on the floor of the state Assembly and asked all MLAs to come forward and report to him if there is any custodial killing.

Daily Excelsior, 13 February 2006

Significant headway in resolving Kashmir: Soz

NEW DELHI, Feb 12: The UPA Government has made a significant headway in restoring peace in strife-torn Jammu and Kashmir by involving different shades of opinion in the dialogue process, Union Water Resources Minister Saifuddin Soz said today. He strongly denied Mirwaiz Umer Farooq-led Moderate Hurriyat Conference's allegations that the UPA was not serious about resolving the vexed issue. "The UPA is involved in the mammoth task of attaining a broad consensus on the complex issue....It is pursuing the matter in all seriousness, keeping in mind the interest of people of the State," Prof Soz said in an exclusive interview. The Minister asserted that the Manmohan Singh-led Government was seeking opinion from the groups to make the dialogue an all inclusive process. "Internal talks are going on and so is the dialogue with Pakistan.

Greater Kashmir, 13 February 2006

Curfew continues in Kargil, relaxed in Leh on fourth day

Srinagar, Feb 12: Curfew continued to remain in force in Kargil district of Jammu and Kashmir on the fourth day Sunday. The authorities have however decided to divide the Leh town into three zones where curfew would be relaxed in phases for two hours each. However, no such relaxation would be given in Kargil town. The situation, though tense, is under control as there have been no reports of any untoward incident from any part of the twin districts during the past 48 hours. After reviewing the situation with senior superintendent of Police Leh, Alok Kumar, the District Magistrate Leh Satish Nehru issued order of relaxation in curfew in three phases in Leh town,

an official spokesman said.

Daily Excelsior, 13 February 2006

3 women among 4 killed, 19 injured

KATHUA, Feb 12: Four persons including three women were killed and 19 others were injured when a bus skidded off the road after hitting a scooter at Langet, about six kms from here on Jammu-Pathankote national highway this afternoon. All 19 injured have been admitted in the District Hospital here. They were responding to the treatment. Official sources said a bus No. 1097 JK02S, which was on way from Kathua to Jammu, hit a scooter No. 0462 JK02U near a petrol pump at Langet on the national highway at 12.15 pm. After hitting the scooter, the bus driver lost balance over the steering. The bus skidded off the road and halted after diving thrice.

Daily Excelsior, 13 February 2006

Closed circuit cameras for vital installations (Mohinder Verma)

JAMMU, Feb 12: The vital and strategically important installations in the winter capital of State will be guarded by closed circuit surveillance cameras within a month as the process for the same began today. With the installations of these cameras, the police personnel would be able to zero in on the movement of suspected persons by sitting in the Police Control Room (PCR), Inspector General of Police (IGP) Jammu Zone Dr Sheesh Pal Vaid told the EXCELSIOR. The process in this regard has begun and a team of the company officials along with some senior police officers conducted the survey of the important installations and places identified by the Jammu Police today, he said. He disclosed that at the initial stage about 16 places would be covered through closed-circuit surveillance cameras and added that more such cameras would be installed in future .

The Indian Express, 13 February 2006

Meet the one-woman army working for KPs (Neeraj Santoshi)

Jammu, February 12: This young rebellious Kashmiri Muslim woman from the downtown Srinagar in Kashmir has a mission — very different from that of most of her political peers. Dr Darakshan Andrabi, who heads the Socialist Democratic Party, is working relentlessly in the Kashmiri migrant camps here to motivate the young Kashmiri Pandit youths to fight for their rights and seek employment in their respective districts in the Kashmir Valley. And it is not surprising today she successfully flagged off a second group of 36 Pandit boys, who will take part in the recruitment drive in the Territorial Army in Anantanag tomorrow, which is being specially held to meet the aspirations of the local populace in the Kashmir Valley.

Daily Excelsior, 13 February 2006

LeT militant killed in Valley

Srinagar, Feb 12: A Lashkar-e-Toiba militant was killed in an encounter with troopers in Lolab area of Kupwara while as three Hizbul Mujahideen militants were arrested today. According to sources, troopers of 18 RR after receiving a tip off launched an operation in Lolab this morning. After zeroing in on a militant hideout, sources said, the militant hiding there was offered to surrender. He however, refused the offer and opened fire on troopers which was effectively returned and in the ensuing gun battle one LeT militant identified as Yaqoob Najar of Doda district was killed, sources said adding some arms and ammunition were also recovered from the encounter site. In a village in Anantanag, troopers smashed a militant hideout and recovered some arms and ammunition from there.

The Indian Express, 13 February 2006

Bridge open, it's over to trade now (Mir Ehsan)

Kaman Post (LoC), February 12: With the launch of Kaman Aman Setu peace-bridge, decks have been cleared for trade through this road. The road and the peace bridge had suffered heavy damages following the devastating quake that hit the region on October 8 last year. The peace bridge, the Army Engineers say, has been designed to bear the weight of heavy traffic that would ply once the trade link is established on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road. The historical road was thrown open last April, ending the hostility between India and Pakistan on the LoC. "We have spent Rs 2 crore on the construction of the bridge and repair of abutments," said Col Dharmendra Gupta, Commanding Officer, Army Engineers.

Daily Excelsior, 14 February 2006

PM to hold talks with Malik on February 17

SRINAGAR, Feb 13: In a move aimed at further consolidating the ongoing dialogue process with the separatist leaders, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will hold talks with Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) chairman Yasin Malik in New Delhi on February 17. The offer comes a day after Union Water Resources Minister Saifuddin Soz said the Centre will soon invite Malik and Democratic Freedom Party chief Shabir Shah for talks and resume the dialogue with the moderate Hurriyat Conference. It also comes nearly a month after the Prime Minister held talks with a five-member delegation of the People's Conference led by Sajjad Ghani Lone in New Delhi on January 14. The invitation to Malik, who renounced the armed struggle in 1994, is seen as yet another

step by the UPA Government to broaden the ambit of talks outside the moderate Hurriyat Conference fold and involving more and more separatist groups and individuals in the dialogue process.

The Indian Express, 14 February 2006

Thinktank mulls economic way to peace in J-K (Majid Jahangir)

Srinagar, February 13: A top US thinktank, Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIC) and US-based Kashmir Study Group (KSG), the architect of host of political proposals for resolving Kashmir issue, have now made recommendations that lay more thrust on the economics than politics of the issue. In a joint report, the CSIC and KSG have recommended "creation of special economic zones in both parts of Kashmir with duty free access to India and Pakistan and including an institutional framework for joint investment". The report - providing strategic insights and practical policy solutions to decision makers - says that the move for creating "Kashmir Special Economic Zones" would build on the trade liberalization agreement reached within South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).

Greater Kashmir, 14 February 2006

Curfew relaxed in Leh, Kargil

Srinagar, Feb 13: The curfew in Leh and Kargil districts of Jammu and Kashmir was relaxed today following improvement in the situation after authorities held meetings with political and religious leaders. Curfew in Leh was imposed on February 9 after some miscreants set on fire three houses belonging to members of the minority community and also threw stones at a Muharram procession. An indefinite curfew was clamped in the Kargil town after a mob set on fire the house of a Deputy Superintendent of Police after Friday prayers. Deputy Commissioner of Leh Satish Nehru told UNI over phone that the Leh town has been divided into two zones. Each zone will be given a two-hour curfew relaxation which can be extended later. He said essential commodities, including gas, vegetables, bread, milk and water is being supplied to the people.

Daily Excelsior, 14 February 2006

Peace march amid relaxation in curfew

LEH, Feb 13: As Dalai Lama condemned incidents of arson and communal disturbance in Ladakh, a peace march of both the Buddhist as well as Muslim communities was taken out here today with resultant improvement of situation in Kargil. With remarkable improvement in the situation, authorities today managed a joint meeting of both the communities at the local Hill Council headquarters. Divisional Commissioner of Kashmir, Basharat Ahmed Dhar, and IGP Kashmir, K Rajendra Kumar, who have been camping here since Thursday last, arranged the first liaison between the hostile communities. The situation took a new positive turn when Basharat Ahmed Dhar read out Dalai Lama's passionate appeal, calling upon the people of Ladakh to maintain "the rich heritage and tradition of communal harmony".

Greater Kashmir, 14 February 2006

'India will settle water disputes with Pakistan'

New Delhi, Feb 13: India will make serious efforts to amicably settle all water issues, including the Baglihar hydro-power project in Jammu and Kashmir, with Pakistan, Union Water Resources Minister Saifuddin Soz said today. "We will amicably settle all issues with Pakistan and take decisions keeping in mind our national interest," Prof Soz told UNI in an exclusive interview. Prof Soz, who took charge as the Water Resources Minister on January 30, said the Baglihar and Kishanganga projects were a priority issue with his Ministry. "Both projects will have to be studied in detail and I am in the process of gathering expert opinion....," he added. The Minister said both the countries were bound to adhere to the Indus Water Treaty, signed in Karachi on September 19, 1960 by then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and Pakistani ruler General Muhammad Ayub Khan.

Daily Excelsior, 14 February 2006

Omar assures support to struggle against SRO 294

JAMMU, Feb 13: Assuring full support to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in their on-going struggle against 'controversial' SRO-294, National Conference president Omar Abdullah today said that his party MLAs will strongly oppose this, what he called, 'anti-weaker section move', in-side and out-side the Assembly. Addressing a gathering in connection with celebration of birth anniversary of Sri Guru Ravi Dassji, Omar Abdullah assured that in the forthcoming budget session of the Assembly, NC members will oppose this SRO with full force. "We will take every possible step inside and outside the House to get this controversial SRO quashed", he said, adding, "quashing of this SRO is necessary to provide justice to the weaker and marginalised sections of the society". Although I donot want to speak politics on this platform but it is very important issue so I am giving you assurance", he said while addressing this religious congregation.

Greater Kashmir, 14 February 2006

Pakistan sends Baglihar report to World Bank

Islamabad: Pakistan has dispatched its final report to the World Bank, neutral expert on the contentious Baglihar Dam being constructed by India in Kashmir, reports said. Pakistan's private Aaj television channel reported that Islamabad believed that the 450-MW Baglihar Dam project on the Chenab river is a violation of the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) between India and Pakistan, which was brokered by the World Bank. Sources in the Indus Water Commissioner's central office told the news channel that a comprehensive and final document containing substantial arguments and evidence prepared by Pakistan's Ministry of Water and Power had been sent to the Washington liaison office of the World Bank representative. The sources said that written arguments from both India and Pakistan had been filed and the World Bank expert would summon representatives from the two countries in the last week of February. UNI

Greater Kashmir, 14 February 2006

3 militants killed in encounters

Srinagar: Three militants were killed in separate incidents across the Valley since Sunday evening, police said on Monday. Two militants of Lashker-e-Toiba (LeT), including a commander were killed in an encounter in south Kashmir's Islamabad district on Monday. Police said the encounter broke out after troops launched a cordon-and-search operation at Shalibugh Kulgam. The militants present refused to surrender and fired upon the troops triggering a fierce encounter. In the ensuing gunfight commander of the LeT, Abu Assaudullah of Pakistan and Muhammad Yousuf Bhat alias Abu Dilawar of Nadimarg were killed.

Daily Excelsior, 14 February 2006

Azad meets PM, Sonia

Jammu, Feb 13: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today called on UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi at New Delhi today and discussed organization, political and developmental matters of Jammu and Kashmir in detail. Later, Mr. Azad also met Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and discussed various matters relating to the Prime Minister's package for over all development and post earthquake reconstruction scenario in quack affected areas of the State, with Prime Minister. Issues pertaining to the political and economical developments in the State also came up for discussion in the meeting. The Chief Minister while discussing the power development sector, highlighted the need for creating maximum avenues for power generation in Jammu and Kashmir State in order to make it self-reliant in local power generation, imperative for overall development of the State.

Daily Excelsior, 14 February 2006

HuM 'Div Commdr' among 3 militants killed

SRINAGAR, Feb 13: Three militants, including a senior commander of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, have been killed by security forces in two separate gunbattles in Bandipore and Kulgam areas since last evening. Informed sources told the Excelsior that on the basis of a specific information troops of Rashtriya Rifles 14th Bn had laid an ambush at Sumlar in Bandipore area of north Kashmir late last evening. During the operation, troops observed some suspicious movement and signalled a halt. One militant, who had got trapped in the ambush, opened fire which was retaliated by troops. The militant got killed. He was identified as Mohammad Iqbal alias Mugaira, resident of Rawalpindi, Pakistan. SSP Baramulla Mohammad Ashkooor Wani described Mugaira as Harkatul Mujahideen's "divisional commander".

The Indian Express, 15 February 2006

Major arms haul in J-K (Bashaarat Masood)

Srinagar, February 14: In a major haul on Tuesday, the first in the state's 15-year insurgency, the Army recovered a large arms cache, including a missile of foreign origin, from Kupwara in Jammu and Kashmir, a defence spokesman said. He added that this was the first time that a missile had been seized in the state. Among other arms and ammunition, the troops also recovered a solar rocket, a Pika gun, two AK 47 rifles, five rpg rounds and 12 anti-tank grenades from a well constructed underground hideout. Meanwhile, in Baramulla, a joint party of Army and police killed three militants of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen (HuM), "Our 68 brigade has recovered a large cache of heavy weapons," Chief of Staff, 15 Corps, Major General V K Singh said.

Daily Excelsior, 15 February 2006

CB team arrives in Leh

JAMMU, Feb 14: A special team of Crime Branch led by DIG S M Sahai reached Leh this afternoon to hold an inquiry into the incidents of arson and violence during the last few days. A Crime Branch team headed by Sunil Sharma, SSP Crime and Railways, Jammu, accompanied Mr Sahai. Mr Sharma had earlier served as SSP Leh. Soon after their arrival in Leh at 3 pm, the Crime Branch officers including Mr Sahai and Mr Sharma inter-acted with civil and police administration in Leh to acquaint themselves with the latest situation. The Crime Branch team had to cancel their departure to Leh during last two days due to cancellation of the flights to Leh. Earlier, day curfew was lifted in Leh today following improvement in the situation.

Greater Kashmir, 15 February 2006

Azad for involving other separatists, political parties in talks

Srinagar, Feb 14: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad has stressed the need for involving the Hurriyat Conference and other separatist groups, besides the political parties, in the ongoing talks to give the much-needed impetus to the peace process. Azad said this when he separately called on Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi in New Delhi yesterday. During his meeting with Dr Singh, the Chief Minister discussed various matters related to the overall development of the state, including the Prime Minister's package and the ongoing relief and rehabilitation in the earthquake-affected areas. Issues pertaining to the political and economic development of the state also came up for discussion at the meeting.

Greater Kashmir, 15 February 2006

Civilian wounded in CRPF firing at Dalgate

Srinagar, Feb 14: CRPF troopers shot at and injured a labourer at Dalgate here on Monday night, leaving him critically wounded. The incident occurred near Khonakhan Dalgate housing 18 and 131 battalions of CRPF. The wounded man, Muhammad Yousuf Hajam son of Ghulam Ahmad of Wakoora Ganderbal says troops fired upon him "without any warning or provocation." "I had gone to Hazratbal for offering prayers. I lost way but kept walking. When I reached near a bunker, the troops asked me to reveal my identity. Before I could show them my I-card they fired upon me," Yousuf who is admitted in ward 16 of SMHS hospital told reporters.

The Indian Express, 15 February 2006

J&K missionaries under scanner

Srinagar, February 14: The detention of Christian missionaries, who were allegedly trying to convert earthquake-affected people of Uri tehsil in Jammu and Kashmir under the garb of providing relief, has once again brought to light the role of missionaries in the state under scanner. The missionaries, claiming to be members of the Bible Society of India, had to shut their shop in quake-hit areas of Uri following complaints from locals that they were luring people to Christianity by offering monetary incentives, official sources said here. A senior police official said the police had warned the missionaries to stop the conversion move failing which a case would be registered against them. The group of missionaries from the Kashmir chapter of the Bible Society of India had been visiting Madian village in Uri sector and had distributed gas cylinders, water bottles, audio cassettes and a copy of the New Testament in Urdu to 230 families of the village, the official said.

Daily Excelsior, 15 February 2006

Next 3 years devoted to development: Azad

SRINAGAR, Feb 14: Next three years will be devoted to development and progress in the State, Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad said today. Addressing a rally at Verinag today, where he was accorded a warm welcome, Mr Azad vowed to steer the State to the shore of development and prosperity and strive for protecting lives and property of the people, who have suffered during the period of militancy. He said he has given categorical instructions to security agencies that no harassment to innocents, no custodial deaths and no collateral damage to property should take place. At the same time, no gun-wielding element would be allowed to rule the roost. "Time has come to built as Khush-hal and peaceful Jammu and Kashmir for which all developmental agencies have been mobilised", the Chief Minister said, adding, "the militancy has given nothing but destroyed the State at all levels".

The Indian Express, 15 February 2006

PM will also invite mainstream parties for talks: Azad

Jammu, February 14: CHIEF Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today indicated that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will also invite leaders of the mainstream parties for peace talks in the near future. Addressing a huge rally at Verinag in Kashmir today, Azad said that he had met prime minister Manmohan Singh during his visit to Delhi yesterday. Azad said prime minister highlighted the necessity of strengthening the peace process in Jammu and Kashmir for ensuring speedy development by also inviting the parties other than the Hurriyat and the separatist groups. "Prime minister also made it clear that he will also invite mainstream parties who have taken part in elections and received the people's mandate," said the chief minister.

Daily Excelsior, 15 February 2006

Three LeT militants killed; 6 civilians hurt in Sopore grenade blast

Srinagar, Feb 14: Claiming to have dealt a severe jolt to Lashkar-e-Toiba militant outfit, Security Forces on Tuesday said that three LeT militants were gunned down in an overnight gun battle at Bandipore in north Kashmir while as a huge cache of arms and ammunition, including a foreign made missile was also claimed recovered from Kupwara. In further violence in the Valley six pedestrians were injured and few vehicles damaged, when a grenade lobbed towards a BSF picket missed the intended target and exploded on the road in Sopore town today. According to sources, a joint party of 14 RR and Special Task Force laid a cordon around Gujarpati village in

Sumlar Bandipore late last evening to nab the militants reportedly hiding there.

The Indian Express, 15 February 2006

Dukhtaran, Shiv Sainiks protest against Valentine Day

Srinagar, Feb 14: Activists of all-women outfit Dukhtaran-e-Millat (Daughters of Faith) took out a protest rally against celebrations on the Valentine Day and destroyed several hundred cards here Tuesday. The DM activists raided several shops in the Lal Chowk, in the heart of Srinagar, and forcibly took away the Valentine's Day cards and destroyed them. They lit a bonfire of the cards and took out a protest rally. "This is a deep-rooted conspiracy of West to involve the Muslims in their vulgar culture such as the Valentine Day. We all should boycott the Western culture," the DM chairperson Aasiya Andrabi said. Before dispersing, the DM activists shouted anti-US slogans.

Daily Excelsior, 16 February 2006

'Govt willing to talk to all pol groups in J-K'

New Delhi, Declaring government's willingness to hold talks with all political groups in militancy-hit Jammu and Kashmir and Northeast to address their "real or imaginary" grievances, President A P J Abdul Kalam today made it clear that terrorism, militancy and extremism would be firmly dealt with and the rule of law will be upheld. Government remained deeply committed to national security and pursued a two-pronged approach of reaching out to disaffected sections of the society while dealing firmly with terrorists and other anti-national forces, Kalam said in his address to the joint sitting of Parliament. "There has been an improvement in the law and order situation across the country, especially in Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeastern states. The number of incidents of civilians killed and persons kidnapped in both Jammu and Kashmir and the Northeast have registered a decline in the last year," Kalam said.

Greater Kashmir, 16 February 2006

Omar to meet Musharraf

New Delhi, Feb 15: In the first ever visit to Pakistan by Jammu and Kashmir's mainstream political leader in the past more than 30 years, National Conference chief Omar Abdullah will meet President Pervez Musharraf and discuss the Kashmir issue. This will be a maiden meeting between Abdullah and General Musharraf. Confirming the visit to UNI, Abdullah said he will be visiting Islamabad from March 9 to 14 for a conference on Kashmir, organised by Pugwash, a European think-tank engaged in finding solution to contentious issues in South Asia.

Daily Excelsior, 16 February 2006

Army Chief reviews J&K security situation

JAMMU, With an eye on maximising pro-people measures and crushing militancy with an "iron hand", Chief of Army Staff J J Singh today reviewed the security situation in Jammu and Kashmir at a high-level meeting at Northern Command headquarters. General Singh, who arrived at Command HQ in Udampur yesterday, is scheduled to meet Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad before flying back to New Delhi in the evening, defence officials said here. Apart from reviewing counter-insurgency and counter-infiltration operations, the Army Chief held separate meetings with Northern Command GOC-in-C Deepak Kapoor and commanders of 14, 15 and 16 Corps on the various pro-people programmes under Operation Sadhbhavana taken by them in Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh regions of the state, they said.

Greater Kashmir, 16 February 2006

Day curfew lifted in Leh, Kargil

Srinagar, Feb 15: Day curfew was lifted in Leh and Kargil district of Ladakh region following further improvement in the situation. An indefinite curfew was clamped in Kargil town after a mob set on fire the house of a Deputy Superintendent of Police after Friday prayers. Curfew in Leh was imposed on February 9 after some miscreants set on fire three houses belonging to members of the minority community and also threw stones at a Muharram procession. Deputy Commissioner, Leh, Satish Nehru told UNI the curfew has been relaxed from 0800 hrs to 2000 hrs in Leh following further improvement in the situation. However, the night curfew will remain in force for few more days as a precautionary measures, he said, adding "we do not want to give any chance to miscreants to cause any disturbance." Nehru said there was no report of any untoward incident from any part of the district and situation remained peaceful.

The Indian Express , 17 February 2006

Geelani declines invitation for PM conference

Srinagar, February 17: Syed Ali Shah Geelani-led faction of Hurriyat Conference has rejected the invitation for next week's round table conference on the Kashmir issue. A Hurriyat spokesman said Geelani was contacted last evening by a Union Home Ministry official for the February 24 conference, called by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New Delhi, but the invitation was declined. Geelani told the official that the ongoing peace process

between India and Pakistan and talks between the Centre and some Kashmiri leaders have not brought about any change in the ground situation, the spokesman told PTI.

The Indian Express, 17 February 2006

Two civilians arrested in IED haul

Jammu, February 16: An Improvised Explosive Device (IED) was defused and two suspected civilians arrested in Gool area of Udhampur district of Jammu and Kashmir in this connection, defence sources said today. Based on specific information, a column of security forces launched a search operation at Harah area, three-km north of Gool, last evening, they said. A white coloured can with wires hanging out was recovered from under a boulder on the road side by the force. The can was identified as remote-controlled IED which was later destroyed on the spot, they said. The security forces also apprehended two civilians in this connection identified as 30-year-old Jamal-ud-Din and 16-year-boy Ashraf, both belonging to Harah village.

Daily Excelsior, 17 February 2006

Security beefed up for railway workers, tracks

SRINAGAR, Security has been tightened for railway staff and railway tracks, work on which is going apace in Kashmir. All necessary precautions have been taken to ensure safety of the railways staff and the railway tracks, Inspector General of Police, (Kashmir), K Rajendra Kumar told a six-member Central team headed by Special Secretary (Home) A K Mitra. The Central team, which concluded its two day visit to the Valley yesterday, reviewed overall security scenario prevalent in the State with special reference to the Valley at a high level security forces officers meeting, official sources said. (PTI)

Daily Excelsior, 17 February 2006

Only two from J&K cross over to PoK via Kaman Post

SRINAGAR, For the first time since the launch of Karvaan-e-Aman (Caravan of Peace) between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad on April 7 last year, only two passengers boarded the cross-border bus from here, official sources said today. However, 37 passengers -- 33 fresh and four returnee -- arrived here from quake-ravaged Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), they added. The sources said a woman and her son had only boarded the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus from here yesterday. They crossed the re-erected Kaman Aman Setu (Peace Bridge) to reach PoK capital Muzaffarabad. Similarly, the 37 passengers from PoK crossed over to this side via the Kaman Post. As many as 54 passengers had crossed sides aboard Karvaan-e-Aman on February two after a gap of more than a month.

Daily Excelsior, 18 February 2009

Centre has open mind on Kashmir: PM to Malik

NEW DELHI, Feb 17: Seeking a permanent solution to the Kashmir issue, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh today met separatist JKLF chief Yaseen Malik and assured him the Centre has an "open mind" and would like to involve a larger cross section of public opinion to end "the period of suffering". In his first meeting with Malik, Singh said there was an air of optimism in the State and an opportunity to bring lasting and permanent peace in the State. Singh's meeting with Malik comes a week ahead of his talks with cross-section of political parties and separatists groups from the State. "The Prime Minister would like all men and women of goodwill in the dialogue process to end the period of suffering," Prime Minister's media Adviser Sanjaya Baru told reporters after the hour-long meeting with Malik.

Greater Kashmir, 18 February 2009

Suspense looms over freedom groups' participation (RIYAZ MASROOR)

Srinagar, Feb 17: Even as the PMO sponsored Kashmir Roundtable has been delayed by one day owing to the Prime Minister's engagements, certain freedom groups in Kashmir are still indecisive about participation in the much-hyped all party meeting to be chaired by Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh. The meeting significantly coincides with the onset of diplomatic season in New Delhi that is not only witnessing Malik-Manmohan talks but also awaits powerful dignitaries such as US President George Walker Bush and French President Jacques Chirac. Although a special team comprising Union Home Ministry officials visited the summer capital of JK and reportedly held secret talks with over a dozen politicians from both sides of the political divide, no prominent political organization has as of now received the invitation for the roundtable.

Daily Excelsior, 18 February 2009

Only two board Karvaan-e-Aman

SRINAGAR, Feb 17: For the first time since the launch of Karvaan-e-Aman (Caravan of Peace) between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad on April 7 last year, only two passengers boarded the cross-border bus from here, official sources said today. However, 37 passengers — 33 fresh and four returnee — arrived here from quake-ravaged Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), they added. The sources said a woman and her son had only boarded the

Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus from here yesterday. They crossed the re-erected Kaman Aman Setu (Peace Bridge) to reach PoK capital Muzaffarabad. Similarly, the 37 passengers from PoK crossed over to this side via the Kaman Post. As many as 54 passengers had crossed sides aboard Karvaan-e-Aman on February two after a gap of more than a month.

Greater Kashmir, 18 February 2009

PM's roundtable divides political spectrum (ARIF HALEEM)

Jammu Feb 17: New Delhi's move to initiate round table talks over Jammu and Kashmir seems to have added to the political haze with the mainstream and separatist political parties cautioning that Centre should have undertaken ground work before going ahead. While Syed Ali Shah Geelani, chairman of his faction of Hurriyat Conference, and Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party president, Shabir Shah have refused to join the round table talks, other groups are of the view that since Kashmir is represented by political parties with divergent policies, bringing them together for a settlement will deadlock the issue.

Daily Excelsior, 18 February 2009

8 families migrate due to terrorists' threat

JAMMU, Feb 17: Terrorized over the looming threat of the militants of the Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) outfit, Muslim families of eight brothers comprising 22 members have migrated from the remote areas of the Ramban tehsil and are presently camping in a room of a Government Middle School along the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway. The only fault of these families which made them to face the threat of terrorists was that they led to the killing of hardcore militant of the Hizbul Mujahideen outfit—Fareed Ahmed by providing information about him to the security forces on January 15, 2006. Since then, these families of village Charali Chabba have been facing threats to their lives.

Daily Excelsior, 19 February 2006

Hurriyat constituents don't favour participation in roundtable meet (Ahmed Ali Fayyaz)

SRINAGAR, Feb 18: Two constituents of the Executive Council of Mirwaiz Umar Farooq's Hurriyat Conference have decided against participating in Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's all-parties roundtable conference on Jammu and Kashmir. Both have, however, decided to go by the ultimate decision to be taken by the Hurriyat in a meeting here on Monday next. Informed sources said that Jammu & Kashmir Peoples Conference, represented in the Hurriyat by Bilal Gani Lone, held a meeting of its working committee here today. While 28 members did not favour Hurriyat's participation in the New Delhi meeting, remaining two believed that attending the conclave would be a wise decision. The organisation finally decided that it should not join the February 25th meeting being held in New Delhi. Most of the participants dismissed the suggestion of the all-parties meeting as an exercise in futility.

The Indian Express, 19 February 2006

Bilal Lone also turns down PM invite

Srinagar, February 18: After fire-brand pro-Pakistan leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, it was the turn of People's Conference, a constituent of Hurriyat Conference, to spurn Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's offer of talks on Kashmir at a roundtable. People's Conference faction led by Bilal Lone convened a working committee meeting of his party during which the decision was taken to impress upon the Hurriyat leadership to turn down the offer of the Centre for such a roundtable conference, party sources said. Lone was already upset over the Centre's move to rope in his brother Sajjad, who heads another faction of Jammu and Kashmir People's Conference, to the dialogue.

Daily Excelsior, 19 February 2006

Election of 2 Doda Councillors set aside

JAMMU, Feb 18: In a first case of its kind ever since the election to the Municipal Bodies of Jammu and Kashmir took place a year ago, the Director Local Bodies Jammu Jeet Lal Gupta has set aside the election of two Municipal Councillors from Doda on the allegations of encroaching upon the State land. They are Zafarullah Rather, S/o Ahad Joo Rather of Ward number 13 Doda, who is also the president of the Municipal Committee Doda and Mrs Nuzhat Iqbal, W/o Mohd Iqbal Zargar of Ward number 9, Doda. Their election have been set aside under Section 16 (1) (d) of Municipal Act 2000 vide judgments dated February 10, 2006.

Daily Excelsior, 19 February 2006

Govt to introduce FRBM Bill in Budget session

Jammu, Feb 18: The Government is introducing the Fiscal Responsibility and Budgetary Management (FRBM) Bill in the upcoming Budget session of the Legislature to ensure financial discipline and pave the way for long-term fiscal reforms in the State. This was stated by the Economic Advisor to the State Government, Dr Haseeb Drabu during pre-budget consultations with the financial and economic experts here today. Commissioner/Secretary Finance, B B Vyas, Commissioner Commercial Taxes, Bashir Ahmad, Commissioner

Excise, Masood Samoon and other senior officers of the Finance Department were present. The budget preparation process was set into motion by the Deputy Chief Minister, Muzaffar Hussain Baig on February 6 by holding consultations with industrialists and traders, both at Jammu and Srinagar.

Daily Excelsior, 19 February 2006

All J&K towns being modernised: CM

Jammu, Feb 18: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad has said that all the towns of Jammu and Kashmir would be modernized and provided with upgraded civic amenities within next three years. In this connection, a prestigious programme of improving sewerage and drainage systems, upgradation of roads, internal links, bus terminals, water supply services, street lights along with beautification and landscaping has been drawn for implementation in a phased manner, he said. Mr. Azad was addressing presidents of Municipal Committees of Jammu division here today. He said that State Government has succeeded in getting central assistance for the purpose in the ratio of 90 per cent grants for the first time, saying that Municipal Committees and local bodies have a greater responsibility in translating the gigantic towns development programme into a big success.

Daily Excelsior, 19 February 2006

'Hurriyat does not represent J&K'

WASHINGTON, Feb 18: Ahead of US President George Bush's visit to India and Pakistan, senior Kashmiri leaders met State Department officials and conveyed that the Hurriyat does not represent the people of the State and there was a need to involve representative of all the regions in the peace process. "The Hurriyat Conference does not represent the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Leaders from all zones of the State namely Gilgit, Baltistan, PoK, Ladakh, Jammu and the Valley should be made part of the peace process. The process of consultations should not be Valley centric," Dr Shabir Chaudhry, head of the one of the factions of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) and Mr Mumtaz Khan of the International Kashmir Alliance said

Daily Excelsior, 20 February 2006

Govt sounds alert against bird-flu, bans entry of poultry products (Mohinder Verma)

JAMMU, Feb 19: State Government today sounded an alert against the bird flu following outbreak of the disease in Maharashtra and banned entry of all poultry, poultry products, pigs and piggery products in the State. A high-level team of Animal Husbandry Department has been deployed at Lakhanpur for the effective implementation of the order. Neither any sort of poultry bird nor poultry products like eggs, frozen chickens, pigs and piggery products would be allowed to enter the State for unspecified period, official sources told the EXCELSIOR. The team will also check the passenger vehicles to ensure that even the tourists don't enter the State with the frozen chicken because researchers are of the opinion that virus of avian flu survives in the frozen condition of the chicken and survive heat upto 70 degree celsius, they disclosed. However, there will not be any sort of ban on the movement of the poultry and poultry products within the State.

The Indian Express, 20 February 2006

Ammunition seized from Waqf Board building

Srinagar, February 19: A huge quantity of ammunition and medicines were today unearthed from the building owned by the Jammu and Kashmir Waqf Board in Anantnag area following which the army and police arrested its president Kulgam Ghulam Mohammad Ganai, a defence spokesman said. The recoveries included four handgrenades, an equal number of UBGL grenades, pistol magazines and a large quantity of medicines were made from an underground hideout measuring 10 X 10 feet in the building at Mohandpura-Bijbehara in Kulgam, 70 km from here after police raided the building on a tip-off, the spokesman said. The troops of 9 Rashtriya Rifles, special operations group of local police and five battalion of CRPF together raided the hideout and made the recoveries, he said. Ganai, a resident of Mohandpura, was arrested on the spot and handed over to police, the spokesman said.

Daily Excelsior, 20 February 2006

CM announces tourist circuit from Pathankot to Kashmir

JAMMU, Feb 19: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today announced the creation of Pathankot-Basohli-Bani-Bhaderwah-Doda-Kishtwar-Kokernag tourist circuit to promote tourism in Jammu region. Addressing a felicitation function organized by Jammu based citizens of Bhaderwah constituency here today, Mr Azad said that the areas he referred to, have plenty of virgin tourist spots full of scenic splendour. This would transform the entire socio-economic profile of the area, he said. The Chief Minister said that tourist development authorities have been set up in the area and rupees 20-crore would be spent under each authority for raising tourist infrastructure with central assistance. The work on some of these schemes would commence soon, he added.

The Indian Express, 20 February 2006

Life is back on track in Rajouri (Shafiq Mir)

Rajkot, February 19: Here is some good news from Rajouri and Poonch. Nearly 17 years after insurgency, the region has finally heralded the return of peace by inaugurating a cinema hall. 'Raina Cinema Hall' was inaugurated by Maj Gen V K Dutta, GOC 25 infantry division, Rajouri, on Friday afternoon. The Raina auditorium, used as cinema hall till the late '80s, was closed in 1989 soon after militancy struck the region. Since then, nobody had dared to look towards the hall, which had once been a major focus of attraction. There was an air of celebration among the locals in the border town of Rajouri as the hall was thrown open. For many youngsters born during the turmoil, it was almost like an eighth wonder. Saima, a Class XII student who was one of the youngsters present at the inaugural function of the cinema hall, said she had never dreamt of having a cinema hall in her town.

Daily Excelsior, 20 February 2006

Kashmir separatists may not attend PM's roundtable (Ahmed Ali Fayyaz)

SRINAGAR, Feb 19: None of the 20-odd Kashmiri separatist leaders, who had been formally or informally invited by the Centre, is likely to attend Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's roundtable conference on Jammu and Kashmir on February 25 next. Indications are galore that even the so-called moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference, headed by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, may decide against participating in the New Delhi conference. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq's Hurriyat is holding an extra-ordinary session of its Executive Council, Working Committee and General Council on Monday to take a final decision whether the conglomerate should attend the conference or stay away from this fresh political initiative. Over a dozen constituents of the Hurriyat's three bodies have deliberated on the subject for the last two days in separate meetings.

Greater Kashmir, 20 February 2006

Rivalry in PMO's Kashmir chamber mars JK convention (RIYAZ MASROOR)

Srinagar, Feb 19: Amidst speculations that his mission in Kashmir was to persuade Hurriyat Conference chief Mirwaiz Umar Farooq to participate in Prime Minister's February 25 roundtable in New Delhi, Union Minister Professor Saifudin Soz steered clear of Hurriyat politics during his stormy visit to Srinagar. But he left broader hints about the reasons behind the bursting of roundtable balloon. While talking to reporters here on Sunday Soz remained extremely discreet when asked whether the PM's roundtable had floundered because of poor legwork. "Well, I don't have brief on that meeting. I can only tell you that Prime Minister's endeavor to widen the dialogue is a great step forward in finding a solution to the problems," he said.

Daily Excelsior, 20 February 2006

2 Jaish commanders killed in Tral

SRINAGAR, Feb 19: Two of the most wanted Pakistani militants of Jaish-e-Mohammad outfit were killed by security forces in a major gunbattle in Tral township of south Kashmir today. Meanwhile, unidentified gunmen shot dead a former militant in broad daylight at Zonimar in the capital city here this afternoon. Informed sources told the Excelsior that on the basis of a specific information, troops of BSF 173 Bn, BSF 53 Bn and Special Operations Group (SOG) Tral swooped on a militant hideout at Ganai Mohalla in Tral town early this morning. According to a tip off, two of the most wanted militants of Jaish-e-Mohammad outfit were hiding at the residential house of a Patwari, namely Manzoor Ahmed Ganai. A Defence spokesman said that troops of RR 42 Bn and BSF 173 Bn conducted the operation with the local SOG.

Greater Kashmir, 20 February 2006

CM: Big countries involved in Kashmir (ARIF HALEEM)

Jammu, Feb 19: The Chief Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad Sunday acknowledged role of big powers in resolving Kashmir dispute and said that solution of the issue is not "in our hands" as Pakistan and other big powers are playing their role in the resolution. "Solution to the Kashmir issue is not in our hands and there are some big countries which are playing their roles behind the curtain. But it is in our hand to eradicate corruption from the state and for this we need not to require permission from (US President George) Bush or (Pervez) Musharraf," Azad said during a function organised by Jammu-based citizens of Baderwah to honour him, who is native of Baderwah. He said politicians of State could not resolve Kashmir issue. "Some big countries and Pakistani President Musharraf are playing their role behind the curtain," he added.

Daily Excelsior, 20 February 2006

Azad to inaugurate peace bridge today

SRINAGAR, Feb 19: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad will tomorrow inaugurate the re-erected Kaman Aman Setu (Peace Bridge), which connects Uri with Muzaffarabad, along the Line of Control (LoC). The 220-metre and 40-ton bailey bridge had been re-erected by the Army on February 11. The bridge had got extensively damaged due to the quake as its entire abutment on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) side had given way due to the landslide triggered by a devastating earthquake on October 8 last year which killed thousands of people and rendered millions homeless on both sides of the LoC. The bridge was made operational for the historic Srinagar-

Muzaffarabd bus service launched by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi from the Sher-i-Kashmir cricket stadium here on April 7 last year.

Greater Kashmir, 20 February 2006

Rs 750 mn for water resources: Soz

Srinagar, Feb 19: Decaying Jhelum river has caught Union Water Resources Minister, Professor Saifudin Soz's imagination who pledged a whopping Rupees 120 million for its revival during his maiden visit to Kashmir after assuming a Cabinet berth in Manmohan Singh government. He is also pursuing with Planning Commission another Rs 147 million for managing the flood spill along the river and more than Rs 500 million for special irrigation schemes to revive the depleting water bodies across the Valley. Although the concrete package, specifically for Jhelum revival, remains the cutout Rs 120 million, Soz promised the overall funding of around Rs 750 million for various measures aimed at conservation of water resources here.

Daily Excelsior, 21 February 2006

Azad inaugurates 'Aman Setu'

Uri, Feb 20: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today re-established the historic link by inaugurating newly erected Aman Setu at Kaman Post, Uri. The 35-feet abutment on PoK side collapsed during October 8 earthquake last year causing damage to Aman Setu. On reaching Kaman Post, the Chief Minister was given a warm welcome by army and civil officers besides general public and school children. Minister for Animal and Sheep Husbandry Taj Mohi-ud-Din, Lt. Gen. S. S. Dhillon, Divisional Commissioner, Kashmir, Basharat Ahmed, IGP Kashmir, K. Rajendra Kumar and Deputy Commissioner, Baramulla, N. K. Verma were also present on the occasion. Interacting with media on this occasion, the Chief Minister appreciated endeavours of the army for re-erecting the bridge within a record short span of time.

Daily Excelsior, 21 February 2006

Hurriyat turns down PM's roundtable invite

SRINAGAR, Feb 20: So-called moderate faction of the separatist Hurriyat Conference has finally turned down Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's invitation and decided to stay away from his roundtable conference on Jammu & Kashmir. It is now abundantly clear that none of the Kashmiri separatist groups or leaders would be present at the get-together being held in New Delhi on February 25. Hurriyat took the decision of not participating in the roundtable conference at a joint session of its Executive Council, Working Committee and General Council today. For two-and-a-half hours, over 15 speakers, representing different constituents in the separatist amalgam, dwelt at length on Kashmir's "freedom struggle", the process of dialogue between New Delhi and Kashmiri separatists as also the Prime Minister's fresh initiative of holding a roundtable conference of all mainstream and separatist leaders.

Daily Excelsior, 21 February 2006

Omar to represent NC in meet

JAMMU, Feb 20: National Conference president Omar Abdullah today said the NC has serious reservations about the way the roundtable conference has been conceived and organised by the Prime Minister. "However, having reiterated that the NC has always been a strong votary of an all inclusive dialogue involving all shades of opinion to resolve the vexed Kashmir issue, the party will participate in the roundtable conference", Mr Abdullah said in a statement. He said he would make frank conversation on the issue so that the problem is highlighted in the right perspective. He said NC patron Dr Farooq Abdullah has declined the Prime Minister's request to participate in the conference in view of his prior commitments. He has told the Prime Minister that his party will be represented by NC president Omar Abdullah.

Greater Kashmir, 21 February 2006

2 militants killed in Valley

Srinagar, Feb 20: Two militants were killed in an encounter with Rashtriya Rifles troops in Varmul district of north Kashmir on Monday. Reports said the militants were killed after the troops of 47 and 33 RR launched an operation in Sikipora, Sopur. Militants tried to break the cordon and started firing on troops. The exchange of firing continued for several hours in which one militant was killed. The other militant was burnt alive when a house caught fire in the gun-battle, reports added. Police has identified one of the killed militants as Aamir Ali while the identity of the other couldn't be ascertained. Meanwhile, unidentified gunmen kidnapped a student Mumtaz Kuls in Rajpora Pulwama. He was later left at an isolated place after severe torture. He has been shifted to hospital where his condition is stated to be critical.

The Indian Express, 21 February 2006

Ex-KZF militant held for forgery

Jammu, February 20: The police here today has arrested a former militant of Khalistan Zindabad Force (KZF)

after finding him applying for a passport on fake identity. When the police started verification of his passport application, it came out that the accused had pasted his photograph on the application form, while the address was of someone's else. The ex-militant, arrested by the police, has been identified as Barkat Singh of Gadigarh, who was active as militant of KZF about nine years back, the police said. The police team, which apprehended him was headed by SHO Satwari police station, Inspector Kulbir Handa. Sources said that Barkat Singh had applied for the passport in the name of Balkar Singh and had pasted his photograph on the application form. But before he could obtain the passport, he was nabbed.

Daily Excelsior, 21 February 2006

Mehbooba for declaring J&K as free trade zone

SRINAGAR, Feb 20: PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, MP today called for declaring Jammu and Kashmir as "free trade zone" so that the State could achieve self sufficiency, imperative for long lasting and dignified peace in the State. Addressing one day convention of the party workers at Budgam today, Ms Mufti said the "self rule concept" can address the balanced development and political stabilisation in all three regions of the State. Consensus on the 'self rule concept' is required to be evolved not only in Jammu and Kashmir but also in the entire sub continent, she asserted. Seeking immediate measures for handing over Salal and Uri hydel projects to the State, the PDP president said the handing over of Salal project is justified keeping in view the fact that the NHPC has already earned profit in multiples of its investment.

The Indian Express, 21 February 2006

Night curfew lifted in Leh

Jammu, February 20: District Administration, Leh today decided to lift the night curfew following improvement in law and order situation in the town that witnessed clashes between two communities a fortnight back. The day curfew has already been lifted a few days back after the situation has improved in the town. The decision of lifting of night curfew was taken after the District Magistrate, Leh Satish Nehru reviewed law and order situation in a meeting with SSP Leh Alok Kumar and other civil officers. The meeting expressed satisfaction over the prevailing situation as no incident of violence took place in Leh for last few days. The meeting was informed that internal bus services are plying normally and the huge hustle and bustle is seen in Leh market.

The Indian Express, 21 February 2006

Roundtable conference: Mirwaiz's refusal seen as a major setback (Rakesh Rocky)

Jammu, February 20: With a final "no" from the moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference led by Mirwaiz Umer Farooq, the February 25 round table conference called by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will be a totally "mainstream affair". The political parties and other organisations who have agreed to participate in the meeting are all non-separatist groups. However, they are enthusiastic over the invite and are preparing for the conference. "We are happy with the invite. This meeting has provided us an opportunity to express our viewpoint," said Dr Agnishekhar, chairman of Panun Kashmir. He added that the refusal of the Hurriyat Conference has exposed the separatist groups who are demanding inclusion of all three regions in the dialogue process.

Greater Kashmir, 21 February 2006

Azad inaugurates re-erected 'Peace Bridge' at LoC

Kaman Post, Feb 20: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad on Monday inaugurated the re-erected Kaman Bridge "Aman Setu (Peace Bridge)", which connects Uri with Muzaffarabad, along the Line of Control (LoC). The 220-metre and 40-ton Bailey bridge had been re-erected by the Army on February 11. The bridge had got extensively damaged due to the quake as its entire abutment on Pakistan-administered Kashmir (PaK) side had given way due to the landslide triggered by a devastating earthquake on October 8 last year which killed thousands of people and rendered millions homeless on both sides of the LoC. The bridge was made operational for the historic Srinagar-Muzaffarabd bus service launched by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi from the Sher-i-Kashmir cricket stadium here on April 7 last year.

Daily Excelsior, 22 February 2006

Farooq alleges embezzlement of crores in Waqf Board

Srinagar, Feb 21: Finally giving nod, packaged with 'cynicism', to Prime Minister's roundtable confab, National Conference today confirmed its participation with president Omar Abdullah and other two representatives making it to PM's residence 7 Race Course for the conference on February 25. The former Chief Minister and the chief patron of the National Conference, Farooq Abdullah while addressing a news conference today at his Gupkar residence lashed out at PDP and threatened to take the former Chief Minister and patron of the Peoples Democratic Party (PDP), Mufti Mohammad Sayeed to the court for, what he alleged as misusing Auqaf Trust for 'vested interests'. Terming the scheduled round table conference called by the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh as a 'mess of things', Abdullah spewed fire against New Delhi for taking Kashmiris 'for granted'. He said that no ground work has been done by New Delhi for holding such a big event and even agenda has not been fixed.

The Indian Express, 22 February 2006

Farooq rejects PM's invite (Bashaarat Masood)

Srinagar, February 21: Farooq Abdullah, former chief minister and patron of opposition National Conference, has rejected the Centre's invitation for the roundtable conference even as his son and party president Omar Abdullah has chosen to toe a different line by taking part in it. "I will not participate in the roundtable conference," said the former chief minister, while addressing a press conference at his residence at Gupkar. "However, Omar Abdullah will certainly take part in its as the party president." The media-savvy Abdullah, who was out of limelight for quite sometime now, termed the meeting as futile.

Daily Excelsior, 22 February 2006

District officer, 5 others injured in Anantnag shootout

SRINAGAR, Feb 21: Suspected militants today ambushed a district level official of the state Planning Department and left him injured alongwith five others at Redwani village in Kulgam area of Anantnag district. Informed sources in south Kashmir told the Excelsior that unidentified gunmen, suspected to be militants, ambushed Mahindra Geep JK01C-7182 of Deputy Director Statistics and Evaluation, Somnath Bhat, at Redwani village on Anantnag-Kulgam Road in the afternoon today. Bhat, a resident of Yar Khusipora village of Qazigund-Kulgam belt, was conducting inspection of some developmental works executed out of the Constituency Development Fund of the local MLA in Homeshalibugh segment. He sustained gunshot wounds along with his Head Assistant, namely Manzoor Ahmed Tantray of Tral, and driver Abdur Rasheed Sofi in the shootout.

Greater Kashmir, 22 February 2006

Decision on Azad's election soon

Srinagar: Former Jammu and Kashmir Power Minister Mohammad Sharief Niaz today said the decision on Ghulam Nabi Azad's candidature from Bhaderwah would be made soon. "Mr Azad will decide about it very soon because he has to get elected to either of the two Houses in the state Legislature within six months after he was sworn-in as the Chief Minister on November two last year," Niaz said while once again offering to vacate his Bhaderwah seat in the state Assembly for his cousin and Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad. "I will not even take a minute to vacate my Assembly seat from Bhaderwah. It would be a matter of pride for me and the people of Bhaderwah if Mr Azad decides to contest the by-elections from the constituency," Niaz told UNI over phone from Jammu. The former Minister said he had offered, publicly as well through the media, the seat to Azad several times in the past.

Daily Excelsior, 22 February 2006

PDP to present comprehensive proposals at PM meet: Mehbooba

Srinagar, Feb 21: Unfolding party's view point being presented during the ensuing Roundtable Conference being convened by Prime Minister Dr. Monmohan Singh on February 25, Peoples Democratic Party president, Mehbooba Mufti said today that the party would place a comprehensive proposal before the Central government based on self sufficiency, economic reforms, entrusting interior security of State to State police personnel, declaring J&K as Free Trade Zone and compensation to State in lieu of Indus Water Treaty besides concert policy towards State for achieving long lasting and dignified peace. Addressing a day long convention of party workers at Pulwama in south Kashmir today, the party president appreciated the move taken by Prime Minister for convening roundtable conference.

Daily Excelsior, 22 February 2006

Terror killings down in J&K

NEW DELHI, Feb 21: Infiltration from across the border in Jammu and Kashmir has declined by 54 per cent and terrorist killings by 22 per cent in the past one year, Home Minister Shivraj Patil informed Lok Sabha today. Replying to questions, Patil said infiltration by terrorists was only taking place in Jammu and Kashmir whereas such infiltration through Eastern and North-Eastern borders was negligible, though these regions were affected by insurgency. He said the major causes of decline in infiltration in J&K were border fencing, strict vigil by security forces as well as ongoing peace talks on the Kashmir issue. Patil said several steps were being taken to equip security, police and para-military forces with hi-tech electronic gadgets, weapons and surveillance equipment.

The Indian Express, 22 February 2006

Rs 98 lakh approved for militancy-hit

Jammu, February 21: The Council for rehabilitation of militancy-affected Jammu and Kashmir approved Rs 98.65 lakhs for the year 2005-06 for rehabilitation of widows, orphans, handicapped and aged-persons of militancy affected of the state at a meeting of the Council held here today under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Vijay Bakaya. Others who attended meeting include Principal Secretary Social Welfare Department B. L. Nimesh, Special Secretary Home, Dalip Singh, Special Secretary Finance Bashir Ahmad, Special Secretary Planning and Development G R Ghani and Executive Director, Rehabilitation Council (Member Secretary) Khurshid Ahmad

Bhat. It was decided in the meeting that an amount of Rs 48 lakh would be spent by District Development Commissioner's of different districts to provide assistance to the affected families.

Daily Excelsior, 24 February 2006

Autonomy only solution: Farooq

KALAKOTE, Feb 23: Reiterating that the restoration of autonomy was the only possible solution to Kashmir issue, former Chief Minister and National Conference (NC) chief patron, Dr Farooq Abdullah has accused the Central Government of non seriousness in resolving the problem. Addressing a public meeting here today, Dr Abdullah criticized the Union Government for not taking NC, which is a premier political party of the State, into confidence regarding resolution of Kashmir issue. Maintaining that no other political party has come out with documented proposal, he asserted that NC will stick to autonomy resolution passed by the State Legislature as this was the only solution to the problem. Even Jammu people who earlier opposed the NC move are now supporting it, he added.

The Indian Express, 24 February 2006

Record number of corruption complaints in J&K

Jammu, February 24: Declared as No.2 in the list of most corrupt states of India, Jammu and Kashmir has again come into spotlight in this respect as it has registered a record of nearly 1000 complaints against ministers, chief secretary, Director General of Police and several bureaucrats in 2005. "After being declared as No.2 in the list of the corrupt states in the country, J&K has again come into the spotlight as 954 complaints of corruption were registered with the vigilance and anti-corruption apparatus in 2005," official sources told PTI. As compared to 2004's 713 complaints of corruption, 2005 recorded 241 more complaints, mostly against the head of departments, top bureaucrats, ministers and other influential persons, they said.

Daily Excelsior, 24 February 2006

Bodies buried after massive protests in Handwara

SRINAGAR, Feb 23: Army, as well as the Congress-led coalition Government, have launched separate damage control exercises to dilute the negative impact of yesterday's indiscriminate firing in which four young civilians had died at Doodhipora village in Handwara area of north Kashmir. Even as massive protests rocked half of Kupwara district and neither the Army nor any mainstream politicians had a face to visit the bereaved families, burial of dead bodies was conducted peacefully in presence of DC Kupwara and Police officials this evening.

The Indian Express, 24 February 2006

As talks process moves, guns lie low in Valley (Riyaz Wani)

Srinagar, February 23: At a time when India and Pakistan are graduating to a more intense engagement in their three-year-long talks process and New Delhi is holding parleys with Kashmir's separatist leadership for an acceptable J&K settlement, there has been a pleasant change on the ground situation. While everybody expected the violence to go up in response to the reinforced peace moves, which were opposed by the militants, it has declined drastically over the past two months. Since December 23 last, when militants triggered a blast at the heavily-guarded Indian Air Force airfield, the calm has by and large been unshattered. More so in Srinagar, which has traditionally been a hub of violence. There has been no suicide attack or a major militant strike. In January and February 2005, the Valley came under a relentless militant onslaught with fidayeen attacks on Kashmir Divisional Commissioners Office, Passport Office and Income Tax Office.

Daily Excelsior, 24 February 2006

Two militants nabbed in Doda with 4 grenades

JAMMU, Feb 23: Security forces today arrested two militants in Doda district and a suspect in Rajouri district. Four hand grenades were recovered from the captured ultras. A large quantity of arms and explosives were seized by the security personnel during three search operations. Official sources said security forces arrested a Hizbul Mujahideen militant Mushtaq Ahmed alias Zuber son of Ghulam Ahmed, a resident of Dhadpeth from village Kuchhal, about 15 kms from Kishtwar this morning. He was apprehended during a surprise raid conducted by the security personnel at his hide-out. Two hand grenades were recovered from his possession. Sources said Mushtaq Ahmed was active since 2002 and was involved in a number of militant activities in Doda district. After preliminary questioning, the security forces handed over the militant to local police.

Daily Excelsior, 24 February 2006

Kashmir solution must be acceptable to all: Bush

WASHINGTON, Feb 23: Echoing Pakistan's line, US President George W Bush has advocated a solution to the Kashmir issue that is acceptable to India, Pakistan and "those living within Kashmir." Ahead of his visit to the two countries, Bush went out of his way to emphasise that a solution had to be "acceptable to all sides." In fact, he took the trouble of clarifying a statement he had made at the Asia Society here hours earlier yesterday calling for

India and Pakistan to address the "important issue" of Kashmir. Subsequently in a roundtable interview to Pakistani journalists at the White House, the President said that he wanted to clarify what he had stated on Kashmir earlier. Pointing out that in his address at the Asia Society he had spoken of a solution acceptable to both sides, Bush stated, "the language should be 'all sides', because it recognises that a solution must be acceptable to India, Pakistan and those living within Kashmir."

The Indian Express, 25 February 2006

Kashmir roundtable today, many absent

NEW DELHI, FEBRUARY 24: Pitched by the Prime Minister's Office as a major initiative to fulfill Kashmiri aspirations and speed up the peace process, the J-K roundtable in New Delhi tomorrow has been reduced to an all-party meeting with the separatist leadership deciding to stay away. The roundtable's taking place at a time when a wave of anger is sweeping the Valley in the wake of the Handwara incident where four persons, including two children, were killed in firing, allegedly by the Army. Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq has even written to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, citing Handwara as another instance of India "unleashing a reign of terror and oppression on the innocent people of Kashmir". Sources today said that at least 45 J-K leaders from Congress, BJP, National Conference, PDP, CPM and CPI would be attending the meeting chaired by PM Manmohan Singh.

Greater Kashmir, 25 February 2006

Geelani arrested

Srinagar: Chairman of a faction of Hurriyat Conference, Syed Ali Shah Geelani was arrested alongwith his many supporters when he tried to take out a procession from his residence in Hyderpora against the killing of four boys in Handwara. Local news agency KNS said Geelani who was under house arrest from Wednesday evening tried to break the cordon and take out a protest demonstration. However, the policemen present there immediately swung into action and took him into custody. The agency said Geelani's principal secretary Malik Nawaz and other activists were also detained.

The Indian Express, 25 February 2006

Handwara killings to echo at PM's meet (Majid Jahangir)

Srinagar, February 24: PEOPLE'S Democratic Party President Mehbooba Mufti today said that she would take up the issue of Handwara and Bandipore killings at the round table conference on Kashmir tomorrow. "The killings of schoolchildren is unacceptable," Mehbooba said a day ahead of the round table conference initiated by the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh. "And I will obviously take up the issues of these killings in the conference." Mehbooba Mufti, while talking to The Indian Express said that she had even raised the issue in Parliament when army in Bangergund Kupwara had killed three children last year. "At that time, my father Mufti Mohammad Sayeed was the chief minister but I still raised the issue in the Parliament," she said. "Our party has been always condemning such issues. Our party wants killings of innocents to be stopped immediately," Mehbooba said.

Daily Excelsior, 25 February 2006

Train to reach Katra this year

NEW DELHI, Feb 24: Railway Minister Lalu Prasad today unveiled a populist budget, leaving second class passenger fares unchanged and effecting 18 per cent reduction in AC first class and 10 per cent in AC second class fares, while introducing 55 new trains and not hiking freight rates across the board. Announcing a slew of sops while presenting his third budget in the Lok Sabha, Mr Prasad said fully air-conditioned 'Garib Rath' with fares 25 per cent lower than the AC three tier fares will be run on a pilot project basis for four pairs of trains. He outlined a strategy to eliminate queues at booking counters through reduction in charges of e-tickets, installing 800 automatic ticket vending machines and introducing 'gramin ticket booking services'.

Daily Excelsior, 25 February 2006

Top HM militant Khanday, associate killed in Doda

JAMMU, Feb 24: Army and police today gunned down two Hizbul Mujahideen militants including a 'deputy district commander' Mohd Rafiq Khanday in an encounter at village Kuchhal in Chatru area of Doda district. A Special Police Officer was injured in the operation. Rafiq Khanday alias Hamja alias Haroon son of Ghulam Khan, a resident of Keshwan was a hardcore militant of Hizbul Mujahideen outfit and had been to Pakistan thrice. He was involved in a series of militant activities, SSP Doda Prithvi Raj Manhas said. Official sources said troops of Rashtriya Rifles and police launched a search operation at Kuchhal in Chatru area last night on an information developed by the Army Intelligence that three militants had taken shelter in the house of Mohd Shaban. SPO Ravinder Kumar, who went inside the house to eliminate the militants last night, was fired upon from inside by the ultras.

Daily Excelsior, 25 February 2006

Hurriyat threatens to quit dialogue

Srinagar, Feb 24: All Parties Hurriyat Conference led by Mirwaiz today threatened to abandon the dialogue process in motion between Kashmiri separatists and Centre in wake of no let up in human rights violations in Kashmir. Senior leader and former Hurriyat chairman Moulana Abbas Ansari at a press conference here today said that Hurriyat had entered the dialogue process with sincerity though at the danger of their heads. He accused UPA government of "not being sincere" alleging that the human rights violations continue unabated in Kashmir. Referring to the killing of four civilians in Bandipore on Wednesday, Abbas Ansari said that if the rights violations continue, Hurriyat would be left with no option but to leave the dialogue process.

Greater Kashmir, 25 February 2006

3 militants killed in Doda

Srinagar, Feb 24: Three militants of Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) outfit, including its deputy commander were killed in a fierce encounter in Doda district of Jammu on Thursday night, police said Friday, while a soldier was killed in an encounter in north Kashmir's Varmul district. Police said the encounter broke out after troops launched a cordon-and-search operation at Kashal Doda. The militants present there refused to surrender and fired upon the troops triggering an encounter. In the ensuing gunfight, police said Hizb's deputy commander Rafiq Khanday and two militants Muneer and Ishfaq were killed. A Special Police Officer (SPO) was wounded in the gunfight. Police said a soldier was also killed in an encounter in north Kashmir's Varmul district on Thursday night. Three militants and a woman were killed in Chittibandi encounter on Thursday evening.

Greater Kashmir, 25 February 2006

Coalition chemistry goes awry

Srinagar, Feb 24: Ahead of by-elections in three constituencies of Varmul district, a nerve war is raging between key partners in the five-party coalition government with both Congress and PDP looking ripe to fall apart. Opposition National Conference's joining chorus with Congress is adding a delicious irony to the scene with both accusing PDP Chief of shedding "crocodile tears." Bickering between Congress and PDP points to a brewing unease within the coalition government. And the way Congress and National Conference Friday sought to provoke PDP to walk out of the coalition suggests that newer permutation and combination was in the offing. A day after PDP Chief Mahbooba Mufti pointedly said rights violations in J&K escalated after Mufti Syed handed over power to Ghulam Nabi Azad, ruling Congress and opposition National Conference launched a strong verbal offensive against PDP.

Greater Kashmir, 25 February 2006

Highest ever 5648 crore plan for JK

New Delhi, Feb 24: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad has achieved yet another distinction in getting highest ever-state annual plan of Rs. 5648 crore approved for the next financial year commencing from April 2006. As against Rs. 4200 crore Annual Plan for 2005-06, the next annual plan for the state would be of the order of Rs. 5648 crore. The allocation for the next financial year is Rs. 1448 crore more than the allocations for current financial year of 2005-06. The plan was approved at a meeting between the Planning Commission led by Deputy Chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia and State Government team led by Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad.

The Indian Express, 27 February 2006

Car bomb blast rocks Bemina

Srinagar, February 26: AFTER a long lull, the militants today detonated a car bomb at Bemina on the Srinagar-Baramulla National Highway, injuring seven security force personnel and a civilian driver. In a separate encounter, a security jawan was injured in south Kashmir. The militants detonated an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) when a security force convoy was passing through Bemina in Srinagar. The IED was planted in a Maruti car that was parked on the Srinagar-Baramulla national highway. As the military convoy passed by, the militants triggered the blast that hit one of the vehicles of the convoy smashing its window panes. Seven security force personnel were injured in the militant attack. A civilian who was driving the vehicle was also injured. The injured security personnel were immediately rushed to the hospital, where they were given medical aid.

Daily Excelsior, 27 February 2006

3 militants believed dead in Anantnag gunbattle

SRINAGAR, Feb 26: While three militants are believed to have died in a fierce gunbattle with Police and security forces in Arwani area of Anantnag district tonight, scores of personnel had a narrow escape when militants targeted a military convoy near Jammu & Kashmir State Board of School Education complex in Bemina outskirts of this capital city today. Informed sources in south Kashmir told the Excelsior that working over a specific information, Anantnag Police and troops of Rashtriya Rifles 01 Bn launched a cordon-and-search operation at Hussanpora-Shamsipora, in Arwani belt of Anantnag district, this evening. During the operation, at least three militants were spotted hiding at the residential house of one Noor Mohammad Shah. As the gunbattle started,

they shifted to the house of one Ali Mohammad Kralely. One militant got killed in the initial round of the firing. Two of his associates offered stiff resistance to the troops till late tonight.

The Indian Express, 27 February 2006

Mobile phones helping security forces in J-K (Muzaffar Raina & Majid Jahangir)

SRINAGAR, FEBRUARY 26: The fascination for mobile phones that felled dreaded Chambal dacoit Nirbhay Gujjar last year is proving a death trap for militants in Jammu and Kashmir as well. Cellphones have made them sitting ducks for the security forces, as most of the recent successes against militants reveal. "We have trapped or killed hundreds of militants and other OWGs (overground workers) through mobile-tracking," a senior security force officer said. "Most of the recent operations were successful largely because of mobiles," he added. Militants are aware that it is dangerous to operate mobiles. "But they don't avoid them as they often prove useful to them," the officer said. "Hizbul militants mostly avoid them whereas groups like Lashkar use cellphones frequently," he added. Recalling how mobile-tracking was instrumental in zeroing in on the perpetrators of the Delhi triple blasts, one police officer said that the police gained vital leads from tracking calls from and to the phone of alleged Lashkar operative Tariq Ahmed Dar, who was arrested on October 29 at Pampore.

Daily Excelsior, 27 February 2006

PM's observations on autonomy, self rule to egg separatism:BJP

JAMMU/ NEW DELHI, Feb 26: The BJP today voiced "deep concern" over Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's remarks on ideas of autonomy and self rule in Jammu and Kashmir at a roundtable in New Delhi yesterday saying these would encourage secessionism. The main opposition party termed as a "strategic blunder" the convening of the roundtable a few days before the visit of U S President George Bush saying the Government was "unwittingly internationalising" the issue, which Pakistan wanted. "The BJP firmly believes that entertaining any idea of autonomy and self rule would encourage secession and separation", BJP president Rajnath Singh told reporters after a meeting of senior Party leaders at the residence of former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee here. In Jammu, BJP's national general secretary and former Union Minister, Arun Jaitly, while talking to reporters, alleged that no proper home work was done before convening the meet. He asserted that the roundtable has failed to achieve the desired results.

Greater Kashmir, 27 February 2006

NC, PDP set to swap roles on the floor (Riyaz Masroor)

Srinagar, Feb 26: State's 10th Assembly session is expected to be a "smooth affair" for the ruling Congress even as the recent spurt in killings and more sharpened polemic between main coalition partners—Congress and PDP—provides a precarious backdrop to the elaborate proceedings commencing in winter capital of the state Monday. Although a new amendment in the state constitution has sealed the prospects of floor crossing, National Conference and PDP seem virtually swapping positions. While PDP grows more assertive as a vocal opposition, NC looks more like an "ally-in-waiting" with respect to its approach towards the ruling Congress. The latest maneuverings, however, are set to give an interesting texture to the ensuing Assembly session and the war of wits between NC and PDP looks set to benefit the ruling Congress. PDP chief Mahbooba Mufti last week invited wrath from Congress leadership for holding Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad responsible for killing of four youth in Handwara while as National Conference went out of its way advising her to "support Azad as a responsible ally in the government."

Daily Excelsior, 27 February 2006

Mirwaiz, Mehbooba, Omar to take part in Kashmir meet

ISLAMABAD, Feb 26 : Kashmiri leaders including PDP chief Mehbooba Mufti, National Conference president Omar Abdullah and head of moderate Hurriyat Mirwaiz Umer Farooq are expected to take part in a two-day meet to be held here next month to discuss ideas to resolve Kashmir issue. International NGO Pugwash, organisers of the March 10-12 Conference, has also invited former Foreign Secretary S K Lamba and several officials involved in the Back-Channel Diplomacy, besides leaders from both sides of Kashmir, said Chief Coordinator Gen (Retd) Talat Masood. "The Conference will provide a platform for the eminent representatives and facilitate the ongoing peace process. The Pugwash Conference offers no solution but only facilitates all on a common platform," he said. The Conference would look at recent proposals like self governance, steps needed to accelerate communications between the two sides as well as exploring prospects of peace.

Greater Kashmir, 27 February 2006

Cross-border Bird Flu worries JK; Army's help sought

Srinagar, Feb 26: The Jammu and Kashmir government has sought the help of the armed forces in preventing the spread of bird flu in the state following the reported outbreak of the deadly avian influenza in Dhadyal and Mirpur areas of Pakistan-administered Kashmir (PaK). Animal Husbandry Commissioner-cum-Secretary Dr Muhammad Deen said letters of request have been sent to General Officers-in-Commanding (GOCs) of 14, 15 and 16 Corps

and the Border Security Force (BSF) Inspector General, (Kashmir) to extend help to the Department's teams deployed in villages along the Line of Control (LoC) to maintain strict surveillance over the resident and migratory bird populations. The Directors of the Animal Husbandry Department (Kashmir and Jammu Divisions) have already sent the letters of request to GOCs and the BSF IG, urging them to facilitate the free movement of teams on recce in the villages along the LoC.

The Indian Express, 26 February 2006

Apt forum to address Kashmir issue: Azad

Jammu, February 25: CHIEF Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today asked the militants to understand the importance of peace talks, resort to ceasefire and allow development. In his address at the round-table conference in New Delhi, Azad said that the state has remained far behind in the race for development with the last 16 years of turmoil having given people nothing but misery. Thanking Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh for convening such a "historic" conference, the CM hoped it would prove a step in the right direction. He also thanked the Prime Minister for all CBMs and the continuous dialogue with Pakistan. Besides this, Azad expressed gratitude for the liberal assistance under the Prime Minister's Reconstruction Plan with a special mention of the highest plan size approved for the next financial year for J&K.

Daily Excelsior, 26 February 2006

Round-table meet says violence has no role in civilised society

NEW DELHI, Feb 25: The first ever round-table conference on Jammu and Kashmir today asserted that violence has no place in a civilised society and all concerned should uphold basic human rights as Prime Minister Manmohan Singh expressed confidence that a common understanding on autonomy and self-rule could be reached within the "vast flexibilities" of the Constitution. As a follow up of the process that began today, attended by leaders of various political parties, NGO and intellectuals from Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh but boycotted by separatist groups including Hurriyat, it was decided that the second round-table conference would be held in Srinagar in second half of May. At the end of the seven-hour long meeting, the round table adopted a statement welcoming the Prime Minister's initiative.

The Indian Express, 26 February 2006

Solution lies in dialogue with real Kashmiri leadership: JKDFP

Srinagar, February 25: The Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP) today said a solution to the Kashmir issue lay in a meaningful dialogue with the "real Kashmiri leadership". "We in principle agree that an acceptable solution to the Kashmir issue is possible only through a process of meaningful and result-oriented talks in which the real Kashmiri leadership is involved," party chief Shabir Ahmad Shah said, addressing a gathering in Doodipora. Shah, whose outfit spurned an invitation to the Prime Minister's Round Table Conference held in Delhi, said participation in any dialogue was possible only "when violation of human rights was stopped, black laws were revoked and all detainees were released in the state." He said the ongoing 'struggle' in Kashmir was based on "correct grounds".

Greater Kashmir, 26 February 2006

Geelani again under house arrest

Srinagar: Chairman of a faction of Hurriyat Conference Syed Ali Shah Geelani was again put under house arrest to prevent him from visiting Dodipora Handwara where four youths were killed allegedly by troops on February 22. Official sources said a large number of police personnel have been deployed outside the Hyderpora residence of Geelani to prevent him from moving out. A senior police officer informed him that he cannot move out without their permission. Geelani was put under house arrest on February 22 evening after the Dodipora incident. However, he was taken into preventive custody yesterday after he tried to break the police cordon near his house. He was released from the police station late in the evening and put under house arrest. Meanwhile, Islamic Students League chairman Shakeel Ahmad Bakshi and Muslim League chief Mushtaq-ul-Islam remained under detention. They were arrested from Moulana Azad Road near here on February 23 during protest demonstration against the killings.

Greater Kashmir, 26 February 2006

Bush says has role in Kashmir

Washington, Feb 25: For the first time, the United States of America admitted that it is playing a role in resolution of Kashmir dispute. Stating this, US President George W Bush affirmed that he believed 'a lasting solution' of the Kashmir issue can be achieved. "I have started to play a role," he stated this when asked what role he could play in resolving this issue as a close friend of both Pakistan and India. In a 17-minute exclusive PTV interview telecast on Saturday, he, in this context, referred to his Wednesday's elaborate address before the Asia Society, where according to Bush, "I spoke out on the issue and encouraged the Pakistan President and the Prime Minister of India to continue down the road of solving the issue with a solution that's acceptable to all sides." "And

that's very important. There's a temptation sometimes for countries to try to jump in the middle of dialogue," he stated. "I believe a lasting solution can be achieved," President Bush added.

Daily Excelsior, 28 February 2006

Normalcy is priority: Governor

JAMMU, Feb 27: Governor Lt Gen (Retd) S K Sinha today said first priority of the State Government is to restore normalcy so that the people could live and work without fear and threat. "As a result of the co-ordinated efforts of Army, para-military forces and police, with the support of ordinary people, the graph of terrorist violence is going down. Last year, the killing of civilians and political activists went down by 24 per cent as compared to the year 2004", Lt Gen Sinha said in his address to joint sitting of the Legislature this morning as the budget session got underway today. In his 80-minutes address, which carried policies and programmes of the Government, the Governor strongly lauded security forces especially the Army saying they have not only been fighting terrorism but were also engaged in community and relief work, particularly in border and far flung areas.

The Indian Express, 28 February 2006

Security up to prevent repeat of 2000

Srinagar, February 28: Ahead of US President George W. Bush's visit to India, security has been beefed up in Jammu and Kashmir especially in minority-dominated villages to prevent the type of massacre of 35 Sikhs that took place on the eve of the then American President Bill Clinton's trip in 2000, official sources said today. Police and security forces have been put on maximum alert in Sikh and Hindu-dominated villages in the state to ensure that no incident that could mar the visit of Bush, they said. All necessary precautions are being taken and security arrangements are being made to prevent any strike on the minorities or any other people in the state, they said.

Daily Excelsior, 28 February 2006

Uproar in LS, RS over Kashmir talks

NEW DELHI, Feb 27: Both Houses of Parliament today witnessed uproarious scenes on the recent Kashmir roundtable, convened by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, even as Home Minister Shivraj Patil assured the Rajya Sabha that the talks were not "centred around" the issues of autonomy and self-rule alone. The Lok Sabha was adjourned for 35 minutes on the issue during Zero Hour. The issue was raised in the Lower House by BJP Deputy Leader V K Malhotra who took exception to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's reported assurance at the all party roundtable meeting on Saturday that the Centre would consider proposals for greater autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir. His remarks prompted Ms Mehbooba Mufti (PDP) to rush to the well of the House, upon which some BJP members also trooped into the well.

Daily Excelsior, 28 February 2006

Azad warns corrupt officers to get ready for action

KHOUR, Feb 27: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad has said that despite the tirade launched against corruption in the State, some officers were still indulging in the corrupt practices and the government was keeping a close watch on the activities of such officials. Addressing a large rally here in the border constituency of Chhamb in district Jammu today, the Chief Minister said that a state-wide campaign against corruption was going on and a lot of success in this regard has been achieved. He regretted that still many complaints are being received by him through public and other agencies against the corrupt officers and others in different circles. He said war against this menace has been launched vigorously but the complete success was impossible without the active support of the public.

Daily Excelsior, 28 February 2006

Stick to coalition ethics: Mufti

JAMMU, Feb 27: Former Chief Minister and People's Democratic Party (PDP) patron, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed today asked the legislators of his party to respect the ethics of coalition politics and project the public interest problem besides highlighting achievements registered by the coalition during the last three years and four months. Addressing a meeting of the party legislators here this afternoon, Mufti Sayeed said that PDP-Coalition Government represents aspirations of the people of Jammu and Kashmir, adding that the people of the State have high expectations from all the coalition partners. He impressed upon the MLAs and MLCs of his party to work with utmost dedication to achieve the goals and objectives set out in the Common Minimum Programme (CMP).

The Indian Express, 28 February 2006

Kashmir on Bush's priority list

Islamabad, February 27: US President George W. Bush said in an interview broadcast Sunday he would use his upcoming visit to India and Pakistan to urge both sides to find a lasting solution to their dispute over Kashmir. "I will use my trip to urge the leadership to continue solving this issue with the idea that it can be solved," Bush told

state-owned Pakistan Television in an interview in Washington, broadcast Sunday. Bush said his discussions with his Pakistani counterpart Gen. Pervez Musharraf and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh revealed attitudes had changed since he first came to office in 2000. In 2002, the nuclear neighbours claim close to war, but in the past two years they have pursued peace talks.

Daily Excelsior, 28 February 2006

Two militants killed in Pulwama

SRINAGAR, Feb 27: Two unidentified militants have died in an encounter between militants and security forces in Drubgam village of Pulwama district late this evening. Informed sources said that militants ambushed a patrol party of BSF 42 Bn at Bon-Drubgam village in Pakharpora-Pulwama belt in the afternoon today. Troops retaliated and chased the militants. Sources said that when troops laid siege to a cluster of half-a-dozen residential houses and walked into the house of one Abdul Ahad Lone S/o Sonallah Lone, two militants opened fire. Two BSF personnel sustained injuries but they took safe positions inside the house and were successfully evacuated by their colleagues amid a fierce covering cover.

Greater Kashmir, 28 February 2006

Furore in Assembly over Handwara Killings (NASEER A GANAI)

Jammu, Feb 27: Outraged over the recent killings in north Kashmir's Handwara and Bandipora townships, opposition National Conference (NC) Monday boycotted Governor Lt-General (retired) SK Sinha's inaugural address to the 10th budget session here on Monday. MLAs and MLCs from NC greeted the Governor with furious sloganeering as he reached the House this morning. The protesting legislators were seeking a high-level judicial probe by a sitting High Court judge and apology from Prime Minister as well as the Army Chief asserting that the Army's Srinagar-based 15 Corps had tried to "justify the wrong." Calling for an end to the human rights abuse, leader of the opposition, AR Rather, went to the extent of terming the spurt in violence against civilians as "State terrorism." "Innocent people and children are being killed without any provocation and government is not showing any seriousness to stop such killings," Rather said while addressing the NC legislators outside the Assembly.

Daily Excelsior, 28 February 2006

All party nod to switch over to Parliament system (Sanjeev Pargal)

JAMMU, Feb 27: An all party Business Advisory Committee meeting, convened by Speaker Tara Chand, today gave its nod to switching over to Parliamentary system in the Assembly under which discussion will be held on grants of only selective Ministries. With this, about 30 sittings of the Assembly in the budget session, which commenced today with Governor's Address to joint sitting of the Legislature, have been reduced to 20, official sources told the Excelsior. All Saturdays having been declared as working days in the calendar issued by the Assembly Secretariat earlier have now been declared a holiday. Despite this, the budget session will conclude on March 29 as against April 4, as scheduled earlier.

The Indian Express, 28 February 2006

'Centre diluting its stand on self-rule' (Neeraj Santoshi)

Jammu, February 27: THE Kashmiri Pandit leaders, who participated in the February 25 roundtable conference on the Kashmiri issue, has opposed the way New Delhi is "shifting and diluting its stand on the issues of self-rule and autonomy". Talking to the The Indian Express after reaching over here, the leaders said that the statement of the Prime Minister, at the end of the roundtable, is indicative of the government's changing stand on the self-rule and autonomy and it will never be acceptable to them. Panun Kashmir leader Dr Ajay Chhurgoo said that not only was the meet grossly mismanaged, but it seemed that the government had not done its homework before the meet. "It is strange that first the government had rejected the ideas of the self-rule and autonomy, but suddenly out of blue during the conference itself, Prime Minister talked about developing understanding on these ideas within the framework of the Indian constitution,"he said.

Greater Kashmir, 28 February 2006

3 militants killed in Valley

Srinagar, Feb 27: Three militants were killed in separate incidents across the Valley since Sunday evening. A militant of Hizbul Mujahideen outfit was killed while two others managed to escape from the cordon in Kulgam area of South Kashmir's Islamabad district on Monday. Officials said troops of 1 Rashtriya Rifles and Police cordoned off Shamspora village in Kulgam and started house to house search. Three militants who were hiding in the village tried to break the cordon after which a gunbattle broke between troops and militants, in which one militant was killed. The deceased has been identified as Nisar Ahmad Bhat. Police claimed three AK-47 rifles were recovered from the encounter scene. Local news agency CNS quoting locals said the troops destroyed the house of one Abdur Rashid Dar by firing mortar shells on it "without any provocation". "There was no militant hiding in the house," the news agency quoted local residents as saying. However, an Army spokesman said the house was damaged during the encounter.