

The Tribune, 1 January 2005

Three militants among eight killed

Srinagar, December 31: Three militants of the Lashker-e-Toiba (LeT) were among eight persons killed, while a ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) worker was injured in the valley overnight, official sources said today. Sources said troops, on specific information that some militants were holding a meeting in a house at Watergam, cordoned off the entire area last evening.

The Tribune, 1 January 2005

Yasin's plan to float third front fails to take off

Jammu, December 31: The plan of the Revenue and Rehabilitation Minister Hakim Mohd Yasin to float a third front in Jammu and Kashmir has failed to take off. Mr Yasin who headed a 13-member group of Independents in the assembly, which later was christened as Peoples' Democratic Front, had recently started motivating some legislators, ministers and those belonging to the National Conference for establishing a third front.

Greater Kashmir, 1 January 2005

Bunkers choke Srinagar streets (Arif Shafi Wani)

Srinagar, Dec 31: Security force bunkers erected in the middle of roads and streets in different parts of this capital city obstruct smooth flow of traffic and cause inconvenience to the people. Although a high-level government committee in its recent report had suggested various steps to remove the traffic bottlenecks in the city, the issue of the bunkers didn't figure in it. At many places the forces have occupied half of the road, and at the some places have enforced one-way traffic on the otherwise two-way road. The important route Baba Dharam Dass road that connects downtown to the Maulana Azad road through Nowpora from RTO's office- used to lessen the traffic pressure on the M.A road through the busy Dalgate-Sonwar junction before the forces literally occupied it.

Daily Excelsior, 1 January 2005

Two militants shot dead in Mendhar

JAMMU, Dec 31: Two Pakistani militants were today gunned down by Army and police in an encounter at Naika Majari in Gursai area of Mendhar in Poonch district while security forces made more recoveries including 10 kg RDX from two hideouts in Doda district, which were smashed on the disclosures of a recently arrested Pakistani militant Asif Mohd Khan. Official sources said troops of 37 Rashtriya Rifles, joined by police commando group and Mendhar police, launched a search operation at Naika Majari under the jurisdiction of Gursai police station at 1 pm today immediately after getting a report from the people that three foreign mercenaries were spotted at Naika Majari.

The Hindu, 2 January 2005

DIG among 11 injured in blast

SRINAGAR, JAN. 1. The Deputy Inspector-General of Police, South Kashmir range, Ravindra Kotwal, today escaped an assassination bid in Anantnag town but was seriously wounded, along with 10 others, including two of his security guards, in a powerful explosion caused by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). Police sources said Mr. Kotwal was on way to the District Superintendent of Police office when his bulletproof car was hit by the IED near the Saddar police station in Nai Basti. It exploded with a big bang causing extensive damage to his car and an escort vehicle.

The Hindu, 2 January 2005

Jammu & Kashmir civic polls to be held after 25 years

SRINAGAR, JAN. 1. After postponing the elections for civic bodies at least three times, the People's Democratic Party (PDP)-led Government today issued the notification for the polls which will be held in eight phases from January 8. The polls will be held after a gap of 25 years in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Hindu, 2 January 2005

Valley cut off

SRINAGAR, JAN. 1. Heavy snowfall led to the closure of the 300-km Srinagar-Jammu National Highway, cutting off the Kashmir valley from the rest of the country. Srinagar and its adjoining areas experienced heavy snowfall early this morning. Trees, electric poles, roof tops and roads turned white and a number of roads were flooded with water as the snow started melting after the sun appeared, disrupting normal life here. The snowfall, accompanied by cold winds, forced people to remain indoors.

The Indian Express, 2 January 2005

Jamaat quits Hurriyat, won't join Geelani now

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 1: The new year began on a bad note for the Hurriyat Conference with the right-wing Jamaat-e-Islami formally announcing its decision to dissociate from the separatist amalgam. The move is being viewed as a serious setback for the moderates led by Hurriyat chief Maulana Abbas Ansari, who had earlier expressed willingness to hold talks with Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani. The power equation has now tilted in favour of the rival faction led by hardliner Syed Ali Shah Geelani.

Daily Excelsior, 2 January 2005

Arrested militants confess smuggling several consignments

JAMMU, Jan 1: The Intelligence Bureau (IB) have captured another hawala operator of Kashmir valley, who was smuggling a cash consignment from New Delhi to Doda while police have made a "significant breakthrough" in the hawala racket during interrogation of three militants arrested recently from Tarore, Bari Barahamana along with Rs 9.39 lakh cash. Interrogation of the militants, which was still at a preliminary stage, has revealed that the arrested militants had only few days back successfully smuggled a hawala consignment of Rs 3.50 lakh from Noida to Doda and handed it over to the militants.

Daily Excelsior, 2 January 2005

Another ultra killed in Mendhar

POONCH, Jan 1: Another top Hizbul Mujahideen militant was today gunned down by Army and police in an encounter at village Sarhuti in Mendhar tehsil. Official sources said troops of 37 Rashtriya Rifles, SOG and Mendhar Police, who had killed two militants at Naika Majari in Mendhar yesterday, continued their search for the third militant, who had escaped during yesterday's operation. The militant was gunned down at Sarhuti this afternoon.

Daily Excelsior, 2 January 2005

JK Police introduces new set of investigation forms

Jammu, Jan 1 : With a view to streamline the existing investigating procedures, Jammu and Kashmir Police today introduced the Integrated Investigation Forms (IIFs) for Investigating Officers for investigation of criminal cases. These forms have been devised keeping in view the legal provisions of CPC and other Acts applicable as on date. The seven set-up of forms prescribed under this programme include first Information Report, Crime Details Form, Arrest/Court Surrender Form, Property search and Seizure Form, Final Form/Report, Court Disposal Forms and Result of appeal Forms.

Daily Excelsior, 3 January 2005

Hizbul militant arrested from ex-MLA's house

JAMMU, Jan 2: In another exposure of politician-militants nexus, the Special Operations Group (SOG) have arrested a militant of Hizbul Mujahideen outfit from the house of a former Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) at Sidhra on outskirts of the City last night. Meanwhile, two militants of Gool have also been shifted here for formal surrender before the police. A senior Police officer, when contacted, confirmed the arrest.

The Hindu, 3 January 2005

PoK council proposes study on constitutional arrangements

ISLAMABAD, JAN. 2. In an unusual move, the Pakistan-controlled Jammu and Kashmir Council (referred to as the Azad Jammu and Kashmir Council) Secretariat has proposed a research study seeking proposals for "constitutional" arrangements for Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), keeping in view the "emerging geopolitical ground reality."

PoK is neither a country nor a province though under the total control of Pakistan. However, the interim 1974 Constitution of PoK gives it the trappings of a country with a President, a Prime Minister and a Legislature of its own.

The Tribune, 3 January 2005

DIG out of danger; 2 militants arrested

Srinagar, January 2: The South Kashmir police chief Ravinder Kotwal, who was among 10 police personnel and eight civilians injured in a powerful improvised explosive device (IED) blast at Anantnag was reported to be out of danger, while the security forces arrested militants in the state during the past 24 hours. A villager, Fareed Ahmad Khan, had a close shave with death last night when militants left him to die after hanging him from a tree at Chakipora Achabal in Anantnag district.

The Indian Express, 3 January 2005

Sallar rape: Another soldier dismissed

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 2: The Army today dismissed another soldier for breach of discipline in the alleged rape of a 60-year-old in Sallar. Earlier, the Army had dismissed a soldier for "indulging in misconduct". He was sentenced to a year's rigorous imprisonment. Defence spokesman Lt Col A.K. Batra said the inquiry into the elderly woman's rape revealed that another soldier, Rifleman Zuber Khan, was also involved as he was present outside the house when his colleague misbehaved with the woman. "He (Khan) failed to report this violation of the Army's code of conduct to superior officer on return to the company base that night," a statement issued by Batra said. "Thus...disciplinary action was also initiated against this soldier for colluding with the main accused."

Daily Excelsior, 3 January 2005

744 terrorists killed, 128 apprehended in 2004

JAMMU, Jan 2: The year 2004 has been historic for the Army in J&K. Concerted counter terrorist operations led to considerable decline in terrorist activity. This welcome change led to increased economic activity and a thrust towards development. The stage for counter terrorist operations in 2004 was set by the events of Nov 2003. On Nov 21, 2003, security forces killed Abu Abrar, Divisional Commander of LeT and six more Terrorists. This was the beginning of a deliberate exercise to target the top terrorist leadership. The Army also accelerated the process of enhancing its counter infiltration capability. Top priority was accorded to construction of the LC fence and electronic gadgetry was put in place to detect infiltrators.

The Hindu, 4 January 2005

Mufti's appeal to Pakistan on utilisation of water resources

JAMMU, JAN. 3. A day before the talks between India and Pakistan on the Baglihar hydel power project, the Chief Minister,

Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, has appealed to Pakistan to become a facilitator in the economic progress of Jammu and Kashmir by not objecting to the various projects started on the State's water resources. Pakistan objected to several projects being constructed on the rivers flowing through Jammu and Kashmir as it claims that they violate the Indus Water Treaty signed by the late Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru and the Pakistan President, Ayub Khan, in 1960.

The Tribune, 4 January 2005

Maulvi Farooq under pressure to take part in poll

Jammu, January 3: The chairman of the APHC, Molvi Umar Farooq, is under pressure from his supporters to take part in the ensuing election to the Srinagar Municipal Corporation. Sources said the Maulana's supporters want the Kashmir Mirwaiz to allow the Awami Action Committee, which is headed by Molvi Umar Farooq, to contest the civic poll. Since Molvi's main area of influence is limited to the interior of Srinagar city, his supporters want a say in the running and management of the civic affairs which was only possible if the action committee candidates contested.

The Tribune, 4 January 2005

Top militant held from ex-MLA's house

Jammu, January 3: Security forces have arrested a top militant belonging to the pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen outfit from the house of a National Conference leader in Jammu city, official sources said here today. On a specific information about the presence of the militant, troops raided a house of a former MLA at Sidhra in the outskirts of Jammu city last night. During the raid, security personnel arrested the ultra identified as Maqsood, a resident of Gool in Udhampur district.

The Tribune, 4 January 2005

JKLF to donate Rs 1 lakh

Srinagar, January 3: Separatist outfit Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) will donate Rs 1 lakh and organise a blood donation camp for the tsunami victims. The organisation will organise a blood donation camp to raise 100 pints of blood to be sent to tsunami-affected people in Andaman and other parts of India, a spokesman of the separatist party said at the end of a meeting chaired by Mohammad Yaseen Malik at Maisuma.

The Tribune, 4 January 2005

Muzaffarabad road necessary for peace, says Mehbooba

Srinagar, January 3: The ruling PDP president and MP, Ms Mehbooba Mufti, has stressed the need for opening the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road and welcomed spotting of five places across the Line of Control (LoC) where separated families living on the two sides of Kashmir could meet. Ms Mufti said though these temporary steps were welcomed but the permanent steps of opening of all routes passing between the two countries was a top priority.

Daily Excelsior, 4 January 2005

Jaish commander arrested at Srinagar hospital

SRINAGAR, Jan 3: As Police, in a dramatic action, lifted a "district commander" of Jaish-e-Mohammad guerrilla outfit from a hospital in this capital city, CRPF claimed to have eliminated a militant in an encounter in Bagaat-e-Kanipora outskirts today. Meanwhile, unidentified gunmen, suspected to be pro-Government counter-insurgents, have killed a village headman in captivity in Pampore area. Inspector General of Police, Kashmir Zone, Javid Makhdoomi, revealed at a news conference this evening that Pulwama Police had, in a major achievement, arrested Jaish-e-Mohammad outfit's "district commander" Sajjad Ahmed Bhat alias Mulla S/o Muzaffar Ahmed Bhat R/o Banday Mohalla, Shopian, today. He said that working on a specific information, a Police party conducted a raid on Dr Munir Khan's Kidney Hospital, at Sonwar, and arrested the top wanted Jaish commander "in an operation of surgical precision".

Daily Excelsior, 4 January 2005

IED defused, hideouts busted

POONCH, Jan 3: Army destroyed a powerful Improvised Explosive Device (IED) on Bafliaz road this morning, averting a major tragedy and smashed two hideouts of the militants in three separate incidents in the district. Official sources said a morning patrol party of the Army observed an IED planted by the militants outside the house of one Ali Zoo at main Bafliaz road in Surankote tehsil. Troops stopped vehicular movement on the road.

The Hindu, 5 January 2005

'Third Front' in Jammu and Kashmir

SRINAGAR, JAN. 4. Political equations have started changing in Jammu and Kashmir much before the transfer of power to a Congress-nominated Chief Minister - scheduled to take place in November 2005. The State Revenue Minister, Hakim Mohammad Yasin, is leading a new group of legislators and has given it the name of "Third Front." Even as no one, except that of the National Conference rebel Dillawar Mir, have come forward, Mr. Yasin said it would be a "vibrant front" comprising like-minded people. The CPI (M) state secretary, who is leading a two-member group in the Assembly, would reportedly join the new front.

The Tribune, 5 January 2005

Testing time for PDP, NC

Srinagar, January 4: Encouraged by its performance in the last Assembly byelections in Jammu and Kashmir, the ruling PDP

is all set to fight the Opposition National Conference here in the polls to the Srinagar Municipal Corporation scheduled to be held on February 1. The elections to the Srinagar Municipal Corporation to be held after a period of 25 years would also be a testing time for both the ruling PDP and Opposition National Conference in view of their performance in power. While it is the six-years' performance of the National Conference, it is two years' performance of Chief Minister Mufti Sayeed's Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) at the head of a multi-party coalition government in the state.

The Tribune, 5 January 2005

PDP worker among two killed

Srinagar, January 4: A Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) worker was among two people killed by ultras, while militants hurled three hand grenades in the city today. Official sources said unidentified militants shot Ghulam Rasool Khan, a senior assistant in the Roads and Buildings Department, when he was coming out of his office at Daresh Kadal in downtown Srinagar in the afternoon. Khan, a resident of Batmaloo and a worker of the PDP, died before he could be shifted to hospital.

The Tribune, 5 January 2005

Sale of Army uniform banned

Jammu, January 4: Following a series of incidents in which militants carried out strikes against the security forces in the guise of men in Army combat dress, the Jammu District Magistrate has imposed a ban on sale of Army uniform to unauthorised persons. The order provides for regulating procurement, storage and sale of the Army combat dress. Under the order no unauthorised person shall procure, purchase, store or stitch or sell Army combat uniform cloth or readymade combat dress. The dealers, including retailers and wholesalers, have been instructed to inform the nearest police station about their occupation of combat dress sellers within one week.

The Times of India, 5 January 2005

Paradise regained: Kashmir all booked for summer

NEW DELHI: Don't head for Kashmir this summer. Every square inch of space in Srinagar, Gulmarg, Sonmarg and Pahalgam is booked. A huge tourist rush has taken even the state government by surprise. With hotels fully booked, it has had to put up tents. And now security forces are being turfed out of hotels to make room. In 2004, the J&K government had budgeted for 2.4 lakh tourists, considerably higher than the 1.25 lakh it had the year before, only to get sceptical sniggers. But by the time the year ended, the tally was a healthy 3.6 lakh - the highest since 1990 when terrorism hit the state.

Daily Excelsior, 5 January 2005

Killings of militants, civilians down, cops up

JAMMU, Jan 4: The militancy related violence considerably went down in the year 2004 in Jammu region, according to official figures released by the office of IGP Jammu Zone, Dr S P Vaid today. Killings of militants, civilians, security personnel, Special Police Officers (SPOs) and Village Defence Committee (VDC) members registered sharp decline in 2004 as compared to 2003, the release said. Decline in the violence is being mainly attributed to the Indo-Pak peace initiative including cease-fire on the border and the Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) initiated by the two countries.

The Tribune, 6 January 2005

Top Lashkar commander shot

Srinagar, January 5: The security forces today shot a top commander of the Lashker-e-Toiba and seized a huge cache of explosives, including 12 kg of RDX, in Jammu and Kashmir today, a police spokesman said. The self-styled district launching chief of Lashkar, Abu Assadullah, alias Janbaaz, a resident of Pakistan, was killed in an encounter with troops of the Rashtriya Rifles at Batkote village of Handwara in Kupwara district in the wee hours, the spokesman said.

The Tribune, 6 January 2005

Healing-touch policy for Sikhs sought

Jammu, January 5: At a congregation in connection with the birth anniversary of Guru Gobind Singh at Gurdwara Digiana here today, a resolution was adopted seeking settlement of the refugees from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir who had been living in a pitiable condition since 1947 in Jammu. By another resolution leaders of various Sikh organisations demanded that the healing-touch policy, initiated by the PDP Congress Government, be extended to the Sikh community also so that youths from the community languishing in different jails since 1984, were released.

The Tribune, 6 January 2005

Centre to talk with J&K groups

New Delhi, January 5: The Centre will commence political-level dialogue with various groups in Jammu and Kashmir. Sources said Home Minister Shivraj Patil will talk to various groups on behalf of the government and a time-table for such talks was being worked out. The decision was taken at a meeting headed by the Home Minister and attended by senior officials, besides Centre's interlocutor to Jammu and Kashmir N.N. Vohra.

The News, 6 January 2005

Parliamentary body on Kashmir presents memo to United Nations

ISLAMABAD: Special Committee of Parliament on Kashmir here on Wednesday presented a memorandum to the UN representative to mark the passing of UN resolution on Kashmir on January 5, 1949. Parliamentarians, including Raja Nadir

Pervez, Liaquat Baloch, Raja Pervez Ashraf, Muheem Khan and Dr Atiya Inayatullah while presenting the memorandum demanded that the Indian government respect the resolution passed by the UN. They also demanded that the Indian government honour its obligations under international law, especially in terms of the UN Security Council resolution to hold a plebiscite in Jammu and Kashmir. They urged to take concrete step to immediately end the gross human rights violation being perpetrated by the Indian forces in held Kashmir.

Daily Excelsior, 6 January 2005

Oldest ultra, associate gunned down in Mahore

JAMMU, Jan 5: A 54 year old militant, who was among the very few old militants, was eliminated by Army and police along with his associate at Thillu Bharneli in Mahore area of Reasi police district today. In three separate operations, security forces today destroyed three hideouts in Poonch district. SSP Reasi Jagdish Lal Sharma told the Excelsior that troops of 51 Rashtriya Rifles and Mahore Police carried out a search operation at Thillu Bharneli this afternoon on a tip off that two to three militants had taken shelter in the area for the night before shifting their hideout to another place.

Greater Kashmir, 6 January 2005

Separatists seek implementation of UN resolutions

Srinagar, Jan 5: Political parties here called upon the international community to play its role in resolving the Kashmir dispute in accordance with the wishes of Kashmiri people and resolutions passed by UN. On this day in 1949 the United Nations passed a resolution on Kashmir for self determination of Kashmiris. The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani today passed a resolution calling upon United Nations secretary general to implement UN security council resolution on Kashmir. APHC held a meeting here stating that non-implementation of UN resolutions was creating serious problems in the region. APHC condemned human rights abuses in Jammu and Kashmir and said international rights bodies should take serious note of the abuses.

Greater Kashmir, 6 January 2005

UJC asks leadership to defeat elections

Srinagar, Jan 5: Rejecting the local bodies elections in Jammu and Kashmir, the supreme commander of Hizbul Mujahideen and chairman of United Jihad Council (UJC), Syed Salahuddin, has hoped Kashmiri people won't allow these elections to succeed and continue to wage struggle for freedom, UJC spokesman said in a statement today. The spokesman quoting Salahuddin said people of Kashmir have rejected earlier elections and these elections would meet the same fate for India has failed in experimenting with polls.

The Hindu, 7 January 2005

More de-induction of troops soon: Vij

JAMMU, JAN. 6. The Chief of Army Staff, N.C. Vij, today said there would be further de-induction of troops in Jammu and Kashmir shortly as part of the Centre's policy to normalise relations with Pakistan. A number of battalions had already been de-inducted from the State following the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh's announcement in the second week of December last year. Talking to reporters here, General Vij said: "The conditions in Jammu and Kashmir are returning to near-normality levels and we propose to further reduce troops in the State. At the same time all steps would be taken to keep the security situation well under control."

The Tribune, 7 January 2005

4 militants killed in J&K

Srinagar, January 6: Security forces killed four militants, arrested one and recovered a large cache of arms and ammunition while five persons, including three CRPF personnel, were injured in a grenade attack in the Jammu and Kashmir overnight, an official spokesman said today. He said security forces gunned down two militants in an encounter at Ajas Sonawari in Baramulla district of North Kashmir today. Two AK assault rifles and other arms and ammunition were recovered from the slain militants.

Daily Excelsior, 7 January 2005

Jaish militant held from Moga

JAMMU, Jan 6: Mendhar police have arrested a Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) militant from Moga in Punjab and brought him to Mendhar for interrogation to ascertain his role in the militant activities. He was involved in the killing of an Army jawan and his father besides other activities of subversion. Police said Abdul Hamid alias Gulla son of Said Mohd, a resident of Kasblari was among the top ranking militants of the JeM outfit. Mendhar police had recently developed an information from some overground workers of the outfit that Gulla was working in a private factory at Moga, hiding his identity.

The Hindu, 7 January 2005

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Daily Excelsior, 8 January 2005

Top ultra Dilawar killed with body-guard in Poonch

POONCH, Jan 7: An "area commander" of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) Dilawar Ikramah, who was the most wanted militant in Mendhar, was gunned down by Army, police and Special Operations Group (SOG) along with his body-guard this morning at Chak Banola in Mendhar tehsil of this border district. "A severe blow has been dealt to the LeT outfit with the killing of Dilawar Ikramah", SSP Poonch Mukesh Singh told the Excelsior after supervising the operation. Reports said the troops of 16 and 39 Rashtriya Rifles, Mendhar police and SOG Mendhar launched a joint search operation in Chak Banola forests early this morning after police developed an information that Dilawar and his associates had taken shelter in the forests.

Greater Kashmir, 8 January 2005

JuM details previous years' attacks on SF

Srinagar, Jan 6: Detailing the attacks on troops during previous year, a spokesman of Jamiat-ul-Mujahideen, in a statement today, claimed that the outfit militants carried out 19 attacks on security forces at different places during 2004, killing 77 security forces including six officers and injuring 174 others. The spokesman claimed the officers killed by the outfit militants during the previous year include three majors, two JCOs, and one commando. The spokesman said 13 outfit militants including seven high level commanders were also slain during previous year. He said the slain outfit commanders include company commander Musa, district commander Uqab, district commander Tariq, divisional commander Manzoor-ul-Islam, battalion commander Meraj-ud-Din and battalion commander Irfan

Greater Kashmir, 8 January 2005

Militants storm Income Tax building

Srinagar, Jan 7: Militants stormed the income tax building at Barbarshah in Srinagar Friday triggering an encounter that left three people dead. Three militants made their way into the government tax building, hurling a hand grenade and firing on the forces. Forces surrounded the building and exchanged gunfire with the militants. One paramilitary soldier, one civilian and one militant was killed. Four security force personnel and an income tax official were also injured in the attack. "Militants hurled grenades and fired indiscriminately while forcing their way in," an officer said. A blaze swept through the upper floor of the fortified three-storey building and many people, including women, had to be rescued by ladder.

The News, 8 January 2005

Kashmir again (Fakir S Ayazuddin)

The debate raging in both Pakistan and India vis a vis the 'core issue' between the two countries, and the apparent thaw in the old Indian stand of 'no discussion' on Kashmir, can be analysed thus: the pressure to dialogue with Pakistan being brought upon the Indian government is primarily that of Indian businessmen who have far greater clout in Delhi than their counterparts have in Islamabad. This began during the nuclear standoff in 1998, when the armies of both countries faced each other eyeball to eyeball across the border, and pressure was brought to bear on both to back off. However neither country knuckled down to the American arm-twisting until the US State department issued an advisory telling their citizens to leave India. The sudden emptying of American expats from Bangalore brought the Indian Silicon dream to earth. This is why the process of de-escalating tensions with Pakistan was initiated at the behest of the Indian business lobby. We in Pakistan should take advantage of this situation, and press for an opening in the Kashmir front.

Dawn, 9 January 2005

Srinagar attack toll rises to 7

SRINAGAR, Jan 8: Seven people died in a two-day battle between Mujahideen and security forces at a federal tax office in occupied Kashmir that ended on Saturday, police officials said. "The operation is over," senior police official Javed Maqdoomi told reporters in Srinagar. In all, two Mujahideen, four security force personnel and a tax official had died in the fighting, he said. The attack began when two grenade-hurling men stormed the high-security federal income tax compound late on Friday afternoon. A dozen security force personnel and income tax officials were injured during the clash, police said. Police had

originally believed they had killed both Kashmiri fighters on Friday but one remained alive, Maqdoomi said. The Kashmiri fighter began hurling grenades and firing at security forces when they approached the building on Saturday.

Daily Excelsior, 10 January 2005

J&K denies vicious propaganda in Europe, West Asia

PUNE, Jan 9: Denying the "vicious propaganda" in Europe and West Asia about the situation in the Kashmir valley, Jammu and Kashmir Finance Minister Muzaffar Baig today said things have improved a lot than what it is was two years ago. "As against the vicious propaganda in Europe and West Asia that things are not normal here and that the Hindu majority has taken over the Muslim dominated state of Kashmir, facts are totally different than what is being projected," Baig, who is on a tour to promote tourism in Jammu and Kashmir in Maharashtra, told reporters here. "I would not say that no violence is taking place at all. However, it is also true that things have improved a lot than what it was two years ago," the minister said adding, last year as many as four lakh pilgrims visited the holy shrine of Amarnath, which is enough proof of how things stand in the Valley now. Not one Amarnath pilgrim was targeted by the militants, who know what the reaction of the people of the State would be if such things are to happen, he said.

Greater Kashmir, 10 January 2005

5 KILLED

Srinagar, Jan 9: Two militants and a soldier were among five persons killed in separate militancy-related incidents across the state since Saturday evening. Police said a Hizbul Mujahideen militant was killed by troops during an encounter at Jabi Tota Sector Surankote yesterday. The slain militant has been identified as Khalid Chatroli alias T1 of Pakistan. The troops also claimed recovery of arms and ammunition from the possession of slain militant. One soldier was killed in an encounter with militants at Palma Kishtawar Doda district yesterday, the police said. Unidentified gunmen on Saturday night barged into the residence of Payara Singh of Koti sector Doda and shot dead his son-in-law Pancham Singh son of Dharam Singh of Kasheryan. No one has claimed responsibility for the shooting. Troops Saturday recovered the body of a Hizbul Mujahideen militant from Lancha forests of Gool in Udhampur district, the police said.

Daily Excelsior, 11 January 2005

2 holed up militants killed in Kulgam

SRINAGAR, Jan 10: Security forces have killed both the local militants of Hizbul Mujahideen, who had got trapped in a search operation in Kulgam, today. Meanwhile, security forces have intensified cordon-and-search operations, which is a routine practice in advance of the Republic Day of Jan 26th, and people of Ajas, Bandipore, today staged a demonstration to register their protest against the alleged atrocities of the armed forces on the civilians. Informed sources in south Kashmir told the EXCELSIOR that security forces today eliminated both the local militants who had got trapped in a military operation at Kellam village in Kulgam. Sources said that when the security forces resumed the search operation today, the holed up militants opened fire. They were both gunned down in a fierce gun battle.

Daily Excelsior, 12 January 2005

Natnu's Cellone exposes Hizbul network (Sanjeev Pargal)

JAMMU, Jan 10: A vast network of Hizbul Mujahideen outfit including a number of over ground workers have been exposed with the recovery of a Cellone mobile telephone of Hizbul Mujahideen "district commander" and hawala kingpin Maqsood Ahmed Natnu in Doda district. "We have received very important information from Natnu's mobile telephone number 9419118851, which was seized by troops of 8 Rashtriya Rifles along with two wireless sets and blood filled clothes of Natnu, from village Babore on Ghat-Doda road yesterday after a fierce gun-battle in which Maqsood Natnu son of Abdul Rashid Natnu escaped in an injured condition along with his associates", official sources told the Excelsior today. Mobile telephone numbers of two more Hizbul commanders were exposed from the Cellone connection but they had been switched off. Probably, the militant commanders and their overground cadre, linked with Natnu, had been alerted by the militants after the seizure of Cellone by the Army, the sources said, adding "credible evidence is being gathered against the overground persons, who include traders and some other important persons, before apprehending them for questioning.

Greater Kashmir, 12 January 2005

'No Made-in-India solution to Kashmir'

Islamabad, Jan 11: President Pervez Musharraf tonight said that Pakistan would not accept any "India-made" solution to the Kashmir issue. "We will not accept any solution of Kashmir with the stamp of 'Made in India' because this dispute cannot be resolved without the involvement of Kashmiris and Pakistan," he said in an interview to the private Geo TV. Amidst reports that Pakistan is to approach the World Bank for resolution of the Baglihar hydro-power dam issue with India, Musharraf said he was still hopeful of reaching a peaceful settlement to the dispute. In the wake of failure of the Baglihar talks between India and Pakistan, he said he was hopeful of settling the issue because a lot of things were taking place between the two countries behind the scenes.

Daily Excelsior, 12 January 2005

3 more militants killed in Poonch

POONCH, Jan 11: In another successful operation, Army, police and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) today gunned down three militants of Tehreek-ul-Jehad outfit including a "district commander" at Naika Majari in Mendhar tehsil of this border district. With today's killings, six militants have been eliminated in the district during last five days. Official sources said troops of 37 Rashtriya Rifles, Poonch Police and 150 battalion CRPF launched a joint operation in Naika Majari at 9 am today

on an information developed by police about a hideout of Tehreek-e-Jehad outfit. After a massive search operation for three hours, the security personnel identified hideout of the militants and asked them to come out and surrender. However, the militants took position inside and opened firing.

Daily Excelsior, 12 January 2005

CM blames politicians for alienation of J&K people

Jammu, Jan 11: Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed today expressed the view that politicians have failed the people of Jammu and Kashmir leading to their alienation. He said politics today was generally viewed as an unclean profession even as there was no dearth of honest and committed politicians in the country. Mufti Sayeed was speaking at an interaction session with the faculty of Jammu University after inaugurating fitness centre, library automation and campus networking facility here this afternoon. 'As politicians, our lapses have alienated people', the Chief Minister said adding if India developed and progressed as a country it was due to the able and dedicated political leadership it had during the freedom movement and post-independence era. He said stalwarts like Nehru, Patel, Kunzroo and Azad provided a leadership that saw the country through all difficulties and also provided sound basis for its economic progress. He said unfortunately today, people have developed a sort of aversion to politics and politicians themselves were responsible for it.

Greater Kashmir, 13 January 2005

Development in the Time of Militarisation-I (Gautam Navlakha)

The Congress led UPA government is carrying out a massive augmentation of country's military in the name of addressing the internal security problem. Believe it or not, it is supposed to provide employment to people who had 'strayed into terrorist activities due to lack of jobs'? Thus 209 batalions of India Reserve Batalions are to be raised in which anywhere between 167,000-250,000 persons can be employed. At the same time states affected by "terrorism" will be asked to raise anywhere between 2-10 batalions. In addition allocations for police modernization has been increased from Rs 1000 cr to 1700 cr. All this is over and above the 261 batalions being raised between 1999-2000 to 2004-05 by the central para military forces. Since it costs Rs 26 cr to raise one batalion (that is how much it was in year 2002) the total bill for raising 209 batalions could run to Rs 5500 cr! This munificence is being undertaken at a time when the Union finance ministry was complaining financial constraint to fund National Rural Employment Guarantee Act which needs about Rs 30,000 cr (Rs 14,000 cr as centre's share and Rs 16,000 cr as that of states).

Daily Excelsior, 13 January 2005

Kashmir is not Palestine (Allabaksh)

Exploiting to the hilt the international spotlight that is focused on him these days, particularly when he goes abroad, the Pakistan's self-appointed President, Gen Pervez Musharraf, is in the habit of speaking of Palestine and Kashmir in the same breath. These are the two 'root' causes of Islamic terrorism, he never tires of telling his audiences, though as an after thought he sometimes adds that illiteracy and poverty also breed terrorism. The burden of his theme, spelt out with straight face, is: resolve the twin problems of Palestine and Kashmir and hey, presto, terrorism will vanish from the world. This simplistic theory should appeal to only the naïve, even though its progenitor enjoys an undeserving patronage of the powerful in the US and the West. In today's US (and much of the West), the post-9/11 era is supposedly cursed only by one affliction that needs to be eradicated. And that is that part of militant Islam that has made the West, particularly the US, its principal target. There is no genuine concern in the US or much of the West when the same curse affects countries like India. That makes things easier for Musharraf.

Greater Kashmir, 13 January 2005

Musharraf seeks US help in Kashmir solution

Islamabad, Jan 12: President Pervez Musharraf has stressed the need for the United States to help resolve the Jammu and Kashmir dispute which he said was the root cause of tension in South Asia. Speaking to a four-member US Senate delegation, the president recalled his talks with US President George Bush on the need to address the long-standing issues like Palestine and Kashmir to bring an end to the present turmoil. The president had an in-depth exchange of views with the delegation led by Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist on Pakistan-US relations and regional and international issues, including the Pakistan-India peace process. Other members of the delegation were Senator Norm Coleman Jr., Senator Richard DeWine and Senator Mitchell McConnell Jr. President Musharraf highlighted the measures taken for peace and progress in Afghanistan. He noted that President Karzai's election gave a new hope to the Afghan people. He called for continued international cooperation to support Afghanistan.

Daily Excelsior, 13 January 2005

Masood Azhar, Ibrahim operated in J&K in 2004 (Ahmed Ali Fayyaz)

SRINAGAR, Jan 12: When virtually the whole world was looking for the Jaish-e-Mohammad supremo, Masood Azhar, and his brother Ibrahim-one of the hijackers of IC-814-they were both operating for their organisation in Jammu and Kashmir. Masood, in fact, addressed a gathering of over one hundred field commanders at the organisation's training camp, close to LoC, in Poonch district as recently as in July 2004. These sensational revelations, currently being verified by the Government agencies, have been made by Jaish's "district commander" Sajjad Ahmed Bhat during his sustained interrogation. Sajjad Bhat had been lifted by District Police Pulwama from a Srinagar hospital earlier this month. Currently under interrogation of different agencies at JIC Srinagar, Bhat has revealed in detail how the most-wanted Jaish supremo and his brother operated for over more than a year in Jammu and Kashmir.

Greater Kashmir, 13 January 2005

2 militants, woman killed in Shopian

Srinagar, Jan 12: Six persons including two Lashkar-e-Toiba militants and an Ikhwani were killed in separate incidents across the state since Tuesday. Two Lashkar-e-Toiba militants and an aged woman were killed in an encounter with troops at Partabpora Shopian on Tuesday night. According to reports, militants attacked the troops of 17-JAKLI unit who were returning after conducting an operation in the area. The troops retaliated triggering an encounter. The gunfight continued for hours killing 55-year-old Atiqa wife of Muhammad Maqbool Naik. In the ensuing fire-fight two militants of LeT were also killed. The slain militants have been identified as Abu Umar and Abu Hamas. Troops claimed recovery of some arms and ammunition from the possession of militants. Suspected militants shot dead an Ikhwani Ali Muhammad alias Ali Punjabi son of Habibullah in his house at Gool Gahan Tengpora Sumbal on Tuesday night.

Daily Excelsior, 14 January 2005

16 militants being released

JAMMU, Jan 13: Sixteen militants are being released by the State Government on the eve of Eid and Republic Day celebrations. The militants being released are locals and mostly belonged to Hizbul Mujahideen outfit, reliable sources said, adding that different security agencies have cleared the names of the militants, who will walk to freedom in the next few days. The militants were not involved in heinous offences, the sources said, adding some of them were due to complete their period of detention shortly. The militants are being released as a goodwill gesture, they asserted.

Greater Kashmir, 14 January 2005

'India has no political, legal or moral case on JK'

Karachi, Jan 13: Pakistan President General Pervez Musharraf has said that India had no political, legal or moral case on Kashmir. According to Pakistani daily The News, Musharraf in an interview on Geo TV said that India's case on Kashmir was based on the age-old adage of "might is right." He added that was it wrong to say that Muslims in Kashmir wanted to be a part of India. He added that India herself was aware of the real scenario of Kashmir and that was the reason why it was hesitant to hold plebiscite in the state. He further added that the "third option" of an independent Jammu and Kashmir was "not an option, but, in reality a tactical device by India to further muddy the waters" and divert the international community's attention from Delhi's pledge of holding plebiscite in Kashmir.

Daily Excelsior, 14 January 2005

3 militants holed-up

SRINAGAR, Jan 13: Two security forces personnel, including a Major of Rashtriya Rifles, got killed in a fierce gunbattle between militants and security forces at Wathora village, near Chadoura, in Budgam district this evening. At least three militants are holed up at a hideout which was likely to be destroyed anytime by night. Informed sources told the EXCELSIOR that troops of Rashtriya Rifles 53 Bn launched a cordon-and-search operation at Palpora Wathora on Srinagar-Chadoura Road late this afternoon. According to a tip off, two to three militants was present at the house of one Ghulam Mohiuddin in the village. As soon as the troops zeroed in on the hideout, militants opened fierce gunfire, killing two soldiers. They were identified as Maj Rathi and Rajesh. Troops, however, tightened siege to the cluster of houses and engaged the holed up militants in a gunbattle.

Greater Kashmir, 14 January 2005

Development in the Time of Militarisation-II (Gautam Navlakha)

Now, one of the key problems that J&K faces is revenue shortfall and high fiscal deficit. The existing revenue often falls short to pay for salary and wages. As recently as in September last the state government was pleading with the central government to release funds so that they could pay back wages and arrears to their employees. Infact according to the state finance minister (Indian Express, November 19, 2004) under the MoU signed in 2000 the state is obliged to reduce revenue expenditure by 5%. Salaries to employees are part of revenue expenditure. "If we donot do so the penalty is that the 15% of our non-plan allocations is withheld (by the centre). It is around Rs 450 cr. This is exactly why we had frozen all recruitment". The state finance minister also told state government employees who went on two day strike for merger of DA with basic salary that the state government does not have funds to do so.

Daily Excelsior, 15 January 2005

Terrorist incidents down by 24 pc in JK: Governor

JAMMU, Jan 14: Describing fencing on 750 kilometer border in Jammu and Kashmir as a major achievement, Governor, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) S K Sinha has said that fast dwindling infiltration and effective combat operations have resulted in 24 per cent slash in militancy related incidents in the State during the past year. In an interview to Doordarshan, the Governor said that 2500 incidents were recorded during 2004 against 3400 in 2003. The Governor said that terrorists have suffered heavy casualties with their 40 to 50 top leaders having been eliminated in several encounters during the year. He said the border fencing will have a good impact on the situation in hinterland soon. Gen Sinha said that terrorists have been subjecting civilians to their attacks in busy markets and other public places which has resulted in the death of 650 innocents including 100 women and children during the last year. The resentment among the people against senseless and barbaric violence unleashed by terrorists has been mounting, he said, adding that the strong urge for peace has brought about an encouraging turn-around in the overall situation.

Greater Kashmir, 15 January 2005

Wathoora encounter ends

Srinagar, Jan 14: Six persons including four militants were killed and a commanding officer was injured in different incidents across the state since Thursday night, police and reports said on Friday. Two militants were killed and two persons including the commanding officer of Rashtriya Rifles were injured in the encounter between militants and troops, which started at Balpora village of Wathoora area in Budgam district on Thursday evening and ended on Friday afternoon. According to reports, the militants holed up inside the residence of an Assistant Sub-Inspector Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din continuously fired on the troops in the evening triggering a fierce gun battle. The army after suffering causality called on reinforcements and cordoned off the whole area. According to reports, when the commanding officer of the troops reached the encounter site, the militants fired indiscriminately on the officer injuring him and several soldiers critically. The encounter according to reports kept going during the whole night with both sides exchanging heavy gunfire.

Daily Excelsior, 15 January 2005

Budgam crowd torches Minister's Scorpio, two Gypsies (Ahmed Ali Fayyaz)

SRINAGAR, Jan 14: Minister of State for Power Javed Mustafa Mir's infamous hostility with the residents of Chhatergam village in Budgam district took the most violent turn this afternoon when a thick crowd gheraoed him and set on fire his Scorpio besides two escort Gypsies of Jammu and Kashmir Police. The Minister's personal security officers (PSOs) and escort personnel called a Police reinforcement which rescued the PDP leader with great difficulty amid high-pitch slogans against him from the violent mob. Eyewitnesses told the EXCELSIOR that the Minister's motorcade reached the already tense Chhatergam village at 1430 hours. The Minister alighted and struck a couple of fists on some youngsters. They ran away and announced the Minister's arrival in the village. As the Minister walked into the residence of his close associate and former militant activist Ghulam Mohammad Dar alias Moma Kanta, over a hundred people gathered and started shouting slogans against him.

Greater Kashmir, 15 January 2005

Probe disappearances

The re-surfacing of a disappeared Hizbul Mujahideen commander has yet again belied the government claim that most of the disappeared persons had gone to Pakistan or joined militant ranks. The militant was arrested twenty-two months ago from a residential house in Varmul district. Since then his whereabouts could not be ascertained. The government and the agency, which took the militant into custody, denied his arrest leaving his parents in a state of shock. For the past two years they went from pillar to post to ascertain his whereabouts but all in vain. The family had given up hope and performed his last rites. But the mystery was unveiled last week when somebody known to the aggrieved family informed them that the former commander was detained in a camp at Varmul. The commanding officer of the unit took pity on the aggrieved parents and allowed several meetings with the arrestee.

Daily Excelsior, 16 January 2005

Fencing of border, LoC has stopped infiltration: Vij

NEW DELHI, Jan 15 : Asserting that fencing of the border and the Line of Control (LoC) had led to "almost complete" stoppage of infiltration in Jammu and Kashmir, Army Chief N C Vij today said the successful operations against Northeastern militants on the Indo-Bhutan border had also borne fruit. "Our biggest achievement this year has been fencing of 700 kms in J and K by our Army in a record time of 12 months even while facing all kinds of difficulties. I commend the men, officers and commanders of the Northern Command who completed this arduous task despite the threat of cross-border terrorism," Gen Vij said in his address at the Army Day Parade here. Due to this and "despite all attempts by the terrorists, today infiltration has been almost completely stopped. This has given the nation a very big psychological advantage and the situation in J and K is progressing towards peace."

The Hindu, 16 January 2005

Militants storm passport office in Srinagar

SRINAGAR, JAN. 15. Piercing tight security arrangements ahead of the Republic Day, militants today stormed a regional passport office inside an indoor stadium here, triggering a gunbattle with security forces which left three jawans injured and two missing. Two heavily-armed militants of the Al-Mansoorian outfit, hurling a grenade and firing indiscriminately, barged into the stadium around 4.15 p.m. CRPF personnel on guard returned the fire and the entire area was cordoned off, official sources said. The indoor stadium is adjacent to the Bakshi Stadium, the main venue of the Republic Day function. Three security personnel, including a CRPF sub-inspector, received bullet injuries. Two CPRF jawans were found missing in the evening roll call. The guns fell silent as dusk descended and security forces adopted a "wait-and-watch" tactic to prevent the militants from escaping under the cover of darkness, the sources said.

Daily Excelsior, 16 January 2005

Siachen troops withdrawal Govt's prerogative

JAMMU, Jan 15: As the infiltration has 'almost' stopped on the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB) in the State during the last year, the terrorists have been exploiting alternative routes to sneak into Jammu and Kashmir. This was disclosed by General Officer Commanding in Chief (GoC-in-C) Lt. Gen Hari Prasad while interacting with media after presenting gallantry and distinguished service awards at investiture ceremony here this morning. "There is no infiltration along Indo-Pak border at present as zero-infiltration syndrome is prevailing in J & K where border people are living in peace and tranquillity now," he said adding this could be achieved by installation of multi-pronged devices, sensors and border fencing. Besides, troop alertness had totally stopped cross border infiltration, he said adding this had virtually demoralised the militant outfits operating in the State.

Daily Excelsior, 17 January 2005

Patil to hold dialogue with J&K groups from next week

NEW DELHI, Jan 16: Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil will start holding the political level dialogue with various shades of opinion in Jammu and Kashmir from next week amid indications that separatists may also be invited for talks. The Centre has started sending out invitations to various groups for talks at political level with Patil who will pick up the threads from where the Government's special representative N N Vohra left, official sources said here. The decision was taken at a high-level meeting convened by Patil last week and is understood to have been given a nod by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. "The invitation for talks being extended to political parties in Government in J and K, those in opposition and other political groups not represented in the legislature," they said. Other shades of opinion, including community groups like those representing Kashmiri Pandits, Gujjars, Dogras, Sikhs and Paharis will also be called for talks, the sources said.

Greater Kashmir, 17 January 2005

2 Fidayeen, 2 CRPF men die in 25-hr gunfight; Passport Office destroyed (Majid Hyderi)

Srinagar, Jan 16: The 25-hour gunfight between Fidayeen (suicide attackers) and paramilitary Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) troops inside the Indoor Stadium complex here that houses the Passport Office ended Sunday evening, leaving four people dead. Officials said the two Fidayeen who had barged into the building on Saturday afternoon were killed in a joint operation by the police and CRPF. The Passport Office, the officials said, was completely destroyed in the incident. "The gun battle has ended. Two militants and two CRPF men have been killed while three jawans were wounded," a CRPF officer told Greater Kashmir. He identified the dead personnel as sub-inspector Ansari and constable Naik Ram belonging to CRPF's 50 battalion. Talking to reporters, DIG Police Mr Lohia said, "It is their (militants) last attempt to throw away the peace process," he said. He denied that there was any security lapse which facilitated the entry of the Fidayeen into the Passport office situated inside the heavily guarded Indoor Stadium.

Daily Excelsior, 17 January 2005

Kashmir is symbol of India's secularism: Natwar

LONDON, Jan 16: External Affairs Minister, Natwar Singh has described Kashmir as a "symbol of India's secularism" and said the country would not allow that to be compromised. "We cannot compromise on the reality, the basic question. For us, Kashmir does not merely mean a few square kilometers of land. It is the symbol of our secularism," Mr Singh said in an interview to BBC Hindi service. "We are proud of the fact that in our country, we have a State with a muslim majority. The Chief Minister of this State is a Muslim, so are majority of Ministers and many MLAs. It is the foundation of India's secularism, and we will not allow that to be compromised," the External Affairs Minister said. Answering a question on the fight against terrorism, he said "India is getting support in its fight against terrorism. The world knows that terrorists are entering Jammu and Kashmir from the neighboring country, more than 60,000 innocent people have been killed in the decades of unrest in that State and countries across the world accepts this fact.

Greater Kashmir, 18 January 2005

AI-Mansoorian strikes baffle forces (Riyaz Masroor)

Srinagar, Jan 17: Besides political rivals, run up to the civic polls see militants and security agencies engaged in a nerve-war taking threat perception in the Valley to a new high. Two surprise strikes by militants within a week and continued sporadic violence elsewhere has not only baffled the security set-up but people have also grown skeptical about the official claims of "fool-proof security during the upcoming civic polls." Following the government's high-level security review on January 6, militants struck deep in the heart of Srinagar engaging security forces for 24 hours in a bloody fight. Security forces in a sustained operation neutralised the two member fidayeen squad of militant outfit AL-Mansoorian holed up in the Income Tax building at Barbarshah. While the debris at the IT complex laid unpaved AI-Mansoorian militants sneaked into the fortified Indoor Stadium complex in the high security zone of Tulsi Bagh where most of the ministers, MLAs and other protected VIPs are stationed in official bungalows. The 25-hour gunfight left two CRPF men dead and five injured.

Daily Excelsior, 18 January 2005

LeT militant killed in Doda

JAMMU, Jan 17: A Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) militant, reportedly planning to disrupt civic elections and Republic Day celebrations in Doda, was gunned down by the Delta Force in an encounter at Basti in Kothi area of Doda police station this evening. Official sources said troops of Delta Force launched a search operation in Basti, Kothi area this afternoon on a specific input that two militants were hiding there and planning to cause blasts to disturb civic elections and Republic Day celebrations. In the gun-battle, security forces gunned down a LeT militant Farooq Ahmed Mir son of Amira Mir R/o Lower Basti, Doda. His associate managed to escape. Security forces didn't suffer any casualties in the operation. Recoveries made from the scene of encounter include one radio set two UBGL grenades, one remote control IED box and one pouch. Weapon of the slain militant was taken away by his fleeing associate.

Daily Excelsior, 18 January 2005

Mufti welcomes Patil's statement on talks

Jammu, Jan 17: Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has said the delegation of powers to people by way of civic polls would go a long way in strengthening the democratic institutions in the State adding that the increased interest of people in the ensuing polls showed their resolve to themselves decide on the day to day matters relating to basic amenities. In an informal interaction with media persons here today, he said the overwhelming response shown by people in the coming civic polls exhibits their resolve to carry forward the peace process and participate in the decision making and executing process at the

grassroots level. He said Srinagar City has witnessed the filing of highest number of nominations for the elections to Srinagar Municipal Corporation. This, he said, shows that the people's determination to carry forward the process of normalization has further strengthened.

Greater Kashmir, 18 January 2005

Delhi to reopen Autonomy file

New Delhi, Jan 17: The Centre will have a fresh look at the whole issue of autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir and will appoint a "three or more member" committee that will examine the proposal initially put forward by the National Conference and subsequently rejected by the then NDA government. Home Minister Shivraj Patil said at an impromptu press conference here today after an hour-long meeting with National Conference leaders Dr Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah that he had also discussed the matter with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The Committee is likely to be headed by Centre's interlocutor on Kashmir, N N Vohra while National Conference was likely to be represented either by Abdul Rahim Rather or Ali Muhammad Sagar. "The National Conference had raised the demand for greater autonomy with me and as well as with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh when we visited the state separately," Patil told reporters after the meeting.

Daily Excelsior, 19 January 2005

'Baaz' to transform jawans into battlefield machines

JAMMU, Jan 18: Set to transform 21st century soldiers into "battlefield machines", the latest state-of-the-art multi-functional handheld computer 'Baaz' has completed its testing phase for its induction into army in Jammu and Kashmir. "The handheld multi-functional computer popularly known as 'Baaz' has completed its testing phase. It will be inducted into army in the State. So far, we have got one sample for demonstration," top army sources today. Weighing just 875 grams, 'Baaz', which was also demonstrated before President A P J Abdul Kalam last year, has been tested in the operational areas as well recently, they said. However, its large-scale induction into army would depend upon their cost factor, they said, adding it has worked satisfactorily in the operational areas. This is a unique effort made by the army in collaboration with private industry, sources said adding it will definitely transform 21 century soldier into "battlefield machines".

Greater Kashmir, 19 January 2005

Autonomy a trap: Hizb

Muzaffarabad: Kashmir's leading fighter group, Hizbul Mujahideen, on Tuesday rejected as "trap" New Delhi's announcement to appoint a committee to examine the issue of more regional autonomy to the disputed state. "This is yet another trap aimed at dividing the Kashmiri leadership and deflecting the attention of the international community from the basic problem, and we reject it outright," said Hizb Salim Hashmi. "We wonder that on the one hand India is holding composite dialogue with Pakistan to resolve all issues including Kashmir and on the other its leaders come up with one or the other thing that amounts to evading the resolution of the basic issue," Hashmi told this correspondent. "The people of Kashmir are struggling and offering unmatched sacrifices for right to self determination. They are not out for any sort of internal autonomy," he said.

Daily Excelsior, 19 January 2005

Decision to reduce troops in J&K open to review: Pranab

NEW DELHI, Jan 18: The Government's decision to reduce troops in Jammu and Kashmir was open to review "as and when the situation demands", Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said today. "The decision was taken in the context of a particular situation. It is always subject to review. If the number of infiltrators increase or the situation deteriorates, of course there will be a review of this decision," he told reporters after an investiture ceremony of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) at their Republic Day camp here. To a question on recent terrorist attacks in J and K, he said the decision would be reviewed "as and when the situation demands" but these attacks "are not enough reason. They are also not due to troop reduction". Observing that the prevailing levels of infiltration has gone down, Mukherjee said the terrorists always chose major national events like Republic Day or Independence Day or the visits by certain foreign dignitaries to grab world attention.

Daily Excelsior, 20 January 2005

Pandits oppose autonomy for J&K, demand homeland

NEW DELHI, Jan 19: Prominent Kashmiri Pandit groups today demanded carving out of a separate homeland for the community in the Valley as they staged a demonstration here to commemorate the start of displacement of over 2.5 lakh people from Kashmir due to militancy 16 years ago. The groups, which came under the banner of Panun Kashmir, also voiced their opposition to the Centre's decision to examine the possibility of grant of autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir. "We want carving out of a separate homeland for our community in Kashmir valley that will be administered directly by the Centre till the time it can evolve its own economic and political infrastructure," Panun Kashmir vice president Shakti Bhan addressing the demonstrators.

Daily Excelsior, 20 January 2005

6 more militants, civilian killed in Rajouri, Poonch

RAJOURI/POONCH, Jan 19: In another day of successful anti-militancy operations, security forces and police today killed six militants-four in Bahi Nambal village of Budhal in Rajouri district and two in Narh, Balnoi in Mendhar sector where five infiltrators were killed yesterday. A civilian was also killed in Nambal operation. SSP Rajouri S A Mujtaba said troops of 60 Rashtriya Rifles, joined by Rajouri police launched a search and cordon operation at village Sadda in Budhal area last night after developing a specific information about the presence of four militants in the area. However, the militants fled from Sadda after observing movement of the security personnel and took shelter in a dhok of Mohd Lateef at adjoining village of Bahi

Nambal in Budhal. After the dhok, where the militants had taken shelter was identified, re-enforcement of Army and police was rushed to the spot. In early hours of this morning, security forces orchestrated the evacuation of civil population and their cattle to avert civilian casualties.

Greater Kashmir, 20 January 2005

DNA report exonerates Major: Army

Srinagar, Jan 19: Army today said the DNA report received from the forensic laboratory in Chandigarh has exonerated the accused Major of 30 RR in the Handwara rape incident. The Major was accused of raping three women including a pre-teen girl at village Badra Payeen on the night of November 6. "The DNA report issued by the central forensic science laboratory Chandigarh indicates that the vaginal swabs of the victim did not contain any DNA strains of the accused," army said. The communiqué added "though the DNA report conclusively clears the Major of the rape charge, the general court martial will proceed to its logical conclusion."

The Hindu, 21 January 2005

Army posts come under fire again

NEW DELHI, JAN. 20 . Indian Army posts on the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir came under fire from the Pakistani side. About 10 mortar shells landed near the Hamirpur post in Mendhar area of Rajouri sector. This is not very far from the site of the unprovoked mortar firing from the Pakistani side on Tuesday. "We are exercising restraint and investigating who could be behind the firing," said Deepak Sammanwar of the Army Headquarters. "It may not be of much consequence. It may be small arms or something and we cannot attribute it immediately to the Pakistani Army," he added.

Greater Kashmir, 21 January 2005

'No evidence to suggest Pak Army's role in LoC firing'

Islamabad: Pakistan today informed India that it has found no evidence to suggest that its Army was involved in the firing incident in Poonch sector of Jammu and Kashmir after "fully investigating" the matter. Pakistan conveyed its finding to India when its Director General Military Operations spoke to his Indian counterpart on the hotline for the second time in two days after the Tuesday night firing incident in Poonch sector in Jammu and Kashmir. Military spokesman Maj Gen Shaukat Sultan said "Pakistani DGMO told the Indian military officer that such allegations create tensions and the two sides agreed that such incidents should be resolved at the local level through flag meetings," he said.

Greater Kashmir, 21 January 2005

Protests in Kawoosa against 'custodial killing'

Srinagar, Jan 20: Many thousand people in Kawoosa Chak village of Budgam district Thursday staged a protest demonstration against the Special Operations Group personnel, who, according to the protesters, killed a released militant in custody after arresting him three days ago. Quoting the protesters, a local news agency KPS reported that SOG personnel arrested Abdul Gani Dar and another civilian of the village on Monday. Police today recovered dead body of Abdul Gani Dar. When the news of Dar's custodial murder reached his village and other adjacent areas of Magam area, hundreds of people rushed to his home and raised slogans against the 'custodial torture and murder' of Dar.

The Times of India, 22 January 2005

Militants may provoke Army to retaliate (Rajat Pandit)

NEW DELHI: Militant outfits, aided by local Pakistani Army battalion and platoon commanders along the Line of Control, could now be trying to provoke the Indian Army to retaliate and wreck the ceasefire. The ceasefire, holding along the 198-km International Border in Jammu and Kashmir, the 778 km LoC and 150 km Actual Ground Position Line in Siachen-Saltoro Ridge area since November 2003, has suddenly turned fragile in the last three days. "The militants and hardline sections of the Pakistani Army would certainly like the ceasefire to break down completely into artillery duels which were norm earlier. They thrive when tensions escalate between India and Pakistan," maintained a senior officer on Friday. The Army is sure the first breach of the 13-monthold ceasefire, in the Poonch sector on Tuesday night, was the handiwork of a "frustrated" sections in Pakistani Army since high-calibre 82mm mortars were used.

Indian Express, 22 January 2005

Hurriyat says no to Centre's J-K move

SRINAGAR, JANUARY 21: The moderate faction of the Hurriyat Conference today termed the Centre's move for a fresh look on the issue of granting autonomy to J-K as a futile exercise. Rejecting the move, the faction said this was not a solution to the Kashmir problem. Addressing a congregation on the occasion of Id-UI-Azha, Hurriyat chairman Mirwaiz Umar Farooq alleged that Centre's move was to ward off "mounting pulls and pressures to resolve the Kashmir issue". Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil on Monday had announced the setting up of a committee to look into the autonomy issue. Terming the move as a futile attempt, Mirwaiz said it (autonomy) was not the solution to the Kashmir problem. He added that polls being held in the state under the Indian Constitution could not be an alternative to the right of "self determination".

Daily Excelsior, 22 January 2005

Two ultras killed in Gool

JAMMU, Jan 21: Pakistan Army fired seven mortar shells on Indian positions in Tarkundi sector in Rajouri district last night while two Hizbul Mujahideen militants were killed in an encounter with security forces at village Lancha in Gool area of Ramban police district. Meanwhile, two militants were spotted at village Paddal in Parmandal area of Samba tehsil. The

militants managed to escape leaving behind some explosive material, AK ammunition and medicines. Official sources said seven mortar shells were fired by Pakistan Army at Cheel post under the jurisdiction of Manjakote police station in Rajouri last night. After shelling, 12 rounds of machine gun were also fired on the spot from across the Line of Control (LoC), the sources said, adding no casualties or damage was reported in the shelling and firing.

Daily Excelsior, 22 January 2005

4 HM militants killed in Udhampur encounter

Jammu: Four Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) militants were killed and three BSF personnel, including an assistant commandant, wounded in an over 18-hour-long encounter in Mahore area of Udhampur district early this morning. A BSF spokesman said acting on a tip-off, BSF troops laid a cordon around Bakhwali patch of the Hariwala forests in Mahore at 1000 hrs yesterday. He said the gunfight ensued in the afternoon after the militants opened indiscriminate fire. Two militants were killed by late last evening while two others were killed early this morning, he added. BSF assistant commandant and two policemen were injured in the gunbattle. The spokesman said about three militants were still suspected to be hiding in the area and a combing operation was on.

Indian Express, 22 January 2005

Take LoC firing on face value: Pranab

NEW DELHI, JANUARY 21: Less than 24 hours before the scheduled arrival of Army Chief Gen N.C. Vij at the Bhimber Gali sector, mortar shells were fired from across the LoC at nearby Mendhar on Thursday evening. It was the second such incident in three days. General Vij, however, cancelled his trip today due to bad weather. Pakistan has suggested that the Indian side investigate yesterday's firing on its own as it "took place on India's territory". The DGMOs of both countries talked for a third time over the phone last night. New Delhi is treading cautiously on the LoC firing, keeping in mind the ongoing peace process. "We should take them on face value," Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said. He indicated that it was possible that militants were responsible. Mukherjee, who has asked Defence Secretary Ajai Vikram Singh to take up the matter with Islamabad, said: "I enquired today and also last night about the shelling from across the border.

Daily Excelsior, 23 January 2005

Another infiltration attempt foiled in Poonch, 2 killed

JAMMU, Jan 22: Army today foiled another infiltration attempt at Gulpur in Poonch sector killing two militants while two more ultras were gunned down by the Border Security Force (BSF) at Bakhwali in Hariwala forests in Lancha area of Gool in Ramban police district taking death toll of militants during last two days operation to four. Official sources said the Army personnel of 6/5 Gorkha Rifles observed movement of a group of four to six militants trying to infiltrate into the Indian territory from near Kanchan post of Army in Gulpur area of Poonch sector this morning. The militants were infiltrating amidst heavy snowfall and inclement weather from across the Line of Control (LoC).

Daily Excelsior, 23 January 2005

Ex-militant killed; 20 kg RDX seized

SRINAGAR, Jan 22 : Militants shot dead a former militant while security forces seized 20 Kg RDX and arrested two militants of Harkat-ul Mujahideen from a hideout in separate incidents in Kashmir today, official sources said. Militants shot dead former militant Ghulam Qadir Wani at his residence in Laddaw area of Pulwama district, an official spokesman here said. Wani, who was released recently, was working as a contractor, he said. Security forces recovered 20 KG RDX from a matador at Krankshiven in Sopore area of Baramulla district, the spokesman said. Acting on a specific information, security forces apprehended two militants of HuM from a hideout at Meemander in Shopian area of Pulwama district, he added.

Daily Excelsior, 23 January 2005

Border firing at small level: Gen Vij

JAMMU, Jan 22: Seeking to play down the Pakistani shelling of two areas in Jammu and Kashmir, Army Chief Gen N C Vij today described it as being of "small level" and said the cause of the incidents will have to be assessed before India thinks about a response. "There have been two instances of some firing at two different places. We need to wait and watch to assess the cause of this," Gen Vij told reporters here when asked about the Pakistani shelling in Rajouri and Poonch consecutively on Tuesday and Wednesday. Emphasising that the Indian Army will not draw any conclusions in a haste, he said the incidents have to be analysed to see whether these were some "local" acts or "part of some design" or any terrorist acts.

The Hindu, 23 January 2005

J&K Government asked to clear encroachments on Pandits' property

NEW DELHI, JAN. 22. The inter-ministerial group, constituted by the Centre for the rehabilitation of the displaced Kashmiri Pandits, has asked the Jammu and Kashmir Government to devise a mechanism to vacate encroachments on the property of the Pandits in the Valley. It has also directed the State Government to prepare an inventory of the properties and post it on the website. The chairperson of the group, Sushma Choudhary, told this to a delegation of the All-India Kashmiri Samaj during a meeting. The delegation, led by M.K.Kaw, sought "confidence-building measures" from the Centre along with Constitutional guarantees ensuring the political, social and economic rights of the displaced community before any dialogue with their representatives is initiated by the Government on their return to the Valley.

Daily Excelsior, 24 January 2005

19 Pakistani mines recovered

JAMMU, Jan 23: Militants blasted a bulldozer of the Public Works Department while security forces recovered 19 Pakistani mines in Rajouri district last night. The bulldozer, parked at an under-construction road at Sam Samad in rajouri district, was blasted by militants last night causing extensive damage to the equipment, official sources said. An explosion took place near Line of Control (LoC) in Nowshera sector where troops recovered 19 Pakistani mines besides a large quantity of explosive material, the sources said. No one was injured in the explosion, triggered by detonation of a Pakistani mine in Nargis Maidan area in Nowshera sector last night. Nineteen Pakistani mines, including three P2 yellow ones, were recovered during searches by troops in the area.

Daily Excelsior, 24 January 2005

Farooq blames Mufti Govt for trying to eliminate NC candidates

JAMMU, Jan 23: Former Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah has alleged that Mufti Mohammed Sayeed Government was trying to eliminate National Conference candidates and was hell bent to rig the Local Bodies elections. Talking to newsmen after addressing workers' rally at party headquarters here this afternoon, Dr Abdullah launched a scathing attack on the Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed for his revengeful attitude towards National Conference and alleged that with the deliberate attempt he has withdrawn the security of the NC candidates contesting Local Bodies and the Jammu and Srinagar Municipal Corporation elections. Dr Abdullah alleged that Mufti was trying to rig the elections and for this he was trying all his means. His men are trying to eliminate NC candidates and even sending threats to them. Family members of some of the candidates have been kidnapped.

Daily Excelsior, 25 January 2005

Talk it out (editorial)

Such is the perceived sensitivity of certain issues that they start generating heat even before they are formally taken up for discussion. The autonomy of the State is one subject of this kind. It has been raised without being formally discussed at any level after 1974 when Indira Gandhi and Sheikh Abdullah had entered into an accord facilitating the latter's return to the mainstream in 1975. P.V. Narasimha Rao had given a boost to this concept by stating that 'the sky is the limit'. There was a dialogue between him and the National Conference leaders but it was too brief and too sudden to merit a detailed description. The idea has witnessed a revival again following a meeting between Union Home Minister Shivraj Patil and NC leaders Farooq Abdullah and Omar Abdullah. Mr Patil has announced that a committee would be set up to look into the matter. On the face of there is nothing wrong if the leaders of different hues meet and hold meaningful talks on any controversy. In practice, however, it has been seen that they rush into publicising their rigid viewpoints stubbornly pre-empting the possibility of a proper meeting.

Daily Excelsior, 25 January 2005

Blast rocks building housing offices

ISLAMABAD, Jan 24: A bomb explosion today ripped through the Government headquarters housing ministerial offices in Quetta, the capital of southwestern province of Baluchistan, but no casualties were reported. The home-made bomb exploded at the cabinet block in the Civil Secretariat, shattering glasses in the building. The block was empty as the blast took place after office hours, reports from Quetta said. It is the second blast in the same building in less than two months. Deputy Inspector General Police Quetta confirmed the blast but said no one was injured. Police sealed off the area and roads soon after the blast in the highest security zone, which house also offices of top Government officials. No one has claimed responsibility for the blast but police suspect the involvement of nationalist rebels who were opposed to the construction of military cantonments and mega projects which enable people from other provinces to settle in Baluchistan.

Daily Excelsior, 25 January 2005

Two civilians, two militants killed

SRINAGAR, Jan 24: Two civilians and two militants were killed and 10 others injured in separate militancy-related incidents in Jammu and Kashmir since last night, an official spokesman said here today. One person was killed on the spot and six others injured seriously when militants hurled a grenade at Kulgam Bus Stand, 70 kms from here, in Anantnag district this afternoon, the spokesman said. The explosive was hurled by militants around 4.15 pm on a passing police vehicle, which missed the target and exploded on the road killing a vegetable seller instantly and injuring six others, he said. Militants killed a mentally-challenged person Mohammad Iqbal Mir in an orchard in Shopian area of Pulwama district, he said. Three persons, including a police constable, were injured when fired upon a search party of security forces at village Urapora in Zainapora area of the district, the spokesman said.

Daily Excelsior, 25 January 2005

Governor optimistic about infiltration dropping to zero level this year

JAMMU Jan 24: Exuding confidence that infiltration would come down to zero level in Jammu and Kashmir from this year, Governor, Lt Gen (Retd) S K Sinha today said that there has been hardly any infiltration during the past three months. In an interactive session with 62 school children of Doda and Kathua districts here this evening, the Governor said that situation is fast improving in the State notwithstanding isolated incidents of violence. The students posed a volley of questions to the Governor that, inter alia included, the measures being taken to combat militancy, reasons for militancy and illiteracy in Doda district, nexus between politicians and militants at some levels, unemployment leading to militancy, providing employment to surrendered militants at the cost of educated unemployed etc.

The Hindu, 26 January 2005

Militants attack Army vehicle

SRINAGAR JAN. 25. Even as the authorities strove to ensure unprecedented security arrangements in Srinagar and other district headquarters in the Kashmir Valley on the eve of Republic Day celebrations, militants struck in Anantnag. They exploded an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) on the Khanabal-Mattan road as a security force vehicle was passing by. Three security force personnel were injured and the vehicle was damaged. An Army patrol detected another IED on the same route and a bomb disposal squad was rushed to the spot to defuse it. In Pulwama district, militants hurled a grenade at security forces but no one was injured.

The Hindu, 26 January 2005

Honour for Srinagar Corps commander

SRINAGAR, JAN. 25. The commander of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps, Nirbhay Sharma, has been awarded the Uttam Yuddh Seva Medal on the occasion of Republic Day for his exceptional service during the ongoing insurgency in the Kashmir Valley. Lt. Gen. Sharma, who has been heading the most sensitive Army Corps in the country for the past 18 months, has already been decorated with the Param Vishisht Seva Medal, Ati Vishisht Seva Medal and Vishisht Seva Medal at various stages in his career. A defence spokesman said the Uttam Yuddh Seva Medal was in recognition of Lt. Gen. Sharma's contribution to the return of normality in Kashmir.

The Tribune, 26 January 2005

Governor sets agenda for peace in valley

Jammu, January 25: The Governor, Mr S.K. Sinha, has set an agenda for the return of peace to Jammu and Kashmir following marked drop in incidents of militancy related violence and in the level of infiltration, which he claimed, had come down to zero. In a message on the eve of Republic Day, the Governor said as head of the state he would strive for wiping every tear and for restoring peace to the state. Mr Sinha said during the past 15 years, more than 39,000 lives were lost. Out of them 15,000 were civilians, 4500 personnel from security forces and 18,500 militants.

The Tribune, 26 January 2005

3 killed in J&K, major incident averted

Srinagar, January 25: At least three persons, including two militants, have been killed and 10 others injured in separate incidents in Jammu and Kashmir since yesterday. A major incident was averted with the arrest of two suspected militants of Hizbul Mujahideen from the general bus stand at Anantnag when they were trying to lob a grenade yesterday. The police said two militants of Hizbul Mujahideen were killed in an encounter with the security forces at Urapora in the Zainapora area of Pulwama district. They have been identified as Zulfikar Hussain, alias Qasim Gujjar, chief coordinator of Hizbul Mujahideen, Pir Panchal range and Abu Zرار. Two AK rifles, two mobile phones and five hand grenades were recovered from the site of the encounter.

The Tribune, 26 January 2005

Tight security in J&K for R-Day

Jammu, January 25: The police and paramilitary forces have encircled the entire sports stadium, the venue for the Republic Day function here tomorrow. Security forces will maintain vigil from the rooftops of government and private buildings surrounding the stadium, where the Governor, Mr S.K. Sinha, will unfurl the Tricolour. Sniffer dogs and mine detectors were used for scanning the stadium and its surrounding areas. The stadium has remained out of bounds for sportsmen for the past one week. Security forces have been busy sanitising the area. CRPF men have been deployed on the flyover in front of the stadium. Vehicles fitted with medina-range guns and SLRS have been deployed around the stadium in Jammu and Srinagar.

Daily Excelsior, 26 January 2005

Hizb commander Qasim found dead

SRINAGAR, Jan 25: Hizbul Mujahideen's top-wanted functionary, Zulfikar Hussain Thokar alias Qasim of Rajouri, and a Pakistani militant have been found dead in yesterday's fierce gunbattle between militants and security forces at Urapora village in Shopian area of south Kashmir. Meanwhile, two militants and a civilian got killed and four civilians sustained injuries in another gunfight between the militants and security forces at Zampathri, in Kellar area of Pulwama district today.

Daily Excelsior, 27 January 2005

HUJI commander killed in Kokernag

SRINAGAR, Jan 26: Even as a commander of Harkat-ul-Jehad-e-Islami (HUJI) has died in an encounter with Army in Kokernag area and two holed up militants have escaped from another gunbattle in Pulwama, militants failed to disrupt the R-Day ceremonies in Kashmir valley today.

Informed sources said that troops of Rashtriya Rifles (RR) 49 Bn eliminated a militant of HUJI outfit in an encounter at Bongund in Kokernag-Dooru belt in Anantnag district today. He has been identified as Fareed Ahmed alias Manzoor alias Khalid S/o Abdul Kareem R/o Thathri, Doda. Some officials claimed that Fareed was a "district commander" with the HUJI. However, independent sources or the militant outfit did not confirm it.

Dawn, 27 January 2005

Demand for plebiscite in rallies across AJK

MUZAFFARABAD, Jan 26: People in Azad Jammu and Kashmir staged rallies and demonstrations on Wednesday on India's Republic Day to remind the international community that the so-called largest democracy had been persistently denying Kashmiris their internationally acknowledged right to self-determination. In state capital Muzaffarabad a public meeting was held

at the old civil secretariat under the aegis of Kashmir Liberation Cell which was addressed among others by AJK senior minister Syed Mumtaz Ali Gillani, minister for food Raja Abdul Qayyum, minister for sports, youth and culture Deewan Ali Chughtai, Jamaat-i-Islami leader Shaikh Aqeelur Rehman and Jammu Kashmir Liberation League leader Chaudhry Raj Mohammad.

The News, 27 January 2005

Can the Kashmir dispute be resolved? (Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema)

The Indian insistence on forgetting Kashmir and 'let's do business' will not only make things very difficult for Pakistanis but may also force them to revert to UN resolutions and the accompanying plebiscite option. To extract the maximum benefits from the principles of sincerity and flexibility, both sides need to comprehend the need for reciprocity. If serious and sincere efforts were made along with injections of flexibility, then it would be difficult to deny the possibility of an optimistically orientated outcome. However, if the application of these principles is effectively impeded, then pessimism is bound to engulf the entire process.

The Times of India, 27 January 2005

IT makes slow, but steady growth in J&K

NEW DELHI: Known for militancy-generated violence for the last 15 years now, the Kashmir valley is in the process of a quiet IT revolution. The Software Technology Park at Rangreth on the outskirts of Srinagar in Badgam district is its very own Cyberabad. It is fully equipped, with half the plots allotted to private sector entrepreneurs being operational. While the Valley, that can boast of a climate ideal for developing the IT industry, and the Rangareth units are poised to open shop in the software market, another ST Park, to be located in Jammu, is in the pipeline.

The Hindu, 27 January 2005

A peaceful Republic Day in Kashmir

SRINAGAR, JAN.26. For the first time in 15 years the Republic Day celebrations went off peacefully in Kashmir Valley. Though the participation of people was low as a strike disrupted normal life, not a single violent incident was reported due to tight security. At the Bakhshi Stadium here, the Finance Minister, Muzaffar Hussain Baig, unfurled the tricolour and took the salute at the march past. Criticising separatist leaders, he said they were sabotaging the democratic process in the State.

The Hindu, 27 January 2005

We are open to alliances: Omar

SRINAGAR, JAN. 26 . The National Conference president, Omar Abdullah, has said that his party will be open to alliances after the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, relinquishes office on completion of his three-year term in November. Speaking to The Hindu Mr Abdullah said that as of now "we are playing the role of a constructive opposition but obviously after the Mufti steps down as part of his arrangement with the Congress it will have an impact on political equations in Kashmir".

The Hindu, 28 January 2005

J&K Minister escapes bid

SRINAGAR, JAN. 27. The Finance Minister and People's Democratic Party leader, Muzaffar Hussain Baig, escaped an attempt on his life during an election campaign in Kashmir. As the parties contesting the civic polls were wrapping up their campaigning for the first phase in Baramulla and Kupwara districts, Mr. Baig had a miraculous escape when a grenade was thrown at him in Wangipora near Sumbal. Reports said he was on his way to the town along with the PDP spokesperson, Basharat Bukhari, when he was stopped by his workers. As he came out of the car, a grenade was thrown at him but it did not explode.

The Hindu, 28 January 2005

Uttam Yudh Seva Medal for Lt. Gen. Hari Prasad

JAMMU, JAN. 27. The Army Commander Northern Command, Lt. Gen. Hari Prasad, has been awarded the Uttam Yudh Seva Medal (UYSM) for his professional acumen, humane touch and ability to synergise the efforts of the Army with those of the Jammu and Kashmir Government and other agencies involved in counter terrorism and rehabilitation operations.

The Tribune, 28 January 2005

26 hurt in J&K grenade attack

Srinagar, January 27: At least 26 persons, including four police personnel, were injured when militants fired two grenades in Pampore town today, about 15 km south of Srinagar, ahead of the forthcoming civic polls. Senior PDP leader and Finance Minister Muzaffar Hussain Beigh and other party leaders escaped unhurt when militants hurled a grenade towards their convoy near Hajin in Baramulla district this afternoon. The police here said militants fired two rifle grenades towards the tehsil office at Pampore, highway township of Pulwama district, this afternoon injuring 26 persons, including 22 civilians and four police personnel.

The Tribune, 28 January 2005

Govt told to take note of Pak propaganda

Jammu, January 27: The Panthers Party chief, Prof Bhim Singh, has urged the Government of India to take serious note of the Pakistan television propaganda against India on Republic Day. In a statement, Prof Bhim Singh said here today that the Pakistan Television World telecast on January 26 some live shots in order to give credibility to the story that a total hartal was observed in Kashmir and women protesters were lathi-charged by the police.

The Tribune, 28 January 2005

International status for Srinagar airport

New Delhi, January 27: In a major incentive to the state of Jammu and Kashmir the Union Cabinet today decided to give its approval to upgrade the Srinagar airport to an international level from the present domestic status. The decision was taken today at a meeting presided over by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. The declaration of the Srinagar domestic airport as international airport would offer improved connectivity and wider choice of services at competitive cost to the air travellers resulting in boost to international tourism and economic development of the region.

The Indian Express, 28 January 2005

J-K polls draw near, talks of Third Front gain ground

JAMMU, JANUARY 27: As the civic polls draw nearer, the efforts to create a Third Front in the state have intensified, with several senior leaders within and outside the ruling coalition holding closed-door meetings. According to sources, at least three such meetings were held recently which were attended among others by People's Democratic Forum (PDF) chairman Haqim Mohammad Yasin and CPI(M) leader M.Y. Tarigami. The PDF is a part of the coalition government while the CPI(M) is supporting the government from outside.

The Indian Express, 28 January 2005

Abdullahs counting on Valley votes

JAMMU, JANUARY 27: The political pressure is well working on the Abdullahs. For the time being, they have limited themselves in the Valley electioneering, with just four days to the polls. After the announcement of the civic polls, neither NC chief Omar nor party patron Farooq has addressed any election meeting in Jammu. Omar skipped the function when Farooq released the NC manifesto for the Jammu Municipal Corporation polls four days back.

Daily Excelsior, 28 January 2005

Father-son duo slaughtered in Budgam

SRINAGAR, Jan 27: Suspected militants have slaughtered a middle-aged civilian and his son in Kremshore area of Budgam district. Meanwhile, as many as 26 people, including four Police personnel, sustained injuries when suspected militants hurled a hand grenade to apparently disrupt the process of municipal election in Pampore today. Informed sources told the EXCELSIOR that four unidentified gunmen, with their faces covered under masks, barged into the house of one Ghulam Qadir Beg at Kremshore in Budgam district at 2130 hours last night. They kidnapped Beg as well as his son, Bilal Ahmed Beg, and later slaughtered them in Chowdhry Bagh nullah, 2 Km from Kremshore.

The Tribune, 29 January 2005

Baramula, Kupwara civic poll today

Srinagar, January 28: It's six in the evening and the capital city of Srinagar is already sleeping. The residents have been up all day, hearing Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Syed list the benefits of civic body elections scheduled to create history in Kashmir. As twin districts of Baramula and Kupwara go to the polls for their eight and two municipal committees respectively tomorrow, it's hard to say what people are thinking. The responses to PDP's call for elections has been overwhelming - not a single local body ward is going uncontested, several wards are set to witness fierce battles, 65 women have filed nominations for Srinagar Municipal Corporation elections, to honour their 33 per cent representation in the process.

The Tribune, 29 January 2005

3 militants killed in encounter

Srinagar, January 28: Three militants, including one of pro-Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen outfit, were killed today in separate encounters across the Kashmir valley, a police spokesman said. The Hizbul militant, Mohammad Abbas Wani, was killed in a gunbattle with the security forces at Kawani Dogerpora in Pulwama district of South Kashmir, the spokesman said.

Daily Excelsior, 29 January 2005

Woman shot dead, son injured

RAJOURI, Jan 28: A woman was shot dead by the militants and her son seriously injured in an attack on their house at village Bagla Taryath under the jurisdiction of Dharamshal police station last night while a BSF Havildar was killed in an accidental grenade explosion at Kalakote. Traffic on Jammu-Rajouri road was blocked by agitated villagers of Bagla Taryath along with dead body of the woman at Sunderbani Chowk demanding setting up of a police picket and a Village Defence Committee (VDC) in the area.

The Hindu, 30 January 2005

Long queues outside booths in Baramulla, Sopore

BARAMULLA/ HANDWARA, JAN. 29. Long queues were seen outside the booths in Baramulla and Sopore today during the first phase of civic elections. The towns in the past have seen a near-total boycott of Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. There was not a single complaint of coercion or intimidation by the police or security forces in any part of north Kashmir this reporter visited. The refrain was that the voters were coming willingly as many of them believe that these elections, meant for upgrading the basic amenities, could not be ignored. Interestingly, the candidates were not provided security as there were too many. The people were aware of last evening's militant attacks in Pampore and Sopore in which one candidate was killed and two others injured.

The Hindu, 30 January 2005

Civic polls a victory for democracy: Mufti

JAMMU, JAN. 29. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, today said democratic roots had been strengthened in the State with the conduct of civic polls. The Mufti told The Hindu: "The participation of people from all parts of the State in the civic elections would go a long way in strengthening the democratic process in the State. Normal democratic functioning has an inherent capability to solve the disaffection of the people at every level and this is already happening in the State. It is a slow process but it is certainly happening in our State and results are before all to see." It did not matter which party got more seats in the civic polls as the holding of the elections with mass participation was itself a victory for democratic forces."

Daily Excelsior, 31 January 2005

3 LeT ultras killed in Rajouri

JAMMU, Jan 30: Three militants of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) outfit were gunned down by the troops of Romeo Force in an encounter at Gai Narh in Gambhir area of Manjakote police station this evening. Official sources confirmed the killing of two militants while unofficial sources put the toll at three. Sources said troops of Romeo Force launched a search operation in Gai Narh at 2 pm on a specific information that four militants of the LeT outfit were holding a "strategy session" in a hideout. The militants were asked to surrender but they gave no response.

Greater Kashmir, 31 January 2005

Disappeared men used in counterinsurgency ops: APDP

Srinagar, Jan 30: The Association of Parents of Disappeared Persons (APDP), a local group fighting for the victims of alleged enforced disappearance, on Sunday accused the security forces of "using the disappeared persons in their custody in the counterinsurgency operations before their elimination." "We have received reports that the armed forces are using the persons who have been disappeared after arrest, in the operations against militants, and after their purpose is served they are eliminated," the APDP patron, Pervez Imroz, said. He said the "recent resurfacing" of some disappeared persons was an indication that many of the missing youth are detained in various security camps and jails across the state.

Daily Excelsior, 31 January 2005

Militants attack NC cavalcade, Cong activists' Hurriyat Hqs

SRINAGAR, Jan 30: Even as a group of Congress supporters this evening launched a mild attack on the headquarters of Hurriyat Conference (Mirwaiz faction) in Rajbagh area of the capital city, militants attacked a campaigning cavalcade of the National Conference in Chota Bazar area. Meanwhile, suspected militants have gunned down two members of a family in Kulgam area and a contractor in Telbal area since last evening.

Dawn, 31 January 2005

Kashmir day programmes finalized

ISLAMABAD, Jan 30: Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas has finalized the Kashmir Solidarity Day programmes to extend moral, diplomatic and political support to Kashmiri people. The interior ministry has already announced February 5 as holiday. A five-minute silence will be observed to pay homage to Kashmiri martyrs at 10am on the day. The foreign ministry has also directed Pakistan missions abroad to observe five-minute silence according to their local time.

Dawn, 31 January 2005

Dialogue on Kashmir options

But on Kashmir, Indian political leaders have rejected a time frame. Can genuine friendship and trust be developed when a core issue, such as Kashmir is relegated to the future? Perhaps Indian expectations are that if substantial benefits result from a cooperative relationship, Pakistanis will accept the status quo in Kashmir. However, support for the Kashmir cause has mounted in Pakistan, and the world needs to pay more attention.

The Tribune, 31 January 2005

NC loses ground, Hurriyat sidelined

Srinagar, January 30: The electorate for civic elections to municipal councils and committees in Baramula and Kupwara has reaffirmed support to the ruling coalition partners in Jammu and Kashmir. In a record-breaking turnout that touched an all time high of 86 per cent in the militant-infested Kupwara district and 48 per cent in Baramula, the voters completely sidelined the separatists and the Hurriyat hardliners who had been voicing boycott calls from various platforms, including Pak TV.

The Tribune, 31 January 2005

Mufti urges separatists to join talks

Srinagar, January 30: Hailing the results of the civic poll held in Baramula and Kupwara yesterday, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has said that people of the Valley have finally voted for peace and development. Disregarding the threat of the gun and boycott calls by separatists, the voters have emerged as their own masters, the Chief Minister said. Respecting the mandate, he said continuity in the process of people's empowerment by holding the Panchayati Raj elections as promised would be maintained. Speaking to TNS at his Maulana Azad Road residence today, the Chief Minister also hoped that the Centre would restore dialogue for resolving the Kashmir issue.

The Hindu, 31 January 2005

J&K civic polls: ruling coalition sweeps first phase

BARAMULLA/ HANDWARA, JAN. 29. The ruling coalition of the Congress and the People's Democratic Party (PDP) in Jammu and Kashmir today swept the first phase of the civic elections in Baramulla and Kupwara districts. They won a clear majority in seven out of nine towns which went to the polls after a gap of 27 years. The Opposition National Conference could manage a better share in Pattan and Sumbal while the resurgence of the Awami League founded by Kukka Parray was significant in Hajin where it bagged 11 out of 12 seats. The ruling coalition, which backed most of the winning independents, secured a majority in Baramulla, Sopore, Handwara, Uri, Pattan and Bandipore.

The Hindu, 31 January 2005

Hoisting the flag after a decade

SURANKOTE (POONCH), JAN. 30. Braving chilly winds and militancy, people in remote hamlets here hoisted the Tricolour on Republic Day after almost a decade. The national flag was hoisted atop the highest hillock so that it could be seen from the surroundings. This is in sharp contrast to the days when militants unfurled black flags on the occasion.

The Times of India, 31 January 2005

Beauty vs Kashmir terror beast

BARAMULLA: This is empowerment with a twist. The army in Jammu and Kashmir has hit upon a novel idea to bring the border women at par with urban ladies. The army in Baramulla in north Kashmir, has established a centre to give beauty training to a few married women and 25-odd college girls. The idea is not just to turn out well-groomed ladies, but to give them skills needed for entrepreneurship. While there are about a dozen parlours operating in Srinagar there are none in the rural areas as any sort of "beauty" activity was banned by militants.