

Indian Express, 1 January 2009

### **Election over, there's work to be done By Amitabh Mattoo**

The successful conclusion of the elections to the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly is being widely and rightly hailed as a victory of democracy. The large turnout of voters - even in the Kashmir valley (despite the boycott call given by separatist organisations), the transparent and largely peaceful conduct of the polls, and the extraordinarily large number of candidates, make the elections one of the most inclusive and credible in the history of Jammu and Kashmir. That Kashmiris who took to the streets a few months ago in a mass intifada-like uprising should turn out in even larger numbers to vote in the state election may be seen by cynics as evidence of Kashmiri fickleness. This would be a mistake. We are witnessing a new transformative politics in Kashmir: the 'ordinary' Kashmiri is seizing every opportunity to achieve peaceful change, from the politics of the street to the politics of the ballot

Daily Excelsior, 1 January 2009

### **Omar to be sworn-in as CM on Jan 5**

SRINAGAR, Dec 31: The Governor's rule in the State will end next week as National Conference president Omar Abdullah is likely to be sworn in as the ninth Chief Minister on Monday, highly placed sources in the party said. The National Conference president is scheduled to visit New Delhi tomorrow to finalise the finer details of the coalition Government with Congress party, the sources told Excelsior. They said the Legislature party meeting of the National Conference will take place on either Saturday or Sunday after which Omar will meet Governor N N Vohra to stake the claim for formation of Government in the State

Hindu, 2 January 2009

### **Jawan killed in Poonch encounter**

Poonch: One jawan was killed and a Junior Commissioned Officer reported missing during an encounter between Army personnel and six suspected Jaish-e-Mohammed terrorists which continued for the second day on Thursday in the Poonch sector close to the Line of Control with Pakistan. The six terrorists who included JeM local commander Abu Dawood were encircled by the security forces amidst intermittent gunfire that went on in Bhatidar late on Thursday night

Daily Excelsior, 3 January 2009

### **No rotational CM, Cong gets Dy CM's post**

NEW DELHI, Jan 2: In keeping with the 'spirit' of the Jammu and Kashmir poll verdict, the Congress has agreed to accept the post of Deputy Chief Minister in place of a rotational Chief Minister, an arrangement it had with the PDP after the 2002 elections in the State. Though the Congress or the National Conference have not made public the formulation it had decided on last night to serve as the basis of their coalition Government in Jammu and Kashmir. Highly-placed Congress sources today said that it would not have its Chief Minister after three years and instead it would support the Chief Ministership of NC leader Omar Abdullah for the full six-year-term

Daily Excelsior, 3 January 2009

### **4 top JeM ultras killed in Mendhar; Retd ASI held for militant links**

JAMMU, Jan 2: Four top militants of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) were reported to have been killed in a fierce three days long gun-battle at Bhati Dhar forests in Chatral area of Mendhar tehsil in Poonch district. While two Army jawans and a militant were killed last night, three ultras perished this morning. Defence spokesman, Jammu, S N Acharya confirmed the killing of four militants in the gun-battle at Bhati Dhar

forests

Daily Excelsior, 7 January 2009

### **GM Shah passes away**

Srinagar, Jan 6: Former Chief Minister Ghulam Mohammad Shah passed away here today following a brief heart ailment. He was 88. Shah, who was admitted at Sher-e-Kashmir Institute of Medical Sciences (SKIMS) Soura last night after complaining about pain in the chest, breathed his last at 5.40 p.m, officials at the hospital said. The officials said Shah was admitted to Medical Intensive Care Unit of Hospital last night. Shah, who was married to daughter of National Conference founder Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, is survived by wife Khalida, daughter Aliya and two sons -- Muzaffar Shah and Iftikhar Shah

Daily Excelsior, 7 January 2009

### **Day 8: Smoke bombs used, special forces rushed**

JAMMU, Jan 6: Army today used 150 to 200 smoke bombs targeting hide-outs of the militants inside Bhati Dhar forests as gun-battle between security forces and militants raged on for eighth day, the longest ever in nearly two decades of militancy in Jammu region. Troops continued air surveillance operation for second day today to get exact location of the hide-outs in case a commando operation is necessitated. Night vision devices including large generator sets have been installed in Bhati Dhar forests of Mendhar tehsil in Poonch district by the Army to carry on operations even during the night. Even light has become a major problem during the day in view of cloudy weather and thick fog engulfing the area

Greater Kashmir, 7 January 2009

### **Gulmarg set to host Snow Festival**

Srinagar, Jan 6: Gulmarg is decked up for Snow festival beginning in the coming few days, director tourism Farooq Shah said Tuesday. Hundreds of skiers and tourists from different countries, majority from India, have arrived in the ski resort covered under a fresh carpet of snow. The Snow festival, which is one of the features of the government's Winter Tourism Schedule, is marked by night skiing, snowboarding, ice-skiing cycling and showcasing of traditional Kashmiri cuisine. Officials said bookings for the festival have already started. 'We want to market Gulmarg as a Winter Tourism destination. It has been observed that most of tourists go to European Countries to spend holidays in winters. By organizing Snow festival we want to attract tourists to Gulmarg which is far more beautiful than other tourist destinations in the world,' Farooq Shah told Greater Kashmir

Daily Excelsior, 10 January 2009

### **Govt to facilitate talks between Centre, separatists: Omar**

JAMMU, Jan 9: Chief Minister, Omar Abdullah today said that National Conference-Congress coalition Government in the State will strive to create a situation conducive for Central Government's dialogue with separatists. Addressing first press conference at Civil Secretariat here after assuming the Chief Ministership, Mr Abdullah said "it is the job of State Government to create conducive atmosphere so that Centre could hold talks with the separatists for the resolution of Kashmir issue", adding "we will perform our duty in this regard as was done by Farooq Abdullah in 2002".

Daily Excelsior, 10 January 2009

### **Militants used Bhati Dhar forests for 5 years**

JAMMU, Jan 9: More than a dozen civilians including a woman, Quresha, have gone underground from areas surrounding Bhati Dhar following a hunt launched by police

for them after revelations made by arrested persons including a retired ASI that Pakistani commanders of Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and some other outfits had made permanent shelters in cave hide-outs of Bhati Dhar forests in Mendhar area of Poonch district with the help of locals. Official sources said a NRI Mohd Shafiq's wife, Muneeza Begum, arrested by the police from Bhati Dhar, was not the woman wanted by police, who had been carrying arms and ration supplies for Pakistani militants commanders of Jaish outfit inside the forests

Daily Excelsior, 11 January 2009

**Tara gets Housing, Rather Finance, Sagar; RDD, Slathia I & C, Sham Health**

JAMMU, Jan 10: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today assigned portfolios to nine Cabinet Ministers including five from Congress and four from National Conference, who were sworn-in along with him on January 5. As a maximum of 15 more Ministers could be inducted into the Cabinet, a number of portfolios have been retained by the Chief Minister for allocation among the new Ministers as and when they are sworn-in. However, with Governor N N Vohra leaving for New Delhi this afternoon and was expected to be back on January 14, the induction of new Ministers is expected only after his return

Daily Excelsior, 14 January 2009

**Govt in dilemma on full budget, vote-on-account**

JAMMU, Jan 13: New NC-Congress coalition Government is yet to take a decision on whether to go for a vote-on-account or present a full budget in February-March for financial year 2009-2010. During last two years of Ghulam Nabi Azad led coalition Government i.e. in 2007 and 2008, the budget session was held in January for the reason that development works could be taken up right from April to extend working season. Finance and Law & Parliamentary Affairs Minister Abdul Rahim Rather, who was allotted prestigious Finance portfolio on January 10, told the Excelsior that he has started meeting the officers of his Departments after taking over the charge to know their preparedness in making the budget

Asian Age, 15 January 2009

**800 women get trained in PoK for hits in India**

Jan. 14: Hundreds of young women are reportedly being trained at several terror camps in Pakistan-occupied Kash-mir and in Pakistan, Indian as well as American intelligence agencies have confirmed. Asiya, a 24-year-old Pakistani woman who was recently arrested while trying to sneak across the Line of Control into India, has reportedly revealed during interrogation that several terror camps where women are being trained are in the Bimar, Kotli and Sensa areas of PoK. It is learnt that during interrogation she revealed that a large number of young women "mujahids" were being trained at these camps. America's FBI, ever since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, has directed its field agents to constantly monitor and spy on young Muslim men and women, including American citizens, who have travelled to Pakistan without any good reason

Daily Excelsior, 15 January 2009

**Chief co-ordinator of 4 outfits nabbed**

Baramulla, Jan 14: Militants in Kashmir received a major set back as police today arrested chief coordinator of four militant outfits and former chief of Hizbul Mujahideen Mohammad Ahsan Dar from Sumbal area of Bandipora district in North Kashmir. Dar, who was once the chief commander operations of Hizbul Mujahideen, was nabbed by a police team while he was moving from his Pattan hometown to Naidkhai area in Bandipora district, Deputy Inspector General of Police North

Kashmir Abdul Gani Mir told reporters here

Daily Excelsior, 16 January 2009

**Omar sets 100 days deadline to improve people's life; No immediate expansion of Cabinet**

SRINAGAR, Jan 15: Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today said his Government intends to take slew of measures to bring an overall improvement in the life of the people of the State within the first 100 days of his taking over with a special focus on improvement of power and development scenario. "My Government intends to take steps to mitigate the problems of the people of the State. To start with, we have formed a 100 days programme and the benefits and improvement should be visible to the people," Omar told reporters at a press conference -- the first in Srinagar after becoming the Chief Minister

Daily Excelsior, 16 January 2009

**800 militants active in J&K: GOC-in-C**

AKHNOOR, Jan 15: Cross-border infiltration in Jammu and Kashmir has been on a decline since 2004, but about 600 to 800 militants are active in the State as per the assessment of various security agencies, the Army's Northern Command chief said today. "About 600 to 800 militants are active in Jammu and Kashmir as per the assessment of various security agencies," General Officer Commanding in Chief (GOC-in-C), Northern Command, Lt Gen P C Bhardwaj told reporters soon after conclusion of Northern Command Investiture Ceremony here today

Daily Excelsior, 17 January 2009

**Intl agencies go hard on Bangladeshis**

JAMMU, Jan 16: The recent statement of Union Home Minister P Chidambaram that Bangladeshis have no business in India has sounded alarm bells among security and police agencies across the region, who have directed all police stations and police posts to identify the Bangla nationals working as labourers at several places. "The infiltration by Bangladeshi nationals in Jammu region via trains and buses from West Bengal has declined during past couple of months, mainly due to heavy presence of security forces for the Assembly elections but it continued. The Bangla nationals, who tried to exfiltrate to Pakistan are mostly caught on the borders while some of them directly start working in brick kilns, fields and other such places as labourers", official sources said

Daily Excelsior, 18 January 2009

**Give J&K a chance: Omar to India Inc**

MUMBAI, Jan 17: Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Omar Abdullah has asked India Inc to help in creating conditions for resurrection of industry and help in solving the problem of "unemployability" in his home State. "I am not asking you to look to invest immediately. I am looking to you to help me create the conditions that will make you to invest in Jammu and Kashmir," Abdullah said last night addressing a gathering of the who's who of Corporate India at an award ceremony here. He asked the industrialists to help solve the two related problems that, according to him needed to be addressed urgently-employment and unemployability

Hindu, 19 January 2009

**Lashkar offers to end jihad**

NEW DELHI: In a statement released to Srinagar-based journalists on Saturday, a Lashkar-e-Taiba spokesperson said it was willing to terminate its terror campaign in return for international intervention on the Kashmir issue. 'If the world listens to our

cries and plays its role in resolving the Kashmir issue, there is no point in continuing fighting,' said the spokesperson, who uses the code-name 'Dr. Abdullah Ghaznavi.' 'Our struggle is only confined to Kashmir,' he claimed, 'and we have no relations or association with armed groups operating at international level. We have no global agenda. We just want freedom of Kashmir and if it comes peacefully we will welcome it. We don't see armed struggle as the only way to achieve our goal. If the world listens to our cries and plays its role in resolving the Kashmir issue there would be no reason for us to fight.'

Daily Excelsior, 19 January 2009

#### **Top LeT comdr held in Doda**

JAMMU, Jan 18: A top Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) commander was today arrested by police from Sartangal bazaar when he was taking a round of the market, most probably surveying the area for carrying out a strike, in Bhaderwah town of Doda district. SSP Doda Prabhat Singh said LeT commander Imtiyaz Ahmed alias Saidullah son of Mohd Sharief R/o Sartangal, Bhaderwah, was apprehended by a police party which identified him while roaming in the market. Police party was on look out for Saidullah as there was a specific input about his movement in Sartangal area

Daily Excelsior, 19 January 2009

#### **PDP will become voice of people: Mufti**

JAMMU, Jan 18: People's Democratic Party (PDP) patron Mufti Mohd Sayeed said today that his party will fill the vacuum of opposition created by NC-Congress alliance and will not allow people of the State to feel helpless. In an informal chat with newsmen after joining of PDP by former MLA and Congress leader Balbir Singh, Mr Sayeed said a common man need not to feel 'bechara' (helpless) as his party would play effective role of an Opposition party, both within and outside the Assembly. "We will become power of the people. We are here to fight for their cause", he said

Daily Excelsior, 20 January 2009

#### **Several citizens cancel cross-LoC visit**

JAMMU, Jan 19: As tension between India and Pakistan refused to die, several citizens on both parts of divided State, who earlier had to wait for months together to visit their relatives, have started canceling their visits despite being granted travel permission by the concerned agencies. Citizens of Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), still venturing to cross Line of Control (LoC) on weekly Poonch-Rawlakote bus services have disclosed that a number of people in both parts of divided State have postponed their programme to meet their relatives in view of ongoing war rhetoric between the two countries

Tribune, 20 January 2009

#### **Govt drive to identify new tourist sites**

The state government has launched a drive to identify more scenic spots in the three regions of Kashmir, Ladakh and Jammu this season so as to attract more tourists and upgrading the existing sites for improving the socio-economic condition of the state. In this direction, already new spots like Bungus and Neelam valleys in remote areas of north Kashmir, the rugged mountains of Zanskar and Nobra valleys in Ladakh, and Bhaderwah in Doda district of Jammu province have emerged on the tourist map of the state. This was disclosed by Tourism Minister Nawang Rigzin Jora, who was of the view that not only did tourism provides much-needed foreign exchange, but also employment opportunities for the youth, since the sector was intertwined with the state's rich art, culture and heritage. The sector was at a low

ebb due to the Amarnath land agitation last year, but the authorities expected a bumper tourist season this

Hindu, 23 January 2009

**Miliband was not off-message, he toed the U.K. line on Kashmir**

LONDON: The British Foreign Office on Thursday said Foreign Secretary David Miliband's remarks on Kashmir, which infuriated the Indian government, were fully consistent with Britain's stated view that any conflict likely to be exploited by terrorists to kill and maim innocent people must be resolved quickly. Sources told The Hindu that Mr. Miliband had not been off-message, nor did he deviate from the government line while calling upon India to resolve the Kashmir dispute urgently in order to blunt the edge of Pakistan-based terrorists

Daily Excelsior, 24 January 2009

**HM commander, associate gunned down in Doda**

JAMMU, Jan 23: In a major success, Doda police today gunned down two top militants of Hizbul Mujahideen outfit including a 'tehsil commander' in Batyas forests under the jurisdiction of Gandoh police station and recovered a large quantity of arms and ammunition from their possession. With today's killing of Hizbul's 'tehsil commander', a total of six commanders of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and HM outfits have been killed in Doda district during past couple of months. SSP Doda Prabhat Singh said a police party was conducting searches in Batyas forests for last three days after developing a specific information that top Hizbul militants have developed hide-outs there. A contact with the militants was established this morning

Tribune, 24 January 2009

**Omar sets up task force to spur growth**

Chief Minister Omar Abdullah today announced the setting up of a joint task force for the promotion of industry and growth and development of the state. The Chief Minister will be its chairman with a former CII president as its co-chairman. The task force members will be prominent industrialists and national-level figures, local CEOs, economists and government officials. The task force will also have a working group, headed by the Chief Secretary and co-chaired by the CII. Its members will be select CEOs and government officials. The secretariat for the task force and the working group will be the CII

Daily Excelsior, 25 January 2009

**Two Lashkar ultras killed**

Two militants believed to be from the Lashkar-e-Taiba were killed in an encounter with security forces in the Shahangri forests of Handwara today. The militants have not been identified yet, but police sources said they were from the LeT as per the intelligence inputs. Today's encounter has come as another shot in the arm for security forces in north Kashmir, as they had recently killed Tamim, a Pakistani, who was a top operative of the Al-Badr in the valley. Besides, they arrested Ahsan Dar, a founder of Hizbul Mujahideen, from there

Daily Excelsior, 26 January 2009

**LeT bid to push fidayeens foiled**

JAMMU, Jan 25: Ahead of Republic Day, a group of three to four militants made an unsuccessful attempt to breach border fencing and sneak into this side from Kanachak sector in wee hours of this morning to create mayhem in the City. Alertness shown by the border guards, however, thwarted the militants plot. In

another success against terror today, police destroyed a well maintained 10' x 8' hide-out of Hizbul Mujahideen militants at Wagan near Sher Bibi, just yards away from Jammu-Srinagar National Highway in Ramban district. The under-ground hide-out, covered with grass to make it look like a normal walking route, had enough space inside to accommodate half a dozen militants