

The Tribune, 1 March 2005

### **HM militant killed in encounter**

Jammu, February 28: A foreign militant of Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) was killed by the security forces in an encounter near Surankote in Poonch district yesterday, a Defence Ministry spokesman said today. The spokesman said the troops ambushed a militant near Surankote yesterday and shot him dead in an exchange of fire. He was identified as Zahid Gul of Pakistan. One AK rifle, one pistol and one radio set were seized from him.

Daily Excelsior, 1 March 2005

### **Mortar shelling again in Poonch**

JAMMU, Feb 28: Five mortar shells were fired upon an Army post in forward area of Tarkundi in Bhimber Gali sector in Poonch district last night from across the Line of Control (LoC). Five 60 mm mortar shells fell near Army's Cheel post at 10.30 pm last night. While four mortar shells exploded, the fifth didn't, official sources said. They couldn't say as to whether the mortars were fired by Pakistan Army or the terrorists. A Defence spokesman, however, said there was a possibility that the mortar shells were fired upon by the terrorists. "We are investigating the shelling", he added and said the Indian side didn't retaliate.

Daily Excelsior, 1 March 2005

### **Central team arrives to assess damage**

JAMMU, Feb 28: The Central team today arrived here for taking on the spot assessment of the damage caused by unprecedented snowfall and incessant rains disrupting badly the infrastructure and basic civic amenities, besides loss of life and property. Soon after its arrival here, the team held a meeting with senior State functionaries and was apprised of the detailed profile of damage caused to vital installation including power, irrigation, road connectivity and other public infrastructure by the snow storm and torrential rains. A computer aided presentation on the magnitude of losses was also depicted to the central team. On power installations, it was informed that 132 KV Srinagar-Chenani and 220 KV Kishenpur-Pampore transmission lines were badly affected and partially restored by the authorities.

Daily Excelsior, 1 March 2005

### **3 troopers injured, 2 ultras holed up in Shopian**

SRINAGAR, Feb 28: At least three soldiers of army have sustained injuries in a gunfight between militants and security forces at Matribugh in Shopian area. Informed sources said that on a specific information, troops of Rashtriya Rifles 9th Bn raided a militant hideout at Matribugh village in Shopian area of south Kashmir today. When some soldiers forced their entry into a room of the target house, two to three militants overpowered one of the soldiers and held him hostage. As his colleagues made an attempt to get him freed, the militants opened fire. Three soldiers sustained injuries.

Greater Kashmir, 1 March 2005

### **Army Major harassing Rednag people Brigadier denies**

Kupwara, Feb 28: The residents of Rednag Lolab here have threatened migration if authorities fail to transfer a "notorious" army Major from the area. According to villagers, 18 Rashtriya Rifles (RR) Major Khullar accuses the inhabitants of "harboring" militants, the claims strongly refuted by the locals. "The Major calls up the village youth and threatens them of dire consequences if they decline the offer of becoming an army source. They many a times thrash youths on the pretext of declining the offer," the residents said. "We have to report everyday on the Rednag camp," three youths told Greater Kashmir.

The News, 2 March 2005

### **Police adopts three children orphaned by snow tragedy**

Srinagar, March 1: The Jammu and Kashmir police today adopted three children, a boy and two girls, orphaned due to the snow tragedy in the Waltengoo area of Anantnag district, while the security forces and various non-government organisations continue to extend their relief and rescue operations. A decision to adopt three orphaned children was announced by the ADG, Mr Kuldeep Khuda, who visited the relief camps at YK Pora and snow-affected villages in Waltengoo area today. The police has already contributed Rs 1 crore to the Chief Minister's Relief Fund for the snow-affected people of South Kashmir.

Daily Excelsior, 2 March 2005

### **Two soldiers killed in Shopian**

SRINAGAR, Mar 1: Three holed up militants of Hizbul Mujahideen have escaped after killing both the soldiers of Rashtriya Rifles, who had been captured and disarmed by them during a fierce gunbattle in Matribugh village of Shopian on Monday afternoon. Informed sources in south Kashmir told the Excelsior that all the three militants of Hizbul Mujahideen, who had been trapped by the RR 9 Bn raiders at the house of one Master Inayatullah at Matribugh, Shopian, on Monday, have managed to escape.

The Tribune, 3 March 2005

### **Separatists not ready to consider themselves 'irrelevant'**

Jammu, March 2: Kashmiri separatists are not prepared to consider themselves "irrelevant" following improvement in the relations between Delhi and Islamabad. A senior APHC leader, Prof Abdul Gani Bhat, and the Chairman of the Peoples'

Conference, Mr Sajjad Lone, agree that the recent developments, including the agreement on the reopening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road, have indicated that the relations between India and Pakistan are improving. Prof Bhat told this correspondent that "we continue to consider our organisations relevant to the exercise on finding a durable and peaceful settlement of the Kashmir issue."

The Hindu, 3 March 2005

#### **Four new buses to ply on Muzaffarabad route**

JAMMU, MARCH 2. The Jammu and Kashmir Government has acquired four air-conditioned buses which will ply to Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. The buses, which will take the Srinagar-Uri-Muzaffarabad route, will have television sets. The Jammu and Kashmir Deputy Chief Minister, Mangat Ram Sharma, who also heads the transport portfolio, told The Hindu here today that the State Road Transport Corporation had made all preparations to roll the buses on the historic road on April 7. The fares had not been fixed but it would be reasonable, as it was a short journey, he said.

The Hindu, 3 March 2005

#### **Democratisation of civic bodies a historic event: Mufti**

SRINAGAR, MARCH 2. Describing the democratisation of civic bodies in Jammu and Kashmir as a momentous event in the history of the State, the Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed today reiterated that these institutions would be fully empowered to manage civic affairs and meet the expectations of people. Mr. Sayeed was addressing a function organised to administer oath to the newly elected councillors of the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC) here today. Jammu and Kashmir Minister for Urban Development and Tourism Ghulam Hassan Mir, legislators Ali Mohammad Sagar, and Mubarak Gul, political activists prominent citizens and senior officials were attended the ceremony.

Daily Excelsior, 3 March 2005

#### **Two militants killed in Poonch**

POONCH, Mar 2: A "deputy district commander" of Hizbul Mujahideen Pir Panjal Regiment (HMPPR) was among two militants killed in an encounter with the Army and police at village Ari in Mandi sector this afternoon. Both the slain militants were Pakistanis. Official sources said the troops of 40 Rashtriya Rifles and Mandi Police launched a search operation at Ari at 11 am today after receiving a specific information from the people that a group of militants had come down to the plains from upper reaches due to heavy snowfall.

Daily Excelsior, 3 March 2005

#### **Magisterial probe ordered in Shopian 'encounter'**

SRINAGAR, Mar 2: Deputy Commissioner of Pulwama has ordered exhumation of two dead bodies with a magisterial inquiry to ascertain whether the two individuals killed by Army at Sharatpora on February 26th were militants or innocent civilians. The investigation has been launched in the wake of complaints from the residents of Kulgam that "two innocent civilians" had been arrested and killed by security forces in a 'fake encounter'. On February 26th, troops of an Army unit in south Kashmir had handed over two bullet-riddled dead bodies to Police Station Shopian with the report that they were militants who got killed in an encounter with security forces at Sharatpora, Shopian. Hours after, residents of Chitripora Nowgam appeared at the Police Station to claim a dead body. They identified one of the slain individuals as the Hizbul Mujahideen militant Mashoq Ahmed Chopan S/o Lal Chopan R/o Chitripora. Two of the residents, namely Bashir Ahmed Malik S/o Ahsan Malik and Nazir Ahmed S/o Sona-ullah, deposed that one of the duo was Mashoq Ahmed Chopan of their village.

The Hindu, 4 March 2005

#### **Special Army teams begin relief works in Kishtwar**

KISHTWAR (DODA), MARCH 3. Relief operations have begun in remote hamlets of the Kishtwar region of Jammu and Kashmir's Doda district that had remained cut off from the rest of the State for more than a fortnight. The Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, himself surveyed the area along with the district administration officials. For several weeks the mood here was one of despondency. Several attempts to establish contact with the administrative blocks of Kishtwar tehsil - comprising two-thirds of Doda district that has an area of 11,691 sq. km - had failed. A blanket of snow, as much as 20 feet thick, in the three remotest blocks of the tehsil - Wadwan, Marwah and Dachan - had blocked all roads to these areas.

The Tribune, 4 March 2005

#### **Two militants killed**

Srinagar, March 3: Three persons, including two Hizbul Mujahideen ultras, were killed and four others were arrested in Jammu and Kashmir over night, an official spokesman said. He said the security forces gunned down two HM militants, Pirpanchal Range Mohammad Ali and Aijaz Ahmad, in an encounter at Aral Mandi last evening. Two AK rifles and other arms and ammunition were seized from the slain militants. The body of Mushtaq Ahmad Bhat was recovered from Kheepora village in Anantnag district last night. He was tortured to death by militants.

The Times of India, 4 March 2005

#### **Army resumes counter-insurgency ops in Kashmir**

WUZUR (Kashmir): After a halt in counter-insurgency operations in avalanche-hit parts of Kashmir valley to partake in rescue operations, Army has resumed its counter-insurgency drive. Brigadier T S Gill, the local formation commander of 2 Sector Rashtriya Rifles here, said there were 'zero' anti-terrorist operations for most of February as his troops were involved in rescue

and relief operations in Anantnag district's Waltingu and Halsidhar, both of which bore the brunt of avalanches. "We have started counter-insurgency operations four-five days back. Earlier, we did not have time for them and the inclement weather and heavy snow made operations extremely difficult," he said.

Daily Excelsior, 4 March 2005

#### **Buried militants turn out to be civilians**

SRINAGAR, Mar 3: Both the individuals, who had been killed by Army at Sharatpora, Shopian, on February 26 last, have turned out to be innocent civilians during the exhumation of their dead bodies today. The bodies were handed over to the new claimants and buried in Bandpaw and Auogam villages after a team of doctors collected their blood samples for DNA fingerprinting. As exclusively reported in this newspaper today, District Magistrate of Pulwama, Lateef-uz-Zaman Deva, had ordered a magisterial inquiry and exhumation of the two dead bodies last evening. Cause of action was the complaint of the relatives of two missing persons of Bandpaw (Shopian) and Auogam (Kulgam) villages, who claimed that the two persons killed by Army at Sharatpora (Shopian) on February 26 were not militants but innocent civilians and their family members. On February 26, troops of 17 Bn JAK Rifles had handed over two bullet-riddled dead bodies to Police Station Shopian with the report that they were militants who died in an encounter with security forces.

Daily Excelsior, 4 March 2005

#### **J&K seeks Central assistance of Rs 1500 cr**

JAMMU, Mar 3: Jammu and Kashmir has sought Central assistance to the tune of over Rs. 1500 crore to meet expenditure of immediate and special nature for relief, rehabilitation of snow storm and avalanche affected families and restoration of essential services like power, PHE, Irrigation, Flood Control, Health, UEED and rebuilding of public infrastructure. Of this, Rs. 500 crore have been sought for immediate assistance to the State. This proposal was finalized mutually by the Central team presently here in this connection and State high level officers after having detailed account of the losses and damages and discussing the requirements sector-wise and area-wise.

Daily Excelsior, 4 March 2005

#### **130 kg RDX seized in Baderwah**

JAMMU, Mar 3: Police and CRPF today recovered 130 kg RDX and a large quantity of explosive devices and ammunition from two hideouts in Baderwah unearthed after the arrest of a Hizbul Mujahideen "section commander" Liaquat Hussain Bhat alias Minta alias Salman, a resident of Puneja Baderwah, who was arrested yesterday. Police said on the interrogation of Bhat, a search operation was launched in a karyana shop of Khalid Hussain son of Ghulam Hussain Dand at Thana Mohalla in Baderwah. From the shop, police recovered a cylinder in which 80 kg RDX had been filled.

Greater Kashmir, 4 March 2005

#### **Central team visits Doda, assesses damage**

Doda, Mar 3: A Central team yesterday visited Doda to assess the damages caused due to recent heavy snowfall in the district. The team on reaching Doda convened a meeting of district and sectoral officers. The District Development Commissioner, Doda gave details of loss caused due to un-precedented snowfall and apprised the visiting team that so far 42 persons who came under avalanches are presumed dead, nine persons have been injured and 1910 families have become homeless while 195 families across the district have been evacuated from the endangered areas. 894 buildings are completely damaged while 1016 building have received partial damages.

The Tribune, 5 March 2005

#### **Indo-Pak bus: 100 travel forms issued**

Srinagar, March 4: Two weeks after the Indo-Pak agreement on starting bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, a 100 application forms were issued to enthusiastic aspirants, waiting in long queues, here today. Those getting verification from at least six quarters will be able to board the first two buses to start from here on April 7 and 14. The announcement to issue more applications for the subsequent trips on the bus would be made later, said Mr John S. Shilshi, Regional Passport Officer, who issued the application forms here. He said that the Governments of India and Pakistan had decided to facilitate travel of 30 to 40 passengers across during a fortnight. "The applications issued today are meant for the first two trips on the bus," Mr Shilshi said, adding that more applications would be issued subsequently. The applications were being issued on first come first serve basis, while efforts were being made to avoid "unnecessary wait" for the applicants.

The Tribune, 5 March 2005

#### **Four militants killed in valley**

Srinagar, March 4: Four militants were killed by the security forces in a fierce encounter in Kashmir. Official sources said the security forces on a tip-off cordoned off a village at Mattan in Anantnag district last evening to nab militants. However, when the troops were about to storm a particular house, they came under heavy fire from militants. The security forces immediately tightened the cordon around the house and engaged the militants in an encounter.

The Tribune, 5 March 2005

#### **Villagers set 3 govt buildings ablaze**

Srinagar, March 4: At least 15 persons were injured when demonstrators took to the streets and attacked government buildings at Shopian in Pulwama district today, demanding lifting of the four-day-long cordon and search operation by the Army in their village, Matribuqh. Three government buildings were set ablaze while several vehicles were damaged by the

angry demonstrators, the police said. The police lobbed teargas shells and fired into the air to quell the demonstrators. The protesters, mostly villagers of Matribugh and nearby villages, converged on Shopian town this morning, raising slogans against the Army, which has launched a cordon and search operation in the area for the past four days. "They demanded immediate lifting of the cordon and search operations," said Deputy Commissioner, Pulwama. The demonstrators set ablaze three government buildings in the town, which included offices of the SDM, the tehsil office and court building of the Chief Judicial Magistrate. The police lobbed teargas shells and fired into the air to quell the demonstrators. An unspecified number of official vehicles were also damaged by the angry demonstrators, the police said.

Greater Kashmir, 5 March 2005

#### **7 militants killed in Valley**

Srinagar, Mar 4: Seven militants were killed by troops and personnel of Special Operations Group (SOG) of Kashmir police in two separate encounters in Islamabad and Pulwama districts of the Valley since yesterday, police and reports said on Friday. A joint posse of Rashtriya Rifles soldiers and SOG today killed four militants in a long gun battle in Tral area of Pulwama district, a local news agency CNS quoting police sources said. CNS reported that troops and SOG personnel cordoned off Khasipora, Batnour village in Tral this morning after a tip-off that some militants were hiding there. Quoting police, CNS said a gun battle between the holed up militants and troops started and lasted till 3 PM in the evening. In the encounter four militants were killed.

Dawn, 6 March 2005

#### **Pakistan to seek easing of curbs: Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service**

ISLAMABAD, March 5: The Pakistan government has decided to ask the Indian government to improve travelling facilities between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad by easing restrictions on the people of occupied Kashmir. Informed sources told Dawn here on Saturday that the government would soon contact the Indian authorities to help address genuine concerns of the Kashmiris regarding travel to Azad Kashmir and Pakistan. Various Kashmiri political parties, especially All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), had urged the Pakistan government to take up the issue with the Indian government or else majority of the Kashmiris in the occupied valley would not be able to visit Azad Kashmir.

Dawn, 6 March 2005

#### **The ultimate weapon for Kashmiris** (M.P. Bhandara)

I mention these facts in passing to make the point that the Kashmiris have been traumatized not only by India but by Pakistan as well. Their current cry for independence or autonomy guaranteed by both India and Pakistan is very understandable in this historical context. The upshot of it all is that we have to change our means, our view of the Kashmir dispute and, at the same time, keep our resolution tight as do the Chinese, who have never attempted to invade Taiwan.

Daily Excelsior, 6 March 2005

#### **3 ultras killed in inter-gang rivalry**

POONCH, Mar 5: Security forces and police today recovered dead bodies of three militants, who had reportedly been killed in inter-gang rivalries in Surankote and Mendhar tehsils. Bodies of two militants were recovered at Gangyal Dhok in Hari area of Surankote by troops of 45 Rashtriya Rifles and police. The militants have been identified as Mohd Tariq alias Shiraz son of Ghulam Hassan R/o Hari, Surankote and Mohd Akram son of Nek Mohd Gujjar R/o Morha Bachai, Surankote. The militants had been beheaded, official sources said, adding police have sent the bodies for post-mortem.

Daily Excelsior, 6 March 2005

#### **Militant held in City with grenade**

JAMMU, Mar 5: Police tonight arrested a Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) militant along with a grenade from a naka near JP Chowk in the City and thwarted his plan to cause a grenade explosion in a crowded area. Arrested militant has been identified as Sajid, a resident of Snehi, Poonch. Police said the militant was intercepted at a naka during an alert being maintained in the City in anticipation of a militant strike. A live grenade was recovered from him.

Daily Excelsior, 7 March 2005

#### **Two grenades, Rs 73,000 cash seized Two more militants arrested**

JAMMU, Mar 6: Police today arrested two more militants including son of a National Conference leader from village Ganjot in Parakh area of Reasi tehsil and recovered two grenades, Rs 73,000 cash and some AK rounds from their possession. The militants were arrested on a tip off given by a Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) ultra Sajid, a resident of Snehi, Poonch, who was arrested by the City police from JP Chowk last night when he was planning to throw a grenade in a crowded area. A live grenade was recovered from his possession.

The Hindu, 7 March 2005

#### **Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service: Pakistan to issue forms from next week**

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 6. Pakistan will start issuing application forms for travel permits from next week for the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service, scheduled to be launched on April 7. Quoting unidentified officials, Pakistan English daily, Dawn said the forms would be available at the Deputy Commissioner's office in Muzaffarabad. From the Indian side, the forms are being

issued from Regional Passport Office, Srinagar.

The Hindu, 8 March 2005

#### **Army de-mining bus route**

SRINAGAR, MARCH 7. Indian Armed Forces are making all efforts to speedily remove mines along the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus route so that the bus service starts by the scheduled date of April 7. But the difficult terrain, hostile weather and heavy planting of mines have made the task very difficult for armed personnel who are working round-the-clock. "De-mining is very sensitive and we have to take a lot of precautions. We have to ensure that during this operation, there are no casualties," said Col. D.M. Gupta, Commanding Officer, 6 Engineers. Pakistani forces, on the other side of the Line of Control, are constructing and repairing the road in full swing. The Kaman bridge, which falls in both nations' territories, is being repaired by the Border Roads Organisation and Pakistani engineers. "We are repairing pillars and embankment and we should be able to meet the target," says Col. Gupta.

The Hindu, 8 March 2005

#### **Many militants feared killed in avalanches**

WUZUR (KASHMIR VALLEY), MARCH 7. The avalanches triggered by the unprecedented snowfall in the Valley this past month are believed to have killed many militants and destroyed their hideouts in the Pir Panjal Range. During rescue operations, the Sector-II Rashtriya Rifles personnel recently recovered at least two weapons purportedly belonging to militants. According to locals at Waltingu Nar, over 10 militants in the area were killed. The Jammu and Kashmir police are now trying to corroborate the information.

Daily Excelsior, 8 March 2005

#### **53 Bangladeshi nationals arrested**

JAMMU, Mar 7: Army troops today foiled an exfiltration bid along the Indo-Pak border at Jatwal in Samba sector with the arrest of 53 Bangladeshi nationals. Defence spokesman said that all were travelling in two buses without documents and intending to exfiltrate to Pakistan when alert troops intercepted them and after a long chase arrested them. However, nothing incriminating was found from the arrested people who were handed over to police for further investigation.

Daily Excelsior, 9 March 2005

#### **Two ultras killed, 50 kg RDX seized**

JAMMU, Mar 8: Army and police today gunned down two Hizbul Mujahideen militants in an encounter at Chatru while the militants lobbed a grenade on Kishtwar ITI centre, targeting a CRPF picket, in Doda district but failed to cause any casualties. Another militant was arrested in Doda town tonight along with a grenade minutes before he could strike in the town. Police recovered 50 kg RDX from Haliyan nullah in Udrana area of Baderwah. Official sources said a militant lobbed a grenade on a Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) picket at Kishtwar Industrial Training Institute (ITI) this morning. The grenade exploded but failed to cause any casualties or damage.

Daily Excelsior, 9 March 2005

#### **56 Pak prisoners to be freed from Kot Bhalwal jail soon**

JAMMU, Mar 8: The Pakistani intruders into Indian side of the border, having record of 'lesser crimes', will be expatriated to their homeland sooner than later. Their number has been officially put at 56. Necessary steps, in this regard, have begun. This process apparently is a follow-up to the exercise already launched by New Delhi and Islamabad to take a sympathetic view on the future of prisoners of the two countries in the custody on either side. Authoritative sources told the EXCELSIOR that the list of 48 such intruders had already been finalised after the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi officially accepted that they are the citizen of that country and agreed to take them back.

Daily Excelsior, 9 March 2005

#### **'Militants sneak into villages after snowfall'**

KUPWARA, NORTH KASHMIR, Mar 8: The Army and State Police have launched a massive operation against militants who have entered the villages following heavy snowfall in the forest area, a senior Army officer said today. There are about 60 militants belonging to different militant organisations including Hizbul Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashker-e-Toiba in the entire Lolab valley, Brigadier V Manoharan told reporters. He said after unprecedented snowfall in the entire belt, militants hiding in the forest area, had sneaked into the villages. "They often change their hideouts but we are after them," he said.

The Indian Express, 9 March 2005

#### **At the LoC, two armies forget guns & mines, try to bridge an old divide**

LOC (URI), MARCH 8: For 58 years, this 200-ft ramshackle wooden bridge on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road was the most visible symbol of enmity between India and Pakistan. The Line of Control cut through it and, after three wars and decades of high tension, the two countries had found it impossible to divide the three brick piers of what everyone here calls the Wood Bridge. Today, hundreds of unarmed men of the two rival armies are busy rebuilding it because the first bus to cross the LoC since 1947 has to go over it. Rivalry has given way to bonhomie and the hostile LoC is now the Line of Celebration.

The Indian Express, 9 March 2005

**J-K on Naga cue, to hand over depts to grassroots**

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8: Jammu and Kashmir is drawing inspiration from Nagaland. The latter's model of 'communitisation', which hands over ownership of government assets and the responsibility of running them, to a village or town, is fast gaining popularity. "We are benchmarking the communitisation programme as a best practices and circulating it to other state governments," said Panchayati Raj secretary Wajahat Habibullah. "This is also being used in the Panchayati Raj Act of Jammu and Kashmir."

The Times of India, 9 March 2005

**'Kashmir now out of Pak reach'**

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has said that because of the U-turns and reversals of stands by Pakistan, Kashmir has "gone far beyond our reach". While his government had dealt with India as an equal sovereign partner, President Pervez Musharraf's policy towards India has been marked by U-turns and retreats, he said in an interview with a US television channel in Jeddah. About his government's dealing with New Delhi, Sharif said: "India conducted nuclear blasts and so did we despite pressure from the US." He said then Indian prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Lahore on his own and the Lahore Declaration was signed. It included the Kashmir issue. "Vajpayee told me that he wanted to see 1999 as a year for the resolution of the Kashmir issue. Now the situation is otherwise. There are reversals, U-turns and retreats everywhere. Kashmir has gone far beyond our reach today," he said.

The Hindu, 9 March 2005

**Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road to be ready by April 7: Army**

SRINAGAR, MARCH 8. The Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road will be ready by April 7 so that the decision to run the first ever bus service between the two cities is implemented, according to Lt. Gen. Nirbhay Sharma, commander of the Srinagar-based 15 Corps. Stating that the Army, the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and the civil administration were working in tandem on the road, Lt. Gen. Sharma told reporters that there were two challenges confronting them. First, the road was in disuse for a long time. Moreover, the area close to the Line of Control was heavily mined.

The Tribune, 9 March 2005

**PDP-Cong alliance fails to install own Mayors**

Jammu, March 8: The PDP-Congress ruling coalition has landed itself in an embarrassing situation by losing the election for the prestigious posts of Mayor of the Jammu as well as the Srinagar Municipal Corporations. While the PDP of Chief Minister Mufti Sayeed failed to get a majority for installing its own Mayor in the Srinagar Municipal Corporation (SMC), the Congress faced a humiliating defeat when the Independent backed by it failed to become Mayor of the Jammu Municipal Corporation (JMC) yesterday.

The Tribune, 9 March 2005

**Hizb Commander among four militants killed**

Jammu, March 8: Three militants, including a self-styled Area Commander of Hizbul Mujahideen, were killed and an Army officer was injured in two separate gunbattles in Doda and Baramulla districts of Jammu and Kashmir since last night, official sources said today. On specific information about the presence of militants in the Chatroo belt of Doda district, Army troops launched an operation early today, triggering an encounter with the militants, the sources said.

Daily Excelsior, 10 March 2005

**PoK delegation for simplifying procedures on bus service**

SRINAGAR, Mar 9: Describing the procedures for facilitating travel on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus as "cumbersome," a visiting delegation from Pakistan occupied Kashmir today said the service would be "meaningless" unless the rules were simplified. "We feel that the procedure is still cumbersome as State and Central intelligence agencies have the screening powers to withhold this process as they have been doing it while issuing passports or other verifications," the four-member delegation led by Muneer Ahmad Chaudhary told reporters before leaving for Jammu at the end of a three-day tour of the Valley.

The Daily Times, 10 March 2005

**Only Kashmiris on Kashmir bus: AJK**

MUZAFFARABAD: The Azad Kashmir Legislative Assembly on Wednesday unanimously opposed travel by Pakistani and Indian nationals on the Kashmir bus, agencies reported. The house demanded in a unanimous resolution that visits by citizens of Pakistan and India to either country should be over international borders. It said the bus-travel by these nationals could cause certain other complications, one of which could be the impression that the ceasefire line could change into a border. It demanded that no immigration office be set up in Azad Kashmir for Kashmiris coming from Indian held Kashmir.

The Indian Express, 10 March 2005

**AP to follow J-K model in tackling Naxalites**

NEW DELHI, MARCH 9: The Kashmir model – anti-terrorist operations and peace initiatives running parallel to each other – is going to be applied in Andhra Pradesh against Naxalites. This decision by the state government, it is understood, has been taken keeping in view two things: Dwindling strength of the hardcore fighting cadre of the Naxalite outfits and numerous feelers received from the extremists' leadership for a fresh dialogue, even though anti-Naxalite operations have continued in full swing. The Andhra Pradesh police feels that the number of hardcore Naxalite cadre in the state is at all time low and is

estimated to be below 500. Though Union Home Ministry officials said adopting the "Kashmir model" only amounted to a "fine-tuning of policy," it runs against the ministry's stated stand.

The Times of India, 10 March 2005

#### **'Water key to Pak's Kashmir obsession'**

Pakistan's obsession with Kashmir has got nothing to do with the two-nation theory. At the heart of Pakistan's fixation is the spectre of acute water scarcity in the immediate future. That is one of the provocative findings of a new study on India-Pakistan relations. According to Sundeep Waslekar and his team at the International Centre for Peace Initiatives, Pakistan's per capita water availability has plummeted from 5,600 cubic metres in 1947 to 1,200 cubic metres in 2005. It is predicted that as early as 2007, Pakistan's water availability might touch the threshold level of 1,000 cubic metres. The worst affected areas are the Sindh and Punjab provinces.

The Tribune, 10 March 2005

#### **5 militants shot in J&K, arms seized**

Srinagar, March 9: Six persons, including five militants, were killed while security forces busted a hide-out and seized a huge cache of arms and ammunition in Jammu and Kashmir overnight, an official spokesman said today. He said two militants were killed in an encounter at Behkipora Rafiabad in Baramula district today. The encounter ensued after a search party was attacked by the militants hiding there. Two more militants Shahid Hussain and Majeed were killed by security forces during a search operation at Titwan Chatroo last night. Two AK rifles, one 303 rifle and one wireless set were recovered from the slain militants.

The Tribune, 10 March 2005

#### **Recruitment issue rocks J & K Assembly**

Jammu, March 9: In an unprecedented step, the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly today passed the motion of thanks on the Governor's Address to the joint session of both Houses of legislature without the Chief Minister replying to the three-day-long debate on it. Amidst noisy scenes that were continuing in the House since the morning on the issue of recruitments in the Floriculture Department, the Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, urged the Speaker that the Opposition members were apparently not interested in listening to his reply and as such the motion should be passed. Thereafter, the motion was passed with voice vote immediately.

The Hindu, 11 March 2005

#### **Ready for talks if militants abjure violence: Manmohan**

NEW DELHI, MARCH 10. The Government will not compromise in the fight against terrorism but is willing to engage militants in a dialogue if they abjure the path of violence, the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, said in the Lok Sabha today. Dr. Singh was replying to the Leader of the Opposition, L.K. Advani's charge that the United Progressive Alliance Government had "completely failed" in meeting the challenge of internal security. The Prime Minister said the Government would tackle the militancy in Jammu and Kashmir, the insurgency in the North-East and the naxalite problem by working with the States in all spheres - political, economic, social and developmental - and helping them modernise their security apparatus.

The Hindu, 11 March 2005

#### **Manmohan likely to flag off bus to Muzaffarabad**

SRINAGAR, MARCH 10. The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, is likely to attend the flagging-off ceremony of the first bus to Muzaffarabad from here on April 7, highly-placed official sources said. The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, is also visiting Uri on March 29 and scheduled to interact with the people of the border town. Sources told The Hindu that both the Government and the Pradesh Congress is keen to see the Prime Minister flag off the bus service. Sources said though the programme has not yet been finalised, there are indications that Dr. Singh may preside over the special function.

The Tribune, 11 March 2005

#### **Four militants shot, 20 kg RDX seized**

Srinagar, March 10: Four militants, including two belonging to the Lashker -e-Toiba, were killed while one Hizbul Mujahideen militant was arrested and large cache of arms and ammunition, including 20 kg of RDX, were seized in the Jammu and Kashmir overnight. An official spokesman said the security forces killed two Laksher militants in an encounter at Bakipora Panzalla village in Baramula last night. Two AK rifles, five magazines, 40 rounds of ammunition, eight hand grenades, one wireless set and eight UBGL grenades were seized from the slain militants, identified as Naseer Ahmad Dar and Ashiq Hussain Rather.

The Daily Times, 11 March 2005

#### **Mirwaiz seeks bigger role for Kashmiris in dispute** (Faiz Rehman)

WASHINGTON: He exuded self-confidence, but displayed a deep frustration with both India and Pakistan for having failed to heal one of the worst wounds of international politics, Kashmir. He was dismayed at the international community for ignoring the sufferings of his people, yet he was optimistic that given a chance, the people of Kashmir would come up with a set of proposals that might be acceptable to both Pakistan and India.

Daily Excelsior, 11 March 2005

**One killed in BSF-militant clash in Kulgam**

SRINAGAR, Mar 10: In a major achievement, Police and security forces today claimed to have killed the Lashkar-e-Toiba militant who was allegedly responsible for the assassination of Ircon engineer, Sudheer Kumar Pundir, and his brother in Pulwama district last year. Meanwhile, a dramatic shoot-out took place at Yaripora in Kulgam area between militants and BSF when security forces were checking vehicles late this evening.

Daily Excelsior, 11 March 2005

**Another top ultra held in Bhaderwah**

JAMMU, Mar 10: Troops of 4 Rashtriya Rifles, CRPF and Bhaderwah police tonight arrested another top Hizbul Mujahideen militant from Malothi, about 28 kms from Bhaderwah. He has been identified as Mubassar Hussain Sheikh (code name Mudasar) son of Fazal Hussain Sheikh, a resident of Khurba, Killar in Bhalla area of Bhaderwah. He was a 'commander' of Hizbul Mujahideen outfit.

The News, 11 March 2005

**Yasin Malik exhibits signature campaign** (Mariana Baabar)

NEW DELHI: Yasin Malik, President of the Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), is holding an exhibition of his signature campaign at the Gandhi Peace Foundation here on 17th of this month. Speaking to The News on Thursday he said, "In the last two years the JKLF has collected fifteen lac signatures and we will display these, including the photo exhibition. Basically this signature drive is meant to draw awareness about the fact that the people of Jammu and Kashmir should also be made a part of the peace talks between India and Pakistan".

The Tribune, 12 March 2005

**J&K to set up finance commission**

Jammu, March 11: The Jammu and Kashmir Government has decided to set up a finance commission to frame guidelines for equitable distribution of funds among the three regions of the state so as to accelerate their development. This was announced by the Finance Minister, Mr Muzaffar Hussain Baig, while wrapping up the debate on the Budget proposals in the Assembly today. He said that norms would be fixed for equitable distribution of funds after consulting legislators. The commission would take note of complaints of discrimination in allotment of funds, especially the hill areas, and make suitable recommendations to the government.

The Tribune, 12 March 2005

**Top Lashker commander killed in Kashmir**

Srinagar, March 11: A Lashker-e-Toiba (LeT) commander, also a member of the Al-Mansoorian suicide squad, was killed by the security forces in South Kashmir late last night, a BSF spokesman said today. He said a patrol party of the 143 battalion flagged down a vehicle coming from Shopian at Yaripora Kulgam around 8.45 p.m. But instead of stopping, militants in a Tata Sumo opened indiscriminate fire on the patrol, injuring Constable P.C. Lal. The security forces also retaliated and in the shootout, a militant was killed. However, three other militants, including one injured, escaped under the cover of darkness.

Daily Excelsior, 12 March 2005

**A 30-day stay for bus travellers in J&K, PoK**

JAMMU, Mar 11: Amid the feverish activity, officially launched, on a specific stretch of the mountainous route on either side of the Line of Control (LoC) to meet the deadline of April 7 for running the historic bus service to Muzaffarabad from Srinagar, a decision is reported to have been taken to introduce the US dollar as the currency for the passengers going to and coming from Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK). This, clearly, is the outcome of the ground level reality, both in PoK and in Indian Kashmir- that is, Indian currency is not acceptable in Pakistan and the territory administered by it, while the use of Pak currency on this side of the LoC just cannot be legal and legitimate tool in the hands of non-Indian nationals from the other side.

Daily Excelsior, 12 March 2005

**3 militants, cop killed in Valley**

SRINAGAR, Mar 11: Even as unidentified gunmen, suspected to be militants, have eliminated a Police constable in Pulwama, security forces have killed three militants of Hizbul Mujahideen in an encounter in Kulgam area of south Kashmir since last evening. Informed sources told the Excelsior that over a specific information, troops of Rashtriya Rifles 9th Bn and Kulgam Police raided a militant hideout at Hablish in Kulgam area today. According to the tip off, three militants of Hizbul Mujahideen were present at the house of one Master Gul Mohammad Bhat S/o Mohammad Abdullah Bhat. During the operation, a fierce gunbattle took place between the holed up militants and security forces. Troops destroyed the target house, killing all the three militants.

Daily Excelsior, 12 March 2005

**J&K Govt challenges HC order**

NEW DELHI, Mar 11: The Jammu and Kashmir Government today challenged a Delhi High Court order to pay within two months ex-gratia of Rs two lakh to a Hindu family, victim of terrorism in the Valley. A special bench headed by Chief Justice B C Patel refused to issue a notice on the petition, seeking setting aside of the order pronounced by a single judge bench. However, the bench today issued a notice on another application filed by the Jammu and Kashmir Government seeking condonation of the delay of about 50 days in the execution of the order due to bad weather in the Valley.

The Daily News, 12 March 2005

**Moving on in Kashmir** (Abbas Rashid)

For the sake of argument if a flurry of activity in other areas leads to the political aspect being eclipsed, the question is what will keep it from reappearing if the aspirations of the Kashmiris that will continue to have Pakistan's support are simply not accommodated by India? Let us remind ourselves that Kashmir did not loom very large on the regional or the international horizon for over two decades after the mid-60s. In 1989 it was not Pakistan but the Kashmiris themselves who launched a political movement against Delhi's misrule. India should be under no illusion therefore that it will secure an enduring settlement without factoring in the will and interests of the Kashmiris. In other words, the process can and should lead eventually to a political settlement acceptable to the Kashmiris and Pakistan. It cannot be an end in itself.

Daily Excelsior, 13 March 2005

**2,470 militants eliminated in 2003-04 in J&K: Veeri**

JAMMU, Mar 12: A total number of 2470 militants were killed in various encounters with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir during the year 2003 and 2004. This information was furnished to State Legislative Assembly in a written reply to a question of S D Shariq by the Minister of State for Home, A R Veeri. The Minister said out of this, 1494 militants were killed in 2003 while 976 were eliminated in 2004. Giving further details, the MOS Home said 714 security personnel also lost their lives while fighting the terrorism in the State during the last two years. He said out of them 384 were killed in 2003 while 330 lost their lives in 2004.

Daily Excelsior, 13 March 2005

**Civilian killed in Surankote**

JAMMU, Mar 12: A civilian was killed in exchange of firing between Army and the militants at village Pamrot in Surankote tehsil in Poonch district last night. He has been identified as Lal Hussain Gujjar, 41, son of Faqir Mohd, a resident of Jharan Wali Gali. Official sources said the civilian was kidnapped by the militants from his house. The militants asked him to guide them to Khet area.

The Indian Express, 13 March 2005

**25 'fake' militants surrendered: J-K**

JAMMU, MARCH 12: The J-K government today admitted in the Assembly that 25 of the 45 militants who surrendered in Nagrota last year were "not genuine". Three people were arrested for "managing" the surrender of the fake militants, said MoS for Home Abdul Rehman Veeri. In a written reply to a question from A.R. Rather (NC) on the incident - first reported in The Indian Express - Veeri said verification revealed that 25 of the militants who surrendered on November 9 were not genuine. He added that an FIR was filed at Charar-e-Sharief police station and the three accused have got interim bail.

The Hindu, 13 March 2005

**Pakistan to sell forms for bus travel from March 14**

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 12. Pakistan today announced that application forms for travellers on the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service would be available from Monday (March 14) at the Office of the Deputy Commissioner (DC), Muzaffarabad. The Office of the Spokesman, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said here that the DCs in the respective districts of Pakistan occupied Kashmir would be designated authorities for issuing applications and travel permits.

The Hindu, 13 March 2005

**'Not a solution to Kashmir tangle'** (Luv Puri)

JAMMU, MARCH 12. The Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, today said the opening of the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar road link is not an ultimate solution to the Kashmir tangle and dialogue with separatists is a must for finding solution to the State's problems. Speaking in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly on the discussion and voting on demands for grants for 2005-06, Mr. Sayeed said: "I want to emphasise that the opening of Muzaffarabad-Srinagar road link is not the ultimate solution to the Kashmir tangle. The dialogue with the separatists has to continue so we take care of the internal dimension of the problem."

The Hindu, 13 March 2005

**Road reopening will foster understanding: Mufti** (Shujaat Bukhari)

SRINAGAR, MARCH 12. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, believes that the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service is just the beginning to creating an atmosphere for peaceful solution to the Kashmir issue and not an end. "It is a remarkable decision the two countries took and is path-breaking as far as Kashmiris are concerned but the negotiations are the only way out" Mr. Sayeed told The Hindu. The road opening, he said, will remove misgivings and foster understanding between the people.

The Hindu, 14 March 2005

**Mufti takes first steps toward friendship** (Shujaat Bukhari)

SRINAGAR, MARCH 13. When the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, took a few steps on the Kaman Bridge today, he became the first civilian leader to set foot on it after nearly 50 years. Mr. Sayeed was inspecting the repair works on the bridge on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road in Uri. There has been no civilian movement on the bridge since the Jhelum Valley Cart Road - as it was then known, was abandoned in 1956. Officials of the United Nations Military Observers Group for India and Pakistan some times used the bridge to cross over to the other side, but only till 1989.

The Hindu, 14 March 2005

### **People along LoC seek opening of other vital roads**

JHANGAR (NOWSHERA), MARCH 13. The announcement that the Uri-Muzaffarabad road would be opened has led to vociferous demands from many people living along the Line of Control (LoC) for opening up other important road links. The historic Nowshera-Mirpur road falling in Rajouri district is a prime example as it falls on the Mughal road, used by the Mughal emperor, Akbar, when he attacked Kashmir in 1586 and annexed it by defeating the local king. The Mughal emperor, Jehangir, is buried here. The road is used by the people to enter important cities of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK), namely Mirpur, Kotli and Bhimber. Most of the divided families live in these cities.

The Tribune, 14 March 2005

### **Hizbul militant killed in encounter**

Srinagar, March 13: A Hizbul Mujahideen militant was killed in an encounter with Rashtriya Rifles jawans in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir today, official sources said. Acting on specific information, the troops raided Athoora village in the wee hours, but came under fire from ultras. Hizbul Mujahideen militant, identified as Abdul Majid of Tarzoo village of Sopore, was killed in the ensuing encounter.

The Tribune, 14 March 2005

### **30 Bangladeshis held in Jammu**

Jammu, March 13: Security forces arrested 30 Bangladeshi nationals foiling an exfiltration bid today. A Defence Ministry spokesman said a patrol party took them into custody at Sangnim near Hiranagar, about 60 km from here on the Jammu-Pathankot road, when they were heading towards the border to cross over to Pakistan.

The Tribune, 14 March 2005

### **Kashmir separatists to wait and watch**

Jammu, March 13: Kashmir separatists have no immediate plan for visiting Muzaffarabad from the Uri side once the road is thrown open from April 7. The president Democratic Freedom Party, Mr Shabir Ahmed Shah, and a former Chairman, APHC, Molvi Abbas Ansari, told this correspondent today, "For the time being we have no plan of travelling on the Srinagar-Uri road for reaching Muzaffarabad." In reply to a question the two leaders said, "We have not applied for the permit by filling the form issued by the passport office."

The Hindu, 15 March 2005

### **Bus service will be open to all: Mufti**

NEW DELHI, MARCH 14. All arrangements for the opening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road on April 7 are on course and anyone who meets the requirements, including the Hurriyat leaders, would be eligible to travel by the bus, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, said here today. "Divided families who have not met for the last 57 years will be given priority to travel by [the] Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service. Most of the people would like to visit that part of our State as the visit would not involve passport and visa formalities," he said.

The Tribune, 15 March 2005

### **JKRF chief wants to travel to Muzaffarabad**

Srinagar, March 14: Engineer Hilal Ahmad War, chairman of the Jammu and Kashmir Realistic Front (JKRF) has urged the authorities to facilitate his travel to Muzaffarabad by the first bus from here on April 7 next. In his statement here today, the JKRF chief said that the historic decision to start the bus service was the brainchild of his party, which sought resolution of the Kashmir problem through a three-point formula. "I wish to board the first bus to Muzaffarabad with some of my party colleagues", he stated adding that his party had mooted the idea on August 10, 1996. The organisation had here on February 17 last year undertaken a token bus journey to Muzaffarabad as part of its persistent demand of re-opening the bus service.

The Tribune, 15 March 2005

### **Major, 2 militants killed**

Srinagar, March 14: An Army Major was among five persons killed in separate incidents of violence in the Kashmir valley since yesterday. Security forces busted three hideouts and recovered a large quantity of arms and ammunition during searches. Four persons - a Major, a soldier, a militant and a civilian - were killed in an encounter at Zandpal, Kunzer, Baramulla district, today. The identity of the militant was yet to be ascertained. Acting on specific information, the security forces cordoned off the village and launched searches to flush out militants hiding in the village this morning. The encounter began when security forces were fired upon by the militants. Till last reports came in, the searches were continuing.

The Tribune, 15 March 2005

### **3 bodies of avalanche victims found (Press Trust of India)**

Srinagar, March 14: Three more bodies were recovered from Waltingu village, worst-hit in the recent unprecedented snowfall and avalanches in Jammu and Kashmir, raising the death toll in the state to 323, official sources said today. With this, the total number of people killed in the village due to snowfall and avalanches has gone upto 175.

The News, 15 March 2005

### **Thousands queue to get Kashmir bus forms (By Khizar Hayat Abbasi)**

MUZAFFARABAD: The Indo-Pak peace bus got a boost on Monday as thousands of people thronged government offices to get forms for travel to Srinagar as authorities in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) started issuing legal documents. A large

number of people, most of them members of Kashmir's divided families, visited the offices of deputy commissioners to get application forms. Deputy commissioners of various districts of Azad Kashmir have been authorised to issue the forms to the nationals of Azad Kashmir. The bus service is the first such venture between the two parts of Kashmir in over half a century.

The Daily Excelsior, 15 March 2005

#### **GoC-in-C visits Uri**

SRINAGAR, Mar 14: Commander of the Army's Northern Command, Lt Gen Hari Prasad, today visited Kaman Post, the last military outpost on this side of Kashmir, alongwith other senior army officers to oversee the arrangements being made prior to the opening of Srinagar -Muzaffarabad road. Army's Public Relations Officer (PRO) at 15 Corps, Col R K Sen, in a statement this evening said that "the main purpose of their visit is to tour the areas affected by the unprecedented snowfall". "During their visit to these areas, in addition to meeting the Awaam (public), they would also be distributing relief material to the affected families," Col Sen said.

The Daily Excelsior, 15 March 2005

#### **LeT 'commander' gunned down 7 injured in Poonch blast**

POONCH, Mar 14: Seven civilians were injured in a grenade attack by the militants at Hathi Than near Punjab National Bank (PNB) in the town here tonight while security forces eliminated a Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) 'district commander' at Phagla Nursery in Surankote. Official sources said a militant lobbed a grenade near PNB building at 8.22 pm. The grenade exploded causing injuries to seven civilians. Police and security forces personnel rushed to the spot and cordoned off the area. Injured were shifted to the district hospital.

The Tribune, 16 March 2005

#### **Army Chief reviews work on Muzaffarabad road**

The Chief of the Army Staff, Gen J.J. Singh, today reviewed the progress of work on the Srinagar-Uri-Muzaffarabad road, ahead of the opening of bus service early next month. Gen J.J. Singh, accompanied by Lieut Gen Nirbhay Sharma, GOC of 15 Corps, was briefed on various facets of the progress of work on the road. He reviewed the work of repairing the Khalne-da-Khas bridge, while work to repair the abutment and strengthening of the pier are already under way and would be completed soon, a defence spokesman said here.

The Tribune, 16 March 2005

#### **2 militants among 4 killed** (Press Trust of India)

Two Pakistani militants of the Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and a jawan were among four persons killed in separate incidents, while militants made an abortive bid to blow up a security vehicle and carried out a grenade attack injuring 11 civilians in Jammu and Kashmir since last night, a police spokesman said today. He said militants also lobbed a grenade near Punjab National Bank in the crowded district township of Poonch yesterday, injuring 11 civilians who had been admitted to the nearby district hospital. The security forces killed one more LeT militant, Abu Umar, in an encounter at Phagla in Poonch district last night, he said.

The Indian Express, 16 March 2005

#### **Kashmir peace road carries hopes of millions** (Reuters)

Kaman Post, March 16: The automatic rifles have given way to spades and shovels, heavy artillery to earth movers and soldiers to construction workers. Troops in divided Kashmir are working frantically to convert what was a mine-infested dirt track on one of the world's most heavily militarised frontiers into a peace road connecting the Indian and Pakistani sectors by bus. The hopes of millions of Kashmiris are riding on the success of the project, one of the most tangible signs of a fledgling peace after decades of enmity.

The Indian Express, 16 March 2005

#### **Militants abortive bid to blow up security vehicle** (Press Trust of India)

Srinagar: Militants made an abortive attempt to blow up a security vehicle with an improvised explosive device (IED) in Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir where an ultra was killed in an encounter with the army on Tuesday, official sources said. The IED, detonated by militants on the main road near Zadoora in Pulwama district around 1230 hours and targetted at two BSF vehicles patrolling the area, missed the mark and caused no harm, the sources said. The whole area was immediately cordoned off by security forces and a hunt has been launched to nab the ultras.

The Daily Times, 16 March 2005

#### **Resolution of Kashmir issue: Musharraf wants high-level talks**

LAHORE: President Pervez Musharraf said on Tuesday that the Kashmir issue could only be resolved through dialogue between the top leaders of India and Pakistan. In an interview with the BBC, he said resolving the Kashmir issue by dialogue between the Indian and Pakistani bureaucracy would be futile. "Trying to resolve Kashmir through low-level dialogue is a foolish and futile effort," he added. He said that during his upcoming visit to India, it would be more important for him to talk to the Indian leadership. "I know there is a desire on the other side too. I look forward to making this meeting a little more than concrete to move the process forward," he said.

The Daily Times, 16 March 2005

#### **Kashmiris must be included in dialogue, says Kasuri** (Associated Press)

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri on Tuesday highlighted the importance of the India-Pakistan dialogue process, saying Kashmiris must be associated with the process seeking a final settlement of the issue and that their legitimate

aspirations could not be ignored. Pakistan had always emphasised the necessity of meaningful, constructive and result oriented dialogue to resolve the Jammu and Kashmir issue, he said, adding that Pakistan believed that rigidity must give way to accommodation and flexibility must be shown by both sides for a durable and peaceful resolution of the issue.

The Hindu, 17 March 2005

**Softening of LoC will transform south Asia: Mufti** (By Luv Puri)

JAMMU. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, said today that the softening of the Line of Control would change the whole atmosphere in south Asia and usher in permanent peace and economic progress. According to the Chief Minister, the softening of the Line of Control will counter Pakistan's propaganda that people in the State are not safe in the country and people across the border will realise the strength of our democratic institutions.

The Tribune, 17 March 2005

**Pakistan's no to third party mediation** (Sarbjit Dhaliwal)

Pakistan Foreign Affairs Minister Khurshheed Mahmood Kasuri said there was no need for third party mediation on Kashmir issue as India and Pakistan were discussing it amongst themselves without prejudice to their known positions on this issue. "Let us hope we can resolve the issue among ourselves," he added. Talking to Indian journalists, Mr Kasuri said the bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad was a big development and it was a Kashmir-specific confidence building measure. He said such a step would provide chance to Kashmiris to meet and discuss their future. He said the Pakistan government wanted solution to the Kashmir issue to the satisfaction of the people of Kashmir.

The Tribune, 17 March 2005

**Mufti, British MP discuss Indo-Pak ties**

While discussing the security situation and the India-Pakistan relations, a British Labour MP, Mr Tom Cox and the state Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, said the upcoming bus service on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road was a major development in the ties between the two countries. Mufti Sayeed informed the British MP that the upcoming bus service on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road would prove to be the "mother" of the ongoing confidence-building measures between the two countries.

The Tribune, 17 March 2005

**1 killed, 28 hurt in IED explosion**

One person was killed and 28 others were injured when an IED exploded in Town Hall in the heart of the border district town of Rajouri today. The condition of seven of the injured was stated to be serious and they were flown here for treatment in Medical College Hospital. The killed person has been identified as Munawar Hussain. Reports said that among the injured, five were Army personnel. The area around Town Hall has been under constant attack of terrorists. Panic spread in the town immediately after the explosion and shopkeepers downed their shutters.

The Tribune, 17 March 2005

**Militant killed in Kashmir**

The security forces killed Jaish-e-Mohammad militant in an encounter at Balhama village in the Bandipora area of North Kashmir late last night, official sources said today. The encounter ensued after a search party was attacked by the militants. An AK rifle, five UBGL grenades, four hand grenades, one magazine and some cartridges were recovered from the slain militant. In another incident, police seized a live grenade near a crowded bus stand at Iqbal Park last evening.

The Daily Times, 17 March 2005

**Kashmir resolution must for normal Indo-Pak relations**

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said on Wednesday that India and Pakistan could not normalise bilateral relations unless the Kashmir issue was resolved in line with the aspirations of Kashmiris. He said peace and stability in South Asia was linked to how India responded to Pakistani moves for settling bilateral disputes. He said India would have to show flexibility in its stated position on Kashmir to facilitate the ongoing India-Pakistan talks. He said the sacrifices made by Kashmiris for their freedom could not be disregarded and Pakistan would continue finding a solution to the problem as desired by Kashmiris and in line with UN Security Council resolutions.

The Dawn, 17 March 2005

**Musharraf seeks US support for Kashmir process**

ISLAMABAD, March 16: President General Pervez Musharraf on Wednesday urged the United States to support efforts aimed at resolving the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in keeping with the aspirations of the Kashmiri people. During a meeting with the visiting US Secretary of State Dr Condoleezza Rice, he underscored that normalization in the region would not be possible without the settlement of the core dispute between Pakistan and India. The president called upon the international community to address the underlying causes of tension like Palestine and Kashmir in order to bring the present turmoil to an end.

The Dawn, 17 March 2005

**Islamabad accused of 'abandoning core issue'**

New Delhi: Kashmir's resistance leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani accused Pakistan on Wednesday of letting down the cause of freedom by changing its attitude towards what Islamabad has been regarding as a core issue with India. Mr Geelani is an opponent of the proposed trans-LoC bus service due to begin its Srinagar-Muzaffarabad operations on April 7, a move he describes as a tamasha, or a spectacle, to distract from the political dispute of Jammu and Kashmir. "I regret that Pakistan is no more considering Kashmir as a core issue..." Mr Geelani claimed...

The Daily Excelsior, 17 March 2005

**Kashmir first time in international focus for peace reasons: Mufti**

Jammu: Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Sayeed has said the opening of the road between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad is indicative of the changed situation and Jammu and Kashmir is for the first time in international focus for reasons of peace, not war... Mufti Sayeed said today that there is complete consensus on the matter within Jammu and Kashmir and at the national level. He said the announcement made by the Prime Minister earlier to open the road shows the confidence he and the country as a whole has reposed in the people of Jammu and Kashmir who have been asking for easy movement of people between the two divided parts of the State. The Chief Minister said that Jammu and Kashmir has been a bone of contention between India and Pakistan in the past but not anymore.

The Hindu, 18 March 2005

**Five militants killed in J&K** (Press Trust of India)

Srinagar, March 18. (PTI): Security forces today shot dead five militants in a pre-dawn encounter in Anantnag district of Jammu and Kashmir, defence sources said. The militants were killed after heavy exchange of fire between the two sides at Duggernar in Kokernag, 80 km from here, the sources said. The slain terrorists were either affiliated with Harkat-ul-jihad-al-islami or Lashkar-e-Toiba.

The Hindu, 18 March 2005

**Include people in peace talks: Yasin Malik**

NEW DELHI. The chairperson of the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), Yasin Malik, has expressed his desire to meet the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh and the Pakistan President, General Pervez Musharraf, to convey to them the sentiments of the Kashmiri people on including them in the dialogue for resolving the Kashmir issue. Mr. Malik said he wanted to meet the two leaders and appeal to them to respect and accept the verdict of the people who wanted to participate in resolving the conflict. "I have now got the signatures of 15 lakh people who want to be included in the peace process. Please do not breach their trust for, the results could be disastrous and there can be no solution without their participation."

The Tribune, 18 March 2005

**Troop pullout cosmetic: APHC**

Kashmiri separatists are not "satisfied" with the rate of troop pullout in Jammu and Kashmir. They describe the exercise as "cosmetic." According to a senior APHC leader, Prof Abdul Gani Bhat, "It is not more than a trickle if 10,000 to 20,000 soldiers out of seven lakh are withdrawn from some parts of the state." He said withdrawal of Indian forces from civilian areas and from the border would be a major confidence-building measure. To a question, the APHC leader said militancy-related violence would decline in case the troops were withdrawn from the civilian areas.

The Indian Express, 18 March 2005

**JKLF unhappy over non-inclusion of Kashmiris in peace process** (Press Trust of India)

New Delhi: As India and Pakistan are poised on the brink of the historic Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus journey, JKLF chief Yaseen Malik today expressed unhappiness over non-exclusion of Kashmiris people in the ongoing peace diplomacy and warned that if the process continued their could be more suicide attacks in the state. "I'm here to ask them to respect their trust, otherwise they will turn fidayeens. There is venom running in their veins against India. If the very first step of the peace initiative - the CBMs are not tailored for the Kashmiri people, then how can we expect any future moves to concern them," he said.

The Daily Excelsior, 18 March 2005

**Rice calls for end to terror in Kashmir, rules out mediation** (Press Trust of India)

ISLAMABAD: Calling for end to violence and terrorism in Kashmir, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice today ruled out chances of any American mediation to resolve Kashmir issue and said that Washington was impressed by the progress of the India-Pak composite dialogue process. "We also talked about the need to end violence and terrorism in this (Kashmir) area. There are number of issues that needs to be dealt with by all the parties and I think, we have been very clear to Pakistan, to India to what their responsibilities to be," ... Asked whether bilateralism worked to resolve Kashmir issue, Rice said India-Pak talks has certainly helped in bringing down the tensions and made progress.

The Dawn, 18 March 2005

**Councillor shot dead in Kashmir** (Associated Foreign Press)

SRINAGAR: A municipal councillor was shot dead in occupied Kashmir on Thursday by suspected Muslim militants, police said. Fayaz Ahmed Mahjoo, elected last month to the municipal committee in the town of Baramulla, was shot dead near his home, a police spokesman said. "The councillor was sprayed with bullets as he was moving near his house," he said.

The Hindu, 19 March 2005

**Boy killed, 9 injured in J&K school blast** (By Shujaat Bukhari)

JAMMU. A 10th standard student was killed and nine were injured when a grenade exploded in a school at Nadihal village in Baramulla district today. The school is located near a Rashtriya Rifles camp. The Senior Superintendent of Police (Baramulla), Munir Khan, told The Hindu that some unidentified militant threw a grenade at the premises of the Government High School. "It exploded during recess around 1.15 pm," he said, adding that Mohsin Sarwar, a 10th standard student, was killed. Five students who suffered injuries had been admitted to hospital in Srinagar. Four civilians received splinter injuries. But all the injured were out of danger.

The Tribune, 19 March 2005

**Army dispels doubts on LoC bus security** (Girja Shankar Kaura)

Attempting to dispel doubts on the security needed for the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, the Army today said a great deal of thought had been put into ensuring that there was fool-proof security for the Indian side of the 170 km journey and that the bus was not used by militants... Chief of Army Staff Gen. J.J. Singh said: "We have given a great deal of thought and chalked out necessary preventive measures to check any such misuse."

The Indian Express, 19 March 2005

**Two women awarded life imprisonment**

Jammu: Principal Sessions Judge, Jammu Vinod Gupta has convicted and sentenced two women Kamlesh Devi and Swarno alias Guddi, both residents of village Badhoi Tehsil Samba to undergo life imprisonment, who are facing trail for the last ten years for allegedly committing murder of Kanta Devi of the same village.

The Indian Express, 19 March 2005

**48 Pak prisoners to be repatriated** (Pawan Bali)

Jammu: It would be a homecoming of a different sort. Three hearing and speech-impaired and five mentally challenged Pakistani nationals lodged in state jails, will finally return "to their roots". Detained here for the last two to 10 years, they figure in the list of 48 Pakistani prisoners in J-K who would be repatriated in the coming weeks. According to sources, they had been arrested under the Foreign Act (FA) - for "straying" into the Indian side. The process of speeding up their release had been affected because of their disability, which made it difficult for the authorities to know more about their personal details. It was due to this reason that their return home had been stalled even after they had served out their term of three to six months.

The Daily Times, 19 March 2005

**Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service: Govt invites Indian media to see preparations**

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani government has invited Islamabad-based Indian media people to visit Azad Jammu and Kashmir tomorrow (Sunday) to see preparations for the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service scheduled to commence from April 7, Press Trust of India (PTI) reported on Friday. Two Indian correspondents based in Islamabad have been invited to join the press party to Muzaffarabad. The visit, being arranged by the Pakistan Information Department for foreign media, includes a trip to Chakoti, the town closest to the Line of Control from the Pakistani side, said PTI.

The Daily Times, 19 March 2005

**India vows to stop militants from using Kashmir bus** (Associated Foreign Press)

NEW DELHI: The Indian army said on Friday that it would stop militants from using the bus between the Held Kashmir and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. The warning comes as the cross-border service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad starts on April 7. Indian Army Chief General JJ Singh said that soldiers in Kashmir were preparing to prevent travel by wanted insurgents. "We have chalked out the necessary measures to check any such misuse," said Singh, adding that army engineers were also scanning the route for landmines.

The Daily Excelsior, 19 March 2005

**Student killed, 8 injured in blast**

SRINAGAR: One student died on spot and eight others sustained splinter injuries when a grenade exploded at a Government school, which also houses an army camp, in Nadihal village of Bandipore today. Meanwhile, security forces have killed one militant in an encounter in Handwara area and all the five militants, who had died in a gunbattle with security forces in Kokernag area yesterday, have been identified. Senior Police officials said that they were investigating as to how the grenade had exploded inside the school premises. Officials claimed that all the slain militants were the members of Harkat-ul-Jehad-e-Islami (HUJI). They claimed that Manzoor Ahmed Bhat alias Mudassar was the organisation's "district commander" in Kokernag belt.

The Indian Express, 19 March 2005

**BJP leader condemns Rajouri grenade attack**

Jammu: The state BJP general secretary Ashok Khajuria has condemned the grenade attack in Rajouri town resulting in the killing of three civilians and injuring other two dozen people. In a statement here today Khajuria said held the state government responsible for the incident and said that the militants in the state are carrying on their activities unchecked due to lack of proper policy of the government to crush the rising head of the militancy.

The Tribune, 20 March 2005

**School blast: villagers protest, observe bandh**

Tension gripped Nadihal, Bandipore in north Kashmir today following protests by the residents of Nadihal village, against the death of one student and injuries to eight others, including seven students, in the explosion in a school. A total shutdown was observed in the area against the incident. "In a cowardice act, the terrorists have not even spared an innocent school boy to serve their ulterior motives", a defence spokesman said here. "Having realised that they are unable to stand up against the might of Army, these enemies of peace have started targeting soft targets. It is time that we rise over the fear psychosis and echo our voice against such atrocities", he added. But the blast was due to presence of a security forces' camp on the school premises, which reportedly acted as a provocation for the militants to attack, believed many residents.

The Tribune, 20 March 2005

**Three killed in J&K** (Press Trust of India)

Three persons, including two activists of the counter-insurgency Ikhwan group, were killed in militancy-related incidents in Jammu and Kashmir since last night where ultras made an abortive bid on the life of a ruling People's Democratic Party leader in Baramulla district. Ali Mohammad Sofi, a resident of Goripora and associated with counter-insurgency group Ikhwan, was shot dead by militants at point-blank range at Narbal in Badgam district today, an official spokesman said here.

The Indian Express, 20 March 2005

**Mangat discusses J-K situation with PM, Sonia**

New Delhi: Jammu and Kashmir, deputy chief minister, Mangat Ram Sharma today called on the Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and discussed overall situation of the state. He was accompanied by ministers of State, Raman Mattoo and Gharu Ram. Mangat thanked the PM for continued support to state through financial packages. He also expressed his gratitude for further extension of Income Tax exemption to the state upto March 2007 with regard to strengthening the industrial sector in the state and requested that the exemption granted for further one year should not only provide concession to new Industrial Units but should cover both fresh as well as existing units undertaking substantial expansion of their units on the pattern of Himachal Pradesh, Uttaranchal and North East.

The Daily Excelsior, 21 March 2005

**Lashkar's worker gunned down**

JAMMU: Bullet riddled body of an overground worker of Lashker-e-Toiba was recovered while as troops smashed four hideouts of the terrorists in Poonch and Rajouri district and recovered a large cache of arms and ammunition. A defence spokesman said that security forces recovered the bullet-riddled body of an overground worker of LeT identified as Kalu in Kalaban area of Bhudal tehsil of Rajouri district last night. He was working as a guide of the LeT outfit in the district.

The Hindu, 21 March 2005

**Work on Baglihar will not be stopped: Mufti**

JAMMU. The Jammu and Kashmir Government has decided that work on the prestigious 450 MW Baglihar project would not be shelved under any circumstances as it would play a crucial role in the State's economic development. The issue had recently snowballed into an international one, as Pakistan had raised objections to the dam's construction.

The Tribune, 21 March 2005

**3 Pak militants among 5 killed in J&K** (Press Trust of India)

Three Pakistani militants were among five persons killed and four jawans injured in two separate encounters in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir since last night, official sources said here today. In the gunbattle, one top Lashker-e-Toiba militant, identified as Abu Husma of Pakistan, was killed. One AK rifle, three magazines, seven grenades and some ammunition were seized from him. One jawan was also injured in this encounter and was later hospitalised, they said.

The Hindu, 22 March 2005

**Villagers battle militants in the higher reaches**

REJARHA (SURANKOTE). The battle against militancy in the higher reaches of Jammu and Kashmir is far from over. Local youths in the far-off hamlets of Pir Panjal have blocked highway routes of the militants by picking up arms in self-defence. This act coupled with the formation of village defence committees (VDC) has thrown an open challenge to the militants operating in this belt. The committees have not only helped the villagers defend themselves against the terror network in the remote areas but also carry out counter-militancy operations. The formation of the committees in this belt has denied militants access to the interior Anantnag and Udhampur districts as well. It has also proved the indispensability of local youth in the counter-militancy operations.

The Hindu, 22 March 2005

**Farooq Abdullah's remarks on travel permit his own: Omar** (By Shujaat Bukhari)

SRINAGAR. Differences within the opposition National Conference (NC) over issuing travel permits for the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service came to the fore today with its president, Omar Abdullah, saying that the statement given by the party patron, Farooq Abdullah, was his personal view and he, in fact, had no authority to speak on policy matters of the party. Stating that Jammu and Kashmir had been forcibly divided, the NC president said it was unacceptable to his party to travel with a passport on this route.

The Daily Times, 22 March 2005

**Syed Ali Geelani blasts Pakistan for reopening road**

NEW DELHI: The Hurriyat Conference's hardline faction led by Syed Ali Geelani lashed out at Pakistan for approving the reopening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road, without political concessions from India. The faction's spokesman said the Shoura (consultative body) also ridiculed the People's Democratic Party's claim that the solution of the Kashmir issue was a priority. He said the solution was possible only by implementing UN resolutions. Referring to the geniality between India and Pakistan, the Shoura alleged that security forces were maintaining their 'reign of terror' behind the spectacle of Indo-Pak Confidence Building Measures (CBMs). The Shoura said that sports ties, exchange of visits by journalists, cultural and peace marches and exchange of visits by the Punjab chief ministers were actions "providing the troops a license to eliminate Kashmiris".

The Daily Excelsior, 22 March 2005

### **2 TJI militants surrender at Surankote**

SURANKOTE: Two hard-core militants of Tehrik-e-Jehadi Islami (TJI) outfit surrendered in presence of Army and Police officers at Dhara Sangla, near here today. They include district commander of the TJI, Rashid Sikander, son of Mohammed Shaqoor R/o Dhara Sangla and Mumtaz Ahmed code name, Sher Khan, son of Abdul Gani Sheikh, R/o Sailan. The surrendered militants also handed over two AK 47 rifles, eleven magazines, four grenades, two wireless sets and 242 rounds to the police. The local people while hailing the efforts of the police and army said that the duo were hard-core militants and their surrender will give a jolt to the outfit and the people will heave a sigh of relief.

The Tribune, 22 March 2005

### **'Unity' bus divides Abdullaha (Ehsan Fazili)**

The beginning of the historic Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service from April 7 aimed at "re-uniting divided families" has surprisingly divided the first political family of Jammu and Kashmir. This was clear when the National Conference President, Mr Omar Abdullah, today said that his father and former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Dr Farooq Abdullah's statement in the Rajya Sabha on travel documents for Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus was different from the party's stand. Mr Omar Abdullah has sought clarification from his father over the latter's statement made last week, wherein Dr Farooq had questioned the entry-permit system in place of passports for travelling on the proposed bus.

The Indian Express, 23 March 2005

### **Hurriyat slams Pakistan for tacitly approving J&K status quo**

Srinagar: Lashing out at Islamabad, the pro-Pakistan Hurriyat faction led by Syed Ali Shah Geelani has said its approval to the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service tantamounts to giving permanency to the status quo in Jammu and Kashmir and "rubbing salt into the wounds of the people". The Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service is an Indian plan to give permanency to the status quo in Jammu and Kashmir. The council said the Mufti Mohammad Sayeed government's claims that resolution of the Kashmir issue was on its agenda, was "nothing but a fraud."

The Daily Times, 23 March 2005

### **Only Kashmiris should use Kashmir bus, say Jihadis**

ISLAMABAD: United Jihad Council (UJC) in its recent meeting expressed its concerns over the use of Muzaffarabad-Srinagar Bus Service by Pakistani and Indian nationals. The meeting participants observed that the service should be restricted to Kashmiris only as it was their right. The meeting was chaired by Syed Salahuddin, chairman of the UJC. The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly had already passed a resolution that only Kashmiris should be allowed to travel on the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar Bus Service.

Greater Kashmir, 23 March 2005

### **Congress activist shot; 4 die in JK**

Srinagar: Four militants including two district commanders of Hizbul Mujahideen and Lashkar-e-Toiba were killed and a Congress activist shot in separate incidents across the state since Monday. Three militants of Lashkar-e-Toiba including their district commander were killed by troops and police in an encounter at Dhara Sangla sector Surankote Poonch on Tuesday. Troops killed a Hizbul Mujahideen district commander in a gun-battle at Veel Nagabal Aishmuqam in Islamabad district Tuesday morning. Troops recovered huge cache of arms and ammunition from Galuti Rajouri, Nachiana Doda and Kadwa Rai Chak Udampur.

The Tribune, 23 March 2005

### **APHC honours Pak envoy's invitation, Geelani gets cold feet (M.L. Kak)**

While several APHC leaders have left for Delhi in response to an invitation by the Pakistan High Commissioner in India in connection with Pakistan Day, the hardliners among the separatists, headed by Syed Ali Shah Geelani, have developed cold feet. Among the prominent APHC leaders who have flown to Delhi include Kashmir Mirwaiz and chairman of the conglomerate, Molvi Umar Farooq, Molvi Abbas Ansari and Prof Abdul Gani Bhat. Two issues are said to have perturbed Geelani. He has a strong feeling that by agreeing to open road, air and rail links, and by allowing interaction between politicians, academicians and journalists from India and Pakistan, the core issue of Kashmir was being placed under the carpet. Secondly, he does not cherish Islamabad patronising his rival conglomerate, the APHC.

The Daily Excelsior, 23 March 2005

### **3 LeT, TuM commanders killed**

JAMMU: Army and police today gunned down three commanders of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Tehreek-ul-Mujahideen (TuM) outfits in an encounter at Chinar Mohalla in Sangla area of Surankote in Poonch district. In the encounter this evening, three LeT and TuM 'commanders' were killed. Army or police didn't suffer any casualties in the operation. Recoveries made from their possession include three AK-47 rifles, eight magazines, one radio set, one hand grenade and six diaries.

The Daily Times, 23 March 2005

### **No insurance cover for Kashmir bus**

LAHORE: Unlike the Delhi-Lahore bus, the passengers on board the historic Uri-Muzaffarabad bus will be travelling at their own risk because the Jammu and Kashmir State Road Transport Corporation (JKSRTC) buses do not have insurance. Resuming after about five decades, the service will first facilitate 30 passengers from each side. The bus service was suspended in 1956. In order to exchange the documents and finalise other details, a flag meeting was held a few yards from the LoC in Pakistani territory, near the OP Post. For the first time after 1956, journalists were allowed to reach the LoC and watch the flag meeting

between the authorities of the two countries. The cannons and bunkers of the Indian army were around half a kilometre away.

The Hindu, 24 March 2005

**"Bus service will lose credibility if Kashmir issue is not resolved"** (By B. Muralidhar Reddy)

ISLAMABAD. The Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, has said that confidence building measures (CBMs) between India and Pakistan such as Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service would lose "credibility" if the Kashmir issue were not resolved. In his brief address ahead of the parade, Gen. Musharraf said India and Pakistan should explore all options for the solution to the Kashmir problem in the light of the September 2004 statement issued after his meeting with the Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, in New York, "which are acceptable to all parties - Pakistan, India and Kashmiri people." On the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, scheduled to start on April 7, Gen. Musharraf said that at the parade "it is not a substitute for the resolution of Jammu and Kashmir issue but a confidence building measure."

The Indian Express, 24 March 2005

**Big-ticket launch planned for bus to Muzaffarabad (NEERJA CHOWDHURY)**

NEW DELHI: On a day Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf declared that CBMs would have little meaning without the resolution of the Kashmir dispute, the UPA Government and the Congress Party veered around to the view that both Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi should be present in Srinagar when the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus is flagged off. Though the final decision is still to be taken, it seemed likely that Sonia Gandhi would address the rally in Srinagar along with Manmohan Singh on April 7, after which the bus would leave for Muzaffarabad. Though the PM is slated to flag off the bus, the Congress President is expected to be by his side when this happens. The presence of both Manmohan Singh and Sonia Gandhi in Srinagar on April 7 shows the importance the Government is attaching to the bus initiative.

The Daily Excelsior, 24 March 2005

**Geelani snubs Pak, boycotts HC function**

NEW DELHI: Pro-Pakistan Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani today boycotted the Pakistan national day function here in protest against Islamabad's "dwindling support to the Kashmir cause" and resumption of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service which he termed an "insult" to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. "The bus is an insult to the people of Jammu and Kashmir and a mere diversion from the core issue... Pakistan is ignoring the sacrifices of Kashmiris by lending support to opening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road. We protest the move and decided to boycott the function," Mr Geelani said here. His boycott of the celebrations at the Pakistan High Commission here is seen as a major blow to Islamabad's effort to assuage the hardliners in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Daily Times, 24 March 2005

**Six killed in more Kashmir violence**

SRINAGAR: Six people including a civilian and a soldier were killed as fresh violence erupted in held Kashmir, police said on Wednesday. Militants triggered an explosion on a highway on Wednesday, killing a civilian and a soldier and wounding four others in a passing military jeep, police said. A bomb planted in an abandoned car on the Srinagar-Jammu highway exploded as the jeep approached it, said police officer Javed Makhdoomi. A soldier and a civilian bystander died instantly and four others were wounded, Makhdoomi said. The blast mangled the jeep, Makhdoomi said. The car was thrown far from the site of the explosion, which also shattered windows in nearby homes. Militant group Hizb-ul-Mujahedeen claimed responsibility for the blast in a telephone call to a news agency in Srinagar.

The Tribune, 24 March 2005

**Bus service a sham, says Hurriyat**

The Geelani faction of separatist Hurriyat Conference has called for protest demonstrations on April 7 against the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service describing the move as holding no solution to Kashmir issue. A spokesman of the APHC, Ghulam Nabi Sumjhi, quoting acting chairman, here today alleged that killings continued in Kashmir even as India and Pakistan were engaged in the process of dialogue and restoration of peace. The acting chairman blamed India for playing a dubious role by entering into dialogue with Pakistan "to cover up excesses and war crimes" by the security forces in Kashmir.

The Daily Excelsior, 24 March 2005

**Car blast kills civilian, injures 6**

SRINAGAR: While as militants triggered a car explosion on a highway in Srinagar city, killing a civilian and wounding four Army soldiers and two pedestrians including a woman, this afternoon, gunmen shot dead a suspected Army source in Baramulla district this evening. Meanwhile, Army today claimed to have recovered a huge cache of arms and ammunition in a Kupwara forest. Sources said that the wreckage of the explosive-laden car was flung nearly 20 meters from site of the explosion, which also shattered windows of nearby homes and Electric Grid Station, resulting in power failure for couple of hours. Hizb-ul-Mujahedeen claimed responsibility for the blast in a telephone call to the local news gathering agencies.

The Daily Excelsior, 24 March 2005

**LeT militant, civilian killed**

JAMMU: A militant and a civilian were killed and a woman was injured in separate militancy related incidents while Udhampur police arrested an over ground worker of the militants and recovered a consignment of arms and ammunition. Official sources said troops of 9 Para and Poonch police gunned down a Lashkar -e-Toiba (LeT) militant at Kallar Kattal in Surankote in Poonch district this morning. One AK rifle, four magazines, 107 rounds, four hand grenades and one wireless set were recovered from the slain militant.

The News, 25 March 2005

### **President urges talks on Kashmir options**

ISLAMABAD: President General Pervez Musharraf on Thursday called for discussing options to resolve the lingering Jammu and Kashmir dispute as agreed in the Pakistan-India joint statement. He said he would take up the Kashmir dispute during his forthcoming visit to New Delhi during which he would also witness a cricket match between Pakistan and India next month. "There has been no forward movement on discussing options," he said. The president said the joint statement issued after his meeting with Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in New York stated that both Pakistan and India would show flexibility. "It is clearly stated that the Kashmir dispute needs to be resolved in a purposeful manner and the options need to be evaluated," he told a private TV in an interview.

Daily Excelsior, 25 March 2005

### **Afghani ultra killed in Basantgarh**

UDHAMPUR, Mar 24: Basantgarh police along with troops of Rashtriya Rifles and BSF today gunned down an Afghani militant of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) outfit at Rai Chak in Kadwah area of Basantgarh in this district. Slain militant has been identified as Abu Billal, an Afghani. Security forces or police didn't suffer any casualties in the operation. Recoveries made from the scene of encounter include two AK magazines, 29 rounds, one Chinese grenade, one Chinese pistol, seven pistol rounds, one pouch and some incriminating documents and cassettes.

Daily Excelsior, 25 March 2005

### **Army poised to win proxy war in J&K: Army Chief**

RAJOURI, Mar 24: Asserting that Army was poised to win the proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir, the Chief of Army Staff, General J J Singh said arrangements had been made in advance to repair the border fencing after the snow melts. Talking to media persons in this border town this evening, he said though Army would be soft towards the local misguided youth in case they wanted to surrender, foreign terrorists would be dealt with a heavy hand. No independent country will let foreign terrorists to enter its territory, the Army chief said and added, we have iron fists for terrorists and velvet gloves for the innocent people.

The Hindu, 25 March 2005

### **"Complete shift" in Pakistan's policy on Kashmir: Geelani**

SRINAGAR, MARCH 24. The chairman of the breakaway faction of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, has said that Pakistan had softened its stand on the Kashmir issue, saying the current developments in India-Pakistan relations reflected this. He said the resumption of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service was, in fact, an "Indian agenda." Mr. Geelani, who, for the first time, boycotted the Pakistan Day celebrations at the Pakistan High Commission in Delhi on Wednesday, told The Hindu that there was a "complete shift" in Pakistan's policy on Kashmir under the President Pervez Musharraf regime. "We wanted to register our protest against it," he said.

The Hindu, 26 March 2005

### **Jammu and Kashmir Home Minister's brother killed**

SRINAGAR, MARCH 24. Militants today shot dead Mohammad Akram Bhat, elder brother of the Minister of State for Home, Abdur Rehman Veeri, in South Kashmir. Police sources said that unidentified militants shot the 50-year-old Bhat, a contractor, at Zirpora near Bijbehara at 5.55 p.m. He was rushed to a hospital where doctors declared him brought dead. A civilian, Noor Mohammad Latoo, was injured in the shootout.

The Hindu, 26 March 2005

### **J&K avalanche, snowfall toll rises to 333**

SRINAGAR, MARCH 25. With the recovery of three more bodies from the worst-hit Waltingu village in Anantnag district, the toll in the recent unprecedented snowfall and avalanches in Jammu and Kashmir has risen to 333, official sources said today. Bodies of Nazir Ahmad Deed, Fareed Ahmad and Noor-ud-din were dug out by search parties from their collapsed houses in the village, 10 kms northwest of Qazigund, yesterday, over a month after heavy snowfall and subsequent avalanches buried the entire village, the sources said. With this, the total number of people killed in the village has gone upto 184 and in the state to 333 - 249 in Kashmir valley and 84 in Jammu division, they said.

The Hindu, 26 March 2005

### **Parliamentary panel flays J&K Govt. on Dal Lake**

NEW DELHI, MARCH 25. The Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committee on Science and Technology and Environment and Forests has expressed deep concern over deterioration of water quality and other associated problems arising out of development of 'eutrophic' conditions in the Dal Lake in Kashmir that have reduced its environmental, recreational and aesthetic value. In its 118th reported tabled in Rajya Sabha last week, the Committee has asked the State Government to identify the principal sources of nutrients and know precisely their rate of accumulation in the lake basin in order to formulate a plan of action to control pollution. Describing conservation of Dal Lake as a national issue, it says that the lake forms the axis of life for the Kashmir Valley and therefore it is not only important from the point of view of ecology, but also from the point of augmenting economy of the people.

The Hindu, 26 March 2005

### **Cluster colonies for Pandits**

JAMMU, MARCH 25. The Pandit community which had to migrate from Valley in the early 1990s due to the threat perception

will be rehabilitated in cluster colonies and the Government will consult the community in this regard, the Revenue Minister, Hakim Mohammad Yasin, said in a written reply to the Assembly today. As per the plan, efforts were on for the early completion of 32 flats at Sheikhpura (Budgam) and 65 flats at Mattan cluster colony. The modalities of rehabilitation of the Pandits would be worked out in consultation with the representative bodies of the Pandits, Mr. Yasin said, adding that there was an agreement on most aspects of the issue. The migrants had been provided one-room tenements with the basic services such as sanitation, water, power supply and medical facilities.

The Hindu, 26 March 2005

#### **Militant group welcomes tourists to Kashmir**

SRINAGAR, MARCH 25. A front-ranking pro-Pakistan militant group, al-Badr has for the first time welcomed "Indian and foreign tourists" to the strife-torn Kashmir valley. In a statement quoted by a local English daily, the outfit said tourists were welcome but added, "they should respect Islamic principles." "We welcome all Indian and foreigners to the valley but they should respect Islamic principles and Kashmiri culture," said a spokesman of the outfit.

Daily Excelsior, 26 March 2005

#### **SPO held for providing vital information to HM militants**

JAMMU, Mar 25: A SPO engaged in district Kathua was used to provide vital security related information and plans to the militants. This was disclosed by Minister of Roads and Building, G M Mir while replying to a Calling Attention Motion of Dr Manohar Lal Sharma on behalf of the Minister of State for Home. 'Chan Mohammed son of Akbar Tapriyal of Sang Khaned, tehsil Ramnagar, Udhampur, who was working as SPO in district Kathua figured adversely during the interrogation of an Hizbul Mujahidin militant Abdul Lateef alias Zahid Fazal of Marmat Doda following his surrender before Kathua Police", the Minister stated in the Assembly.

The Hindu, 27 March 2005

#### **Silk imports hit output in Kashmir**

JAMMU, MARCH 26. Large-scale dumping of silk has affected production in the State resulting in closure of silk units. The State had been a major producer of silk and it was being exported to markets especially in Europe. Silk provides employment to people in Ramnagar, Sunderbani, Anantnag and Budgam areas. The production, which touched 850 tonnes before 2001, has now come down to 500 tonnes. According to the State Government, the lowering of tariff for silk imports has hit production. The Agriculture Minister, Abdul Aziz Zargar, termed the condition grim and blamed it on cheap imports. The Minister said: "The rate of silk had fallen drastically to Rs.130 per tri cocoon. Producers cannot even cover the cost of production and there is little incentive to be in the trade which is incurring losses."

The Hindu, 27 March 2005

#### **Mirwaiz welcomes bus service**

SRINAGAR, MARCH 26. The chairman of a faction of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, has described the confidence-building measures between India and Pakistan such as the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service a good step. This is in contrast to the separatist leader, Syed Ali Geelani's remarks that the bus service would undermine the cause of Kashmiris. The Mirwaiz, however, urged the leadership of both countries to hold talks on Kashmir in Srinagar. "In place of holding talks in New Delhi, both leaders should come to Kashmir to hold dialogue for the resolution of Kashmir," he said quoting a Persian couplet "Qazae zameen bar sar zameen"(Disputes should be resolved at the disputed places). The Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, and the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, should hold talks here and not in Delhi or Islamabad.

The Hindu, 27 March 2005

#### **India, Pakistan urged to end "proxy war" in Kashmir**

NEW DELHI, MARCH 26. The Jammu and Kashmir Council for Human Rights (JKCHR) has urged India and Pakistan to end their "proxy politics and proxy war" in the State and allow the people living under the three administrations to have three popularly -elected legislatures and governments with full access to human rights and fundamental freedoms. The JKCHR said the people of Kashmir be allowed to negotiate for themselves. In his submission before the 61st session of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR), being held in Geneva, Syed Nazir Gilani of the JKCHR said that over the past 15 years, the people had suffered violation of human rights both "at the hands of the security forces" and militants. Kashmiris had killed Kashmiris and the pluralist society had been reduced to rubble due to the displacement of the Pandits.

The Hindu, 27 March 2005

#### **Policeman among 10 killed in Kashmir**

SRINAGAR, MARCH 26. Two militants and a policeman were among 10 killed and a Congress worker injured in separate incidents in Jammu and Kashmir, a police spokesman said today. The security forces arrested four persons. The spokesman said militants raided Hassote village in the Mahore area of Udhampur district this morning and fired at the family of a surrendered militant Mohammad Shabir Gujjar. Gujjar's mother Gagy Begum, wife Shamshad Begum, and his infant daughter were killed. The ultras set ablaze the house, causing damage to it. Before fleeing, the militants also killed one Mir Qasim in his house at nearby Plani.

Daily Excelsior, 28 March 2005

**HM commander among 4 killed**

SRINAGAR, Mar 27: A top commander of the pro Pakistan Hizbul Mujahideen (HM) and a police constable were among four people killed and 24 others, including three women injured, in Kashmir overnight. A Defence Ministry spokesman said the troops on specific information conducted a search operation at Drushpura forest in north Kashmir district of Kupwara yesterday afternoon. He said when the troops were sealing the area the militants opened fire and hurled hand grenades. Troops also returned the fire and in the ensuing encounter a militant was killed.

Daily Excelsior, 28 March 2005

**3 of a surrendered ultra's family among 4 killed**

JAMMU, Mar 27: Four civilians including three members of a surrendered militant's family were killed by the militants at village Hasot in Chasana area of Mahore in Reasi police district on Friday night. The victims included a six day old baby. SSP Reasi J L Sharma said a group of militants entered into the house of a surrendered militant Shabir Hussain at Hasot late Friday night and opened indiscriminate firing on the house inmates. While Shabir Hussain was not present in the house, his three family members were killed in the firing.

The Tribune, 28 March 2005

**Preparations on for smooth journey to Muzaffarabad**

Jammu, March 27: With just 10 days left for the first bus to carry the first batch of visitors to the Uri border for crossing over to Muzaffarabad, finishing touches are being given to the road and the required infrastructure is being set up on the LoC. A 19-seater luxury coach carried out a trial run from Srinagar to Uri and the experts travelling in it pointed out some shortcomings in the road development programme. These loopholes, according to official sources, would be removed within the next three days. According to the Minister of State for Transport, Mr Raman Bhalla, the two 19-seater buses are fully air-conditioned and have push-back seats. Television sets have been installed in the buses which have inbuilt facility for the supply of drinking water.

The Tribune, 28 March 2005

**3 women among 20 hurt in grenade blast**

Srinagar, March 27: Five persons, including three militants and a policeman, have been killed and several others injured in separate militancy-related incidents in Jammu and Kashmir since last night, officials said here today. In a major breakthrough, security forces shot dead Ghulam Mohammad Malik alias Kamran, self-styled divisional commander-cum-financial chief of Hizb, during an encounter in Dardpora forests of Kupwara district last night, an official spokesman said. An AK rifle, three magazines, 63 rounds, three hand grenades and a wireless set were recovered from Malik's possession, he said.

The Hindu, 28 March 2005

**Economic self-reliance more important: Mufti**

SRINAGAR MARCH 27. Maintaining that he was not averse to granting greater autonomy to the State, the Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, has said that economic self-reliance was more important and added that political autonomy and a begging bowl do not go together. He also called for engaging separatists in the ongoing dialogue and normalisation process. In an interview here, the Chief Minister said that autonomy was an option but the views of all the three regions would have to be taken before an agreement was reached. He said while there was a demand for more autonomy in Kashmir, demand for total integration and union territory status was voiced in Jammu and Ladakh, respectively.

The Hindu, 28 March 2005

**Muzaffarabad traders oppose demolitions on bus route**

MUZAFFARABAD, MARCH 27. With the feel-good factor reshaping the Indo-Pak ties and the bus diplomacy driving the cross-border relations in a positive way, millions of Kashmiris are waiting breathlessly for April 7 when the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus will roll down, bridging the gap between the two sides of the Kashmir valley. But, what had begun as a cheering process in the decades-long tensed region took an ugly turn on Saturday, when shopkeepers of the main market in Muzaffarabad were asked to demolish road encroachments to make room for the bus service. Traders protested against the move and took to streets. Shutting down their businesses, angry traders and shop owners came out in a "peaceful march" against the district government and the Municipal Corporation of Muzaffarabad.

The Hindu, 28 March 2005

**Pandits want to visit Muzaffarabad**

SRINAGAR, MARCH 27. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, today said he would take at the appropriate level the demand of sending a delegation of Kashmiri Pandits to Muzaffarabad via the Jhelum Valley Road. The Chief Minister gave this assurance to a delegation of the Hindu Welfare Society, Kashmir, which called on him to highlight the problems confronting the community. The Society sought jobs and the rehabilitation of displaced Pandits. They also demanded that a special bus carrying a delegation of the community be sent to Muzaffarabad to visit the Sharda Devi Mandir.

The Hindu, 28 March 2005

**PoK seeks advertisements along highway**

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 27. Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) sees a great opportunity for firms to advertise their wares along the route of the Muzaffarabad-Srinagar bus service scheduled to begin from April 7. Terming it as a 'historical occasion' the PoK Government through an advertisement in prominent dailies here has invited firms/companies with 'vast experience' in

dealing with national/multinational companies for handling their commercial advertisement through display of signs, hoardings, floodlight boards along the highway on its side.

The Hindu, 28 March 2005

#### **Resolve Kashmir to prevent another Kargil: Musharraf**

ISLAMABAD, MARCH 27. India and Pakistan should adopt a "positive" attitude towards the Kargil war and resolve the Kashmir issue to prevent repetition of Kargil-type incidents, the Pakistan President, Pervez Musharraf, has said. To an e-mail query sent by an Indian to his Presidential website, Gen. Musharraf said reunification of the two nations was not possible. They could establish close ties if the Kashmir issue was resolved. On the Kargil war, he said: "I do not want to enter into a debate as to who won and who lost." According to him, neither side will accept the other's claim and "we will end up debating it." Claiming that India has "misquoted" the casualty figures, which according to him was "very high," he said the reports in the media spoke of several "problems" faced by the Indian Army during Kargil. He said the conflict was an offshoot of the Kashmir dispute and the result of several "intrusions" by India after the Shimla Accord.

The Indian Express, 29 March 2005

#### **Militants torture man in J&K** (Press Trust of India)

Jammu, March 29: In a horrific incident, militants burnt the tongue of a person with cigarette stubs after they failed to extort money from him in Doda district of Jammu and Kashmir, official sources said. Taj Din of Baltias village in the district was found in an unconscious state on the outskirts of his village on Monday, three days after he was kidnapped by militants, they said. Taj, unable to speak, wrote on a piece of paper that militants burnt his tongue with cigarette stubs after they found no money in his possession, they added.

The Indian Express, 29 March 2005

#### **Two BSF jawans killed in militant attack in J&K** (Press Trust of India)

Jammu: Two BSF jawans were killed and nine injured when Jamait-ul-Mujahideen militants ambushed a search party at Rajouri district of Jammu and Kashmir, police said. The militants fired indiscriminately at the Border Security Force search party at Manu post in the district around 10 last night, they said. Jamait-ul-Mujahideen militant outfit on Monday owned responsibility for the attack. In a fax statement, JUM chief spokesman Jameel Ahmed said militants under 'commander' Jamsheed Hyder carried out the attack at Rajouri.

The Daily Times, 29 March 2005

#### **Kashmiri leaders from both sides likely to meet in Delhi** (By Mohammad Imran)

ISLAMABAD: Top Kashmiri leaders from both side of the Line of Control (LoC) are likely to meet in New Delhi in the second week of next month, sources told Daily Times. Sources said this would be the first interaction between Kashmiri leaders from both sides of the LoC at New Delhi. Syed Ali Geelani, chairman of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference-Geelani, and Mir Waiz Umer Farooq, chairman of Jammu and Kashmir Awami Action Committee will be the leaders from held Kashmir while Shah Ghulam Qadir, former AJK finance minister, Sardar Atiq Ahmed Khan, president All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference, Sardar Ejaz Afzal Khan, Jamaat-e-Islami's ameer in AJK, and some other leaders are members of the steering committee.

The Daily Times, 29 March 2005

#### **20 pro-India Kashmiri leaders to visit AJK**

NEW DELHI: India has given a go-ahead to a delegation of pro-India Kashmiri leaders to travel to Muzaffarabad. Sources said that a 20-member Kashmiri delegation of pro-India groups would go to Muzaffarabad on a four-day visit and a list had been sent to Pakistani authorities for approval. The 20 Kashmiri leaders and 30 passengers belonging to the divided families will move in two buses which will be flagged off by Indian Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and Congress President Sonia Gandhi.

The Daily Excelsior, 29 March 2005

#### **Omar, Mehbooba visiting Muzaffarabad on first bus** (From Ahmed Ali Fayyaz)

NEW DELHI: In a significant political development, Government of India has decided to carry the Jammu and Kashmir heads of all the mainstream political parties on the first bus to Muzaffarabad on April 7th next. National Conference president, Omar Abdullah, and the ruling Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) chief, Mehbooba Mufti, are among the senior politicians who have filed their papers in order to get necessary travel documents for the historic journey. Travelling of the Kashmiri mainstream politicians is going to gain extra-ordinary importance in the wake of the separatist leaders' decision to stay away from what a number of them welcome but underplay as "official show".

The Daily Excelsior, 29 March 2005

#### **Bus will help PoK people seek asylum in J&K: Khurana**

JAMMU: Cautioning the Centre against the dangers inherent in the reopening of the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road, Bharatiya Janata Party's Incharge North Zone and former Governor of Rajasthan, Madan Lal Khurana, has said that too much of politics being played locally in support of the human traffic across the Line of Control (LoC) will prove counter-productive. He also charged UPA Government with diluting and undermining achievements of the NDA Government. When the Prime Minister will flag off bus from Srinagar to Muzaffarabad on April 7, the BJP would stage massive demonstration in Jammu not against the opening of road but against the permit system and ignorance towards the Resettlement Act.

The Daily Excelsior, 29 March 2005

#### **3 militants killed in Bijbehara**

SRINAGAR: While as three militants were claimed to be killed in a gun battle with police and Army troops in Anantnag district today, at least seven civilians, including three women were injured in a grenade blast in Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed's hometown of Bijbehara this afternoon. Meanwhile, a woman who was injured in Sunday's grenade blast in Srinagar succumbed to injuries in a hospital here today. SP Anantnag claimed that one militant was injured in the exchange of fire. He said that troops had engaged the injured militant in the firefight and operation was going on till late tonight. He also claimed that troops did not suffer any casualties.

The Daily Excelsior, 29 March 2005

**'No security threat from bus service'**

NEW DELHI: Discounting possibility of any security threat from the historic Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, Army chief Gen J J Singh said requisite safeguards had already been taken, while the Army had already readied the road much ahead of schedule. Drawing attention to the fact that the passengers going to either side would be members of divided families, he said proper identification measures, including photographs and fingerprints, would be taken to ensure that the person going back after meeting his relatives would be the same who had come here. Asked about the security for the bus, Gen Singh held that the possibilities of militants targetting the bus were remote since they would be 'counter productive', but the security forces would anyway implement appropriate measures.

The Indian Express, 30 March 2005

**Boost to J&K economy on CII's priority list: Mittal**

Jammu: In today's highly competitive and globalised environment, Indian industry needs to upgrade skill, productivity and delivery mechanism to match benchmark with the best in the world, said chairman of Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) Northern Region, Rakesh Bharti Mittal. Deliberating on the economic priorities of CII, Mittal mentioned that the accelerated economic and industrial development of J&K is CII's top agenda. The present government in the state has been taking a number of steps to boost the state economy and to promote the progressive initiatives to strengthen the inherent potential of state.

The Daily Excelsior, 30 March 2005

**Bus outcome of sacrifices, not Indo-Pak statesmanship: Sajjad**

SRINAGAR: While asserting the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service is "a product of heroic and defiant struggle of the people of Kashmir", Peoples' Conference (PC) has outrightly rejected it as an output of "visionary statesmanship" of the Indian and Pakistani leadership. "I fail to understand if the Muzaffarabad bus service is a start of the results of the struggle of sacrifices. What is the correlation between the sacrifices of Kashmiris and Sonia Gandhis, Manmohan Singhs and Muftis? Why are they flagging off the bus? Why not heirs of martyrs? The service is consequence of sacrifices not a ceremonial product," Sajjad said. He cautioned the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh not to convert the bus into 'farce'.

The Daily Excelsior, 30 March 2005

**Two ultras killed in Nowshera**

JAMMU: Two militants, suspected to be Pakistanis, were gunned down by Army and police in an encounter at Sukhan Gala in Nowshera sector in Rajouri district overnight while three militants of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen surrendered before security forces in Gandoh area in Doda district today. Two other militants remained untraced till this evening. Recoveries made from the slain militants included two AK-56 rifles, two magazines, four hand grenades, one radio set and one dairy. Security forces didn't suffer any casualties in the operation that lasted two days. Identity of the killed militants hasn't been established so far but they were suspected to be Pakistanis. They were wearing black dresses. Meanwhile, three militants of Harkat-ul-Mujahideen laid down arms before Army and police in Gandoh area of Doda district today.

The Daily Excelsior, 30 March 2005

**Militants kill youth in Reasi**

JAMMU: A youth was killed by the militants at village Biwilian in Pouni area of Reasi last night for his refusal to go to Thanna Mandi in Rajouri district and bring hawala money for them. Police sources said two militants of Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) sneaked into the house of Imtiyaz Ahmed last mid-night and reportedly asked him to bring Rs 4 lakh hawala money for them from a "source" in Thanna Mandi. Police said Imtiyaz refused to oblige the militants on the ground that two local youths -Liaquat Ali and Rafakat Ali were recently arrested by the police for bringing hawala money for the militants. Agitated over resistance offered by the youth, the militants slit his throat and killed him. The militants fled away after the killing.

The Hindu, 30 March 2005

**Mehbooba, Omar Abdullah to board bus** (By Shujaat Bukhari)

SRINAGAR. An all-party delegation is preparing to board the first bus to Muzaffarabad on April 7 as the Government of India has already forwarded the names of delegation members to the Government of Pakistan for approval. The delegation members include the ruling People's Democratic Party (PDP) president, Mehbooba Mufti, and the National Conference chief, Omar Abdullah. "It seems both India and Pakistan have agreed to the visit of the politicians," sources added.

The Hindu, 31 March 2005

**Militants warn against travelling on bus** (By Shujaat Bukhari)

SRINAGAR. Four militant organisations today urged the people not to board the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus. They also assailed the Pakistan Government for going ahead with the bus diplomacy. In a joint statement faxed to newspaper offices here, the pro-Pakistan Al-Nasireen (The Helpers), Save Kashmir Movement, Al-Arifeen (The Pious) and Farzandan-e-Millat (Sons of the Community) said that an extraordinary meeting of the "supreme commanders" of all the four outfits was held in

Srinagar to discuss the proposed bus service. "They agreed that the bus service was in no way in the interest of [the] ongoing jihad in Kashmir," the statement said. "It was a deep conspiracy by [the] Indian Government and is a lethal weapon to cause damage to the very foundation of [the] freedom struggle."

The Indian Express, 31 March 2005

**8 days to go, militants issue bus threat**

SRINAGAR/NEW DELHI: A week before the first bus rolls on the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad road, pro-Pakistan militants today issued a threat to its passengers, asking Kashmiris to refrain from boarding this "coffin" and becoming "traitors." The statement also included the list of 40 passengers from Kashmir waiting for Pakistan's approval and sought the news agencies to carry all the names "so that they refrain from boarding the bus." In view of the new threat, the government has decided to increase the security cover to the bus. Senior Home Ministry officials say that besides the usual security cover to the bus. Senior Home Ministry officials say that besides the usual security drill of "area domination," and security cover along the route, helicopters would be used to provide security to the bus enroute to Muzaffarabad.

The Hindu, 31 March 2005

**Bus to Muzaffarabad will be safe, says Patil**

NEW DELHI. The Union Home Minister, Shivraj Patil, today asserted that all steps would be taken to ensure a safe journey for passengers on the inaugural bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad on April 7. "We are looking into all reports. All necessary steps are being taken to ensure full safety of the passengers and the bus," Mr. Patil told reporters here when asked about threats reportedly issued by the Kashmir Mass Movement, a shadow outfit of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and the Laskher-e-Taiba.

The Daily Excelsior, 31 March 2005

**Fidayeen attack foiled; 2 militants, trooper killed**

SRINAGAR: Two militants and a paramilitary soldier were killed when a group of two Fidayeen tried to storm a Border Security Force (BSF) post in north Kashmir's apple town of Sopore this morning. Meanwhile, unidentified gunmen shot dead a village head in Kokernag area of Anantnag district tonight. A BSF spokesman said that two militants made an attempt to storm the camp and the troopers foiled it. Both the slain militants could not be identified and the duo was later buried by police at a graveyard in Boniyar, some 35 kilometres from Sopore. No militant group claimed the responsibility for carrying the attack.

The Indian Express, 31 March 2005

**Two BSF jawans killed in J-K militant attack** (Press Trust of India)

Jammu: Two BSF jawans were killed and nine injured on Monday when Jamait-ul-Mujahideen militants ambushed a search party at Rajouri district of J-K. The militants fired indiscriminately at the Border Security Force search party at Manu post on Saturday night, police said. Head Constable Saroop Chand and Lance Naik Hoshiyar Singh died on the spot. The militant outfit has owned responsibility for the attack.

The Daily Excelsior, 31 March 2005

**PM hints at discussing Kashmir with Musharraf**

ON BOARD THE SPECIAL AIRCRAFT: Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today indicated that he would discuss all issues, including Kashmir, with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf when he visits New Delhi next month and asserted there was no change in India's stated position on them. He said that some progress has been achieved in the Indo-Pak dialogue process after September last year. The Prime Minister said one round of the composite dialogue process had been completed and both countries were about to begin another round. Dr Singh said the hurdles relating to the Srinagar-Muzaffarabad bus service, scheduled to be flagged off on April seven, have been satisfactorily resolved.