

Indian Express, 1 March 2007

### **Army, IAF to airlift stranded passengers**

Jammu, February 28: With the 300-kms long Jammu-Srinagar national highway remaining closed for the ninth consecutive day, Army and Air Force on Wednesday jointly launched an operation to airlift the stranded passengers. The IAFs IL-36 and AN-32 aircraft were pressed into service as part of Operation Humsafar and 500 stranded passengers were airlifted to Kashmir Valley since this morning, spokesperson of Ministry of Defence, Colonel S D Goswami told reporters here. He said that over 700 stranded passengers have been so far registered for airlifting them to Srinagar. The aircraft were flown from Chandigarh to Jammu Air Force station from where stranded passengers were airlifted to Srinagar during five sorties so far. Senior Air Force and Army officers are supervising the Operation, he said adding that this step has been taken following the request from state government to the Ministry of Defence to airlift the stranded passengers to Kashmir Valley. Over 2,000 stranded passengers are still awaiting their turn for being airlifted to Kashmir Valley in IAF aircraft at Jammu airport.

Daily Excelsior, 1 March 2007

### **PDP stays away from Cabinet, regrets letter not even acknowledged by CM**

Jammu, Feb 28: Differences between Congress and Peoples Democratic Party PDP today widened with all four PDP Cabinet Ministers staying away from the Cabinet meeting, convened by Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad this evening, regretting that their demand for discussion on troops reduction and withdrawal of Armed Forces Special Powers Act AFSPA in the Cabinet was not considered by Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad. On the other, the Cabinet, which met for more than one and a half hour, cleared today's agenda which included approval for notifying Bloeria Committees report on demarcation of new districts and creation of posts for newly created administrative units including eight districts, three sub divisions and 12 tehsils, which were scheduled to be made functional from April 1 this year. Yes, we stayed away from the Cabinet meeting finding the issues, for which we had sought convening of a special meeting, missing from the agenda. They are not ready to even discuss sensitive and most important issue of gradual reduction of troops and AFSPA withdrawal, Finance, Planning and Law & Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Tariq Hamid Qarra, a close confidant of the Muftis, told the Excelsior.

Daily Excelsior, 1 March 2007

### **7 policemen chargesheeted in fake encounter case**

Srinagar, Feb 28: Seven policemen, including two senior officers, were today chargesheeted in a court here in connection with the killing of Abdul Rehman Paddar, one of the five civilians gunned down in alleged fake encounters in Jammu and Kashmir. Police filed the chargesheet against Superintendent of Police, Ganderbal, Hans Raj Parihar, his deputy Bahadur Ram, Assistant Sub-Inspector Farooq Gadoo and four constables in the court of Chief Judicial Magistrate M Y Akhoon. The three officers alongwith constables Farooq Ahmad Paddar, Zaheer Abbass, Manzoor Ahmad and Bansi Lal were arrested early this month following widespread protests after the killing of five civilians in alleged fake encounters by the Special Operations Group, Ganderbal, came to light. The accused were charged with hatching a criminal conspiracy Section 120b RPC, abduction with the intent to murder Section 364, murder Section 302 and destruction of

evidence. It is the first chargesheet in the fake encounter cases.

Kashmir Times, 1 March 2007

**Editorial: Brightening peace prospects**

The latest statements of Syed Salauddin, Pakistan-based chief of the Hizb ul Mujahideen, the largest indigenous militant group operating in Jammu and Kashmir, who is also the chairman of the United Jihad Council, endorsing President Musharraf's proposals as a first step in the direction of a Kashmir solution have been hailed by most sections of the people with the exception of Syed Ali Shah Geelani as a positive move which brightens the prospects of peace in the region. The HM chief succinctly said we believe in talks which are purposeful, objective oriented, and trilateral, because even if the aspirations of any of the three parties in the dispute are overlooked talks could well end up as a futile exercise adding that President Musharraf's four-point proposals could be the first important step in this direction. One need not read too much in the HM chief's statement and it would be naive to describe it as any basic shift in his stand taken by him so far. Even in the recent past Syed Salauddin has been asserting that he was interested in an end of violence and for just peace in Jammu and Kashmir and such peace is possible only if the Kashmir dispute is resolved in accordance with the wishes of the people of the State. He never opposed the peace process or dialogue for resolving the crisis per se but made it clear that any such dialogue has to be unconditional and purposeful.

Greater Kashmir, 1 March 2007

**Editorial: Towards Self-Sufficiency**

It is not a new phenomenon. The closure of Jammu and Srinagar highway during winters and rainy seasons does not mean only road blockade or stranding of a few thousand passengers in inhospitable situations which in itself is a big problem but it entails a barrage of problems for common people. It means scarcity of everything essential for life. It would be too simple to think that the road connecting the state with the rest of the world could ever be made all-weather road but constructing an alternative road may help in reducing the miseries caused to common people but it would be too simplistic to think that it would be the final answer to the problem. Over a period of time people in Kashmir, which once upon a time was self-sufficient in meeting winter requirements, have become fully dependent on supplies from outside the state. This dependence from outside the state for almost everything essential for living has been draining resources of the state resulting in the state failing to grow as a self-sufficient state as other neighboring states have grown during the past sixty years. The state administration has been making tall claims about investing in sectors like agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, floriculture, handicrafts and industries there might have been some development in these sectors but making the state self-sufficient has so far proved a pipe dream.

Daily Excelsior, 2 March 2007

**Mehbooba meets PM; discusses troops reduction, AFSPA repeal**

New Delhi, Mar 1: Pushing ahead with its campaign on de-militarisation in Jammu and Kashmir, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti today met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and later said she discussed wide-ranging issues with him including pulling out security forces from civilian areas in the State. Mehbooba, camping in the national capital for last

two days, had earlier held a series of meetings with Congress leaders including UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi and External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee after Congress shot down the PDP proposal for holding a special cabinet meeting to discuss the issue of de-militarisation. The rift between the states two key ruling alliance partners widened when PDP did not participate in the cabinet meeting last night. The decision to stay away from the cabinet came despite a meeting Mehbooba had with Gandhi here. After the ten-minute meeting with Singh, a press release issued by PDP said Mehbooba met the Prime Minister to discuss the issues of troop reduction, revocation of Armed Forces Special Powers Act AFSPA and vacation of agricultural and orchard land and private and Government buildings taken over by security forces for anti-militancy drive in the State.

Daily Times, 2 March 2007

**Opinion: No hasty Kashmir solution (Dr. M Hasan)**

The prevalent mode of governance coupled with the iniquitous property relations has produced an extremely affluent and powerful minority, which rules through the application of brute power over a billion-plus, the weak and downtrodden majority, and snatches a disproportionate share of their labour. Now that the process of resolving the Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan is reported to be proceeding satisfactorily and a new dispensation for the former State of Jammu and Kashmir is being worked out, it is time to pay attention to a vital aspect of the terms of the resolution. To design a new dispensation for an existing state or part of a state is a complex and unpredictable venture. The subcontinent has had more than its share of failures. India has hardly met its tryst with destiny as Jawaharlal Nehru and his Congress Party had envisaged. Pakistan is not what its great leader Mohammad Ali Jinnah had envisaged. Bangladesh has turned out to be quite different from what the massively popular Awami League and its leader Sheikh Mujibur Rehman wanted. The present-day Pakistan has experienced upheavals, which Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and the Constituent Assembly that unanimously legislated the 1973 Constitution, could not possibly imagine. We have remained poor and restive, craving for the rule of law.

Daily Excelsior, 2 March 2007

**Rajouris most wanted ultra Yasin eliminated**

Jam, Mar 1: Rajouri district's most wanted militant and commander-in-chief of Hizbul Mujahideen Pir Panjal Regiment HMPPR, Mohd Yasin, a SPO deserter, and his associate were eliminated by Army and police in a fierce gun-battle at Morha Daraj under the jurisdiction of Kandi police station in Rajouri district late tonight. Yasin was carrying a reward of Rs 5 lakh on his head, official sources said. Yasin, who had joined militancy after deserting police as SPO, was involved in killing 10 minority community members at Dhar Sakri and six at Gabbar Budhal besides spreading rumour about the killing of 12 civilians last year when Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh was chairing Round Table Conference in Srinagar. Besides, he was involved in several other civilians killings and other subversive activities. Troops of 48 Rashtriya Rifles and Rajouri Police had been monitoring Yasins movement for last about a fortnight in Kandi area through different mode of communications, SSP Rajouri Farooq Khan told the Excelsior on telephone from the site of encounter late tonight.

Daily Excelsior, 2 March 2007

**Govt relaxes norms in border areas of J&K**

New Delhi, Mar 1: In a reprieve to cellular operators, the Government has relaxed security norms to allow provision of mobile phone services up to 500 meters of India's international borders. Till now, the operators were barred from offering services up to 10 km from the international border of India. They operators will also be required to create a buffer zone of 10 km along the Line of Control, Line of Actual Control, Akhnoor and Pathankot areas in Jammu and Kashmir, where cell sites and radio transmitters cannot be deployed. Failing compliance with these conditions could attract stern Government action against telecom operators, including imposition of financial penalties. Periodic surprise checks may be carried out by the Department of Telecom Do or its authorised representatives, including security agencies to ensure the compliance with the conditions. In case, any violation in respect of usable mobile signals in the no service zone or in the buffer zone are detected, stern action will be taken according to the terms and conditions of the license agreement, including imposition of financial penalty, DoT said. The operators will have to use requisite technology to ensure that the signals become unusable within 500 metres of the international boundary.

Daily Excelsior, 3 March 2007

**Govt appoints special prosecutors to pursue fake encounters case**

Srinagar, Mar 2: Even as four officials of J&K Police have been removed from duty and attached to face departmental inquiry into their conduct, Government has appointed special public prosecutors to pursue the case of Ganderbal fake encounters against the detained SP Hans Raj Parihar and other accused Police, CRPF and Army officials. Commissioner-Secretary Law Department, Akhtar Kochak, has issued an SRO on Wednesday last whereby Deputy Director in the State Vigilance Organisation, Farooq Ahmed Kathwari, has been appointed as the Special Public Prosecutor to pursue the infamous Ganderbal fake encounters case in the Court of Chief Judicial Magistrate CJM. Srinagar and subsequently in a District and Sessions Court. Mr Kathwari will be assisted by two Chief Prosecuting Officers in Srinagar District, namely Syed Bari Andrabi and Qazi Manzoor Ahmed. This special team of public prosecutors will pursue prosecution against the detained SP of Ganderbal, Hans Raj Parihar, Dy SP Bahadur Ram and other accused officials, mostly from Police, CRPF and Army.

Kashmir Times, 3 March 2007

**Editorial: Beyond demilitarization**

The Congress High Command may have rightly stepped in to defuse the crisis emerging in the CongressPDP coalition government in Jammu and Kashmir by sounding a note of caution to both the parties, reviving hopes that the coalition may not fall. However, the issue of demilitarization that has sparked this crisis has not received the kind of attention it merits and any complacency on this count can prove to be more disastrous than any mathematical permutation and combination of coalition partners in the government. Petty politicking over a serious issue may finally be detrimental to the interests of peace, especially at a time when a consensus is emerging even in the mainstream political parties over the issue of demilitarization. Almost all the major political parties of Jammu and Kashmir including National Conference, PDP, Peoples Democratic Front and CPI M

have favoured the beginning of a demilitarization process as an important and initial step towards a political solution to the vexed Kashmir issue. Even the Congress at the Centre is not averse to such a demand but is weighing options. However, the states unit of the party has been blowing the trumpet of petty politicking by opposing any demand for demilitarization and deeming peace and normalcy as a pre-requisite to the condition of withdrawal of troops.

Daily Excelsio, 3 March 2007

### **Mirwaiz supports peace process**

Srinagar, Mar 2: Extending his full support to the Indo-Pak peace process, Chairman of the moderate Hurriyat Conference HC Mirwaiz Moulvi Umar Farooq today said that the withdrawal of troops would be the first step towards finding a durable and acceptable solution to the Kashmir issue. Addressing a Friday congregation at the historic Jamia Masjid this afternoon, the Mirwaiz said that the Hurriyat Conference fully supports the ongoing process between the two countries. We as a main party to the dispute extend support to the India and Pakistan in their resolve to find a peaceful and lasting solution to the issue, he said adding both the countries have now realised that there could be no military solution to this problem. He said the Kashmir issue has entered a decisive phase because of the supreme sacrifices made by the people of the Jammu and Kashmir since 1947. The Mirwaiz said a process has started to address the Kashmir issue but the withdrawal of troops would be the first positive step in this direction. He said the withdrawal of troops would help to improve relations between India and Pakistan. However, he said, some mainstream political parties are trying to use this for their political gains only to create hurdles.

Indian Express, 3 March 2007

### **Opinion: Restoring trust in J&K is central (Rekha Chowdhary)**

Ever since the false encounters causing the deaths of Abdur Rehman Padder a carpenter, Nazir Ahmed Deka a perfume seller, Ghulam Nabi Wani a vendor at Lal Chowk, Showkat Ahmad Kataria an imam and several others became public knowledge, Kashmiris have been seething with anger. The issue of the disappearances of thousands has suddenly come into mainstream discourse. The issue has generated heat not only on the streets of the Valley but also on the floor of the legislature. And yet the entire furore has remained limited to Kashmir. The issue did not lead to a national political campaign for justice in J&K. Even the national media did not do much to put the issue before the public. The reasons for this is not difficult to find. The issue has become a casualty of the widespread perception that debating human rights in Kashmir would go against India's national interests. National interest has always been pitted against human rights. That this approach needs to be changed was acknowledged by the PM himself. Manmohan Singh made a commitment while addressing Kashmiris in Srinagar that there would be zero tolerance for human rights violations.

Greater Kashmir, 3 March 2007

### **GEELANIS LAST WISH: DONT FORGET AZADI**

Srinagar, Mar 2: Veteran pro-freedom leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani today urged the Kashmiri people not to forget the sacrifices of thousands of youth for the cause of

freedom and take the ongoing movement to its logical conclusion. This is my last wish, the ailing leader told Hizbul Mujahideen chief Syed Salahuddin who telephoned Geelani to inquire about his health. Geelani has been diagnosed of severe kidney ailment and is undergoing treatment at a Delhi hospital. His party sources say the leader needs specialized treatment available outside India but the government has impounded his passport. The Hizb chief assured Geelani that the present anti-India movement will be continued at all costs. I know that thousands of Kashmiri youth have laid down their lives for freedom under my command. I assure you that none will be allowed to sabotage this struggle, Salahuddin said to Geelani.

Indian Express, 4 March 2007

### **Hurriyat to educate people on Musharraf's formula**

Srinagar, March 3: Hurriyat Conference has decided to launch a public contact programme to educate people about the four-point formula of Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf towards finding a solution to Kashmir issue. Hurriyat Conference will very soon strengthen its public contact programme to make people aware about the four-point formula of President Pervez Musharraf and take them into confidence on the ongoing peace process, a statement from moderate Hurriyat faction quoting its Chairman Mirwaiz Umer Farooq said. Mirwaiz said there was a need to take effective steps to ensure the withdrawal of troops from both sides of Line of Control in the state to pave way for a lasting solution to Kashmir issue.

The Tribune, 4 March 2007

### **PoK business team to arrive on March 13**

Jammu, March 3: A 28-member business delegation from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir PoK is reaching here on March 13 to explore possibilities for mutual trade between the two sides of divided Kashmir. The delegation will first reach Srinagar by the road route from Uri and spend three days in the valley. Thereafter, it will come here on March 16 and return to Muzaffarabad on March 18. This is for the first time after Partition in the past 60 years that any trade delegation from PoK is coming here. A trade delegation from J&K was scheduled to visit PoK last year, but this did not happen because of the devastating earthquake. The PoK delegation will be led by chamber president Zulfiqar Abbasi. The group has been invited by Ram Sahai, president of the Jammu Chamber of Commerce and Industry JCCI. Sahai said their visit would be a big event in the ongoing peace process and people-to-people contact between the two countries, and especially those of Jammu and Kashmir.

Greater Kashmir, 4 March 2007

### **Opinion: No liberation till education (Sajjad Bazaz)**

Kashmir has a glorious past in education. It has produced great scholars, thinkers and historians. Sheikh Yaqoob Surfi, Gani Kashmiri, Maulana Anwar, Kalhana and Hassan are some such personalities who attained eminence. But in modern age, it is a million dollar question. Can Kashmir produce such personalities today? Perhaps not. As on date Kashmir among other things has lost its appeal to produce eminent personalities as scholars, thinkers etc. Because Kashmir has failed to keep pace with changing times. During the past few decades there has been tremendous deterioration in academic

standard and in 1990 when armed separatist emerged on the Kashmir scene, our student community was misguided by a self styled slogan No Education till Liberation. This witnessed total collapse of the education system, as the security forces took shelter in school building and later converted them into permanent security camps. This was coupled with irresponsible attitude of all concerned civil and administrative authorities. The norms set for the smooth and effective educational systems were thrown to winds during the period of turmoil.

The Hindu, 4 March 2007

### **No troops reduction in J&K: Manmohan**

New Delhi: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has ruled out, for now, troops reduction in Jammu and Kashmir. He said such a step could be contemplated if terrorist activities ended in the troubled State. The Prime Minister rejected the contention that the Army was an army of occupation Troops were in the State to protect the citizens, their lives and liberties from those who believed in violence and terror. Dr. Singhs remarks on Saturday constitute a refutation of the statement made by All Parties Hurriyat Conference chief Mirwaiz Umar Farooq on Friday that India and Pakistan had agreed on troops reduction. The Prime Minister described his statement as speculation. Apart from Pakistan and separatist voices, which have been demanding demilitarisation, the Peoples Democratic Party, a partner in the ruling alliance with the Congress in the State, has raised the question of troops reduction.

Daily Excelsior, 5 March 2007

### **Time not ripe for demilitarisation: Azad**

Srinagar, Mar 4: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad has said that time was not ripe for demilitarisation in the State. Addressing a public meeting at Salamabad in Uri, about 100 km from here in north Kashmir yesterday, Mr Azad said once peace was visible on the ground in the State, withdrawal of troops will automatically follow Immediate demilitarization was not possible when innocent people are being killed, he said, adding that peace was not visible in Kashmir despite people desperately yearning for it. For withdrawal of troops, peace is a pre-condition, he added. Lauding the security forces for their work during all these years, he said they are deployed in the State for the safety and security of the people. Without naming the coalition partner in the Government, Peoples Democratic Party PDP and the separatist organisations, Mr Azad said those demanding withdrawal or reduction of troops should take into account the ground situation before making such a demand.

Daily Excelsior, 5 March 2007

### **Doodipora killings probe completed**

Srinagar, Mar 4: The one-man inquiry commission probing the Doodipora killing of four boys allegedly by Army last year is likely to submit its report to the Government soon as the inquiry has been completed. I will submit the report on the Doodipora killings within a fortnight from now as the inquiry into the incident has been completed yesterday, the Inquiry Officer, Sessions Judge Syed Tariq Ahmad Naqshbandi told here today. Naqshbandi said the inquiry recorded statements of 21 people, including the relatives of the victims, police and medical officer concerned with the case. The Government

constituted the Commission following widespread protests across the Valley over the killing of four boys allegedly by a unit of Rashtriya Rifles of the Army at Doodipora in Handwara area of Kupwara district on February 22 last year. The Army refused to take part in the inquiry challenging the competence of the State Government to constitute the commission in view of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act.

Greater Kashmir, 5 March 2007

**Widow or half-widow, Taslees dilemma continues**

Srinagar, Mar 4: Tasleema, 35, is one of the hundreds of unfortunate women whose husbands went missing in custody of various security agencies in the past 17 years in the Valley. Mother of three, her husband Muhammad Afzal Shah of Kulgam, Islamabad was picked up allegedly by paramilitary Border Security Forces 199 batallion from his rented accommodation at Khonakhan Dalgate here, where he was an imam of a mosque, on April 26, 1997. Recounting the fateful day, Tasleema said, Some persons in Army uniform barged into our room and dragged Afzal. I pleaded them to leave him but they pushed me inside the room and bolted the door. Next day, local residents staged demonstrations and approached Nehru Park Police Post. Tasleema, with the locals, searched Afzal unsuccessfully in camps and interrogations centres. We spotted one of his leather slippers at Rajbagh bridge. Some houseboats owners living nearby told us that on April 26 night some vehicles stopped on the bridge. They said they heard a loud noise in the river as if something was thrown into it she said. But despite search we could not locate his body, she added.

Daily Excelsior, 5 March 2007

**Editorial: Any doubt'**

It is not the first time that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has ruled out troops reduction in the State. Time and again he has made it clear that demilitarisation or withdrawal of the security forces is not possible as long there is threat of terrorism. At a function in New Delhi last weekend he has asserted that there is no change in this stance. Clearly in his perception the ground scenario still deserves a close look. Who will disagree with him' We in this State are exposed to almost everyday dastardly killing of innocent fellow citizens and attacks on security forces. That these are all planned attempts shows how well-organised their perpetrators are. No doubt their number has substantially come down. But their potential to create mischief on the strength of modern weapons is in tact. Moreover their inflow from across the Line of Control continues. That is why the official circles are wary of Pakistans professed drive against extremists on its soil. They obviously notice that the neighbouring country does not show the same enthusiasm in dealing with the menace along the LoC and International Border with this country as it does on its Afghanistan frontier. It is not an exaggerated view.

Kashmir Times, 5 March 2007

**Editorial: Rigid and illogical**

Prime Ministers latest statement virtually ruling out any reduction of troops deployed in Jammu and Kashmir untill terrorism ceases, is bound to have adverse impact on the ongoing peace process between India and Pakistan. It also betrays New Delhi's rigid posture in relation to confidence building measures in Jammu and Kashmir for creating a

conducive climate for pushing forward the peace process. One can understand the context in which Manmohan Singh made such a statement. He was asked by the mediapersons to comment on Mirwaiz Umer Farooq's claim that India and Pakistan have agreed to reduce the troops in Jammu and Kashmir on both sides of the Line of Control. The statement of Marwaiz, unwise as it was, had created an impression that the two countries have already agreed for the reduction of troops from the divided state. Perhaps the PM wanted to dispel this impression. But while denying that any such agreement has already been reached he should not have outrightly ruled out the reduction of troops from the civilian areas.

Greater Kashmir, 5 March 2007

**Editorial: Why dither?**

On one hand the Government of India claims to have succeeded in restoring peace in the troubled Kashmir on the other hand it continues to maintain an extra ordinarily high concentration of its troops in the state. This is despite the fact that all leading and well meaning defence experts have been counseling it to withdraw troops to avoid the increasing instances of civil-military conflict situations. In fact these experts have time and again opposed the use of armed forces for internal security. The increased incidents of the deployed jawans killing their own officers and colleagues prove the experts right. The deployed troops have been showing signs of fatigue which more often than not results in the killing of the defenceless civilians at their hands. The political leadership in India appears totally indifferent to the ground situation in the state in which the ordinary souls in Kashmir are feeling totally subjugated. Even their elected representatives ostensibly wielding power appear helpless in providing any relief to the common people facing the excesses. Any visitor to the Valley is struck by awe on seeing the heavy presence of troops in the populated areas.

Daily Excelsior, 6 March 2007

**Azad vows to wipe out predators in armed forces**

Srinagar, Mar 5: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today described the Ganderbal fake encounters as brutal acts of predators in uniform and vowed yet again that atrocities of police and security forces on innocent civilians would never be tolerated by his Government in Jammu and Kashmir. Declining a direct comment on the rising disharmony between Congress and PDP over the issue of withdrawal of troops, Mr Azad asserted that he was not among the politicians who had been laying nets and fish baits to hoodwink their own people for personal vested interest. Addressing a massive gathering of over 12,000 people at a famous garden in Kokernag, Mr Azad admitted that there were some predators in police and security forces who had been killing innocent civilians to earn rewards and promotions. However, he said his Government was committed to regard its public announcement of zero tolerance to human rights abuse and nobody, found involved in such killings would be spared in seeking maximum punishment for the criminals in uniform.

Daily Excelsior, 6 March 2007

**Ahead of visit, import-export items listed**

Jammu, Mar 5: In a bid to give a boost to ongoing peace process and start trade link

between two divided parts of the State, six day visit of a high level delegation of prominent trade and industry representatives from Pakistan occupied Kashmir PoK to Jammu and Kashmir has been given a green signal. The visit was reported to have been cleared by Governments of India and Pakistan as well as PoK and J&K, official sources told the Excelsior. Beginning March 13, the delegation will have a stay of three days each in Jammu and Kashmir regions, sources said, adding this will be first ever visit by PoK traders to J&K since peace process was revived between the two countries which include Confidence Building Measures CBMs like start of Srinagar-Muzaffarabad and Poonch-Rawalakot bus services and opening of five points on LoC for fortnightly movement of civilians between two parts of the State. The PoK delegations tour will be followed by a visit of J&K industrialists to that part of the State.

Kashmir Times, 6 March 2007

### **PM decides to resolve standoff on troops cut**

Jammu, Mar 5: Given the explosive turn, the ties of Congress and Peoples Democratic Party have taken in the state on the issue of reduction of troops and withdrawal of Armed Forces Special Power Act AFSPA placing even the alliance between the two partners on the rocks, finally the Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh has decided to convene a meeting of the leaders of two parties to buy peace. According to highly placed sources, the Prime Minister in this respect today talked to Minister for External Affairs Pranab Mukherjee, who is indisposed. In the meeting to be chaired by the Prime Minister himself, Peoples Democratic Party patron Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad would also participate besides Mukherjee. Although the date for the meeting has not been fixed but the sources maintain that given the uncertainty prevailing about the fate of coalition in the state, the meeting would be convened very shortly. This is pertinent to mention here that earlier the Minister for External Affairs has tried to mollify the two warring partners but he failed to douse the heat spoiling the ties.

Kashmir Times, 6 March 2007

### **Editorial: Probing HR abuses cases**

That the fate of 79 official enquiry committees constituted to probe allegations of custodial killings since 1990 is unknown is a reflection of the government's complacency to the issue of human rights abuse in Jammu and Kashmir. Given the present indifference of the government, both in the state and the Centre, to the massive campaign being built up against violations, there has been no change in the attitude which indeed is a cause for concern. The recently unearthed Ganderbal fake encounters, which have become a landmark in their own right, have rightly sparked off peaceful protests and strengthened hands of human rights activists and victims who wish to transcend their victimhood to seek justice. The advocacy for an independent tribunal or commission to probe injustices and violations perpetrated by security forces and sponsored by state is gaining ground and is even endorsed by both the major separatists and mainstream political parties in Jammu and Kashmir. However, in face of this campaign, the only official response is not only feeble but also dismal.

Daily Excelsior, 6 March 2007

**Editorial: Population transfer or cleansing'**

In the wake of terrorism we have seen the exodus of the Kashmiri Pandit community from the Kashmir region. Before that Punjab has witnessed movement of the seriously affected people in identical circumstances. In 1947 the communal violence had induced the mass departure of Muslims from the Jammu region. Likewise all Hindus and Sikhs had been compelled to leave their home and hearth in Azad Kashmir as the Pakistan occupied part of the State is locally known. At that point in time there was exchange of Hindus and Muslims on a wider scale too in the sub-continent with the formation of Pakistan on the basis of the two-nation theory based on religion. Population transfer has been generally described as the forced migration of a large group of people from one region to another by state policy or international authority, most frequently on the basis of ethnicity or religion. This is distinguished from exile and banishment which entail the same process but have genesis in different reasons. This definition gives the impression as if it is a regulated procedure. This is simply not true. We know it from our personal experiences in the State. The journey in these instances has not only been unwilling but also stained with blood.

Greater Kashmir, 6 March 2007

**Editorial: More Courts Needed**

It is high time to evolve an effective mechanism for expeditious disposal of the cases pending in various Courts. It is a hard reality that the number of cases in various courts in the state during past sixteen years has multiplied and our system was not geared to cope with the increasing workload resulting in a tardy dispensing of justice. As very aptly stated by Chief Justice of Jammu and Kashmir High Court Justice B. A. Khan at the time of inauguration of the Mega Lok Adalat time has gained such a great importance in today's fast developing world that a person does not want to waste a single moment on petty and insignificant issues. Under the prevailing scenario it is obligatory for judiciary not to drag cases and instead dispose them expeditiously. True the concept of holding Lok Adalats was timely and well conceived and this had not only facilitated quick disposal of cases but had also helped in upholding authority of law but there is need for taking many more steps that could bring in more speed in the disposal of the cases in various court cases. It also cannot be denied that during the past few years many new courts have been set up in the state but while considering the number of cases pending disposal in various courts they are very few.

Daily Excelsior, 7 March 2007

**EU report disfavours plebiscite in J&K**

London, Mar 6: A European Union report on Jammu and Kashmir has disfavoured any plebiscite in the State, saying it would be meaningless unless Pakistan withdraws all its troops from the parts under it, corrects the demographic changes and ensures return of territory under China. The report, to be discussed by the EU's Foreign Affairs Committee on March 21, notes that over last 58 years, there have been large scale population changes in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir PoK with people from outside settling in unlike the Indian side where such settlements are prohibited. An amendment recognising this

situation is among 16 accepted from among 250 moved in the report prepared by prominent Member of European Parliament MEP Baronness Emma Nicholson. These would be discussed by Foreign Affairs Committee on March 21 before the report is presented to the plenary for voting towards the end of May. Any plebiscite would be meaningless without a change in policy from Islamabad, which maintains that all of Kashmir is an integral part of Pakistans territory, and without Pakistani troop withdrawals and the return of Punjabi and Pathan settlers from Gilgit and Baltistan as well as Chinese withdrawal from Aksai Chin and the Shaksgam Valley, the amendment said.

Daily Excelsior, 7 March 2007

### **NC raps PDP for misleading people on demilitarization**

Srinagar, Mar 6 : National Conference NC today came down heavily on the PDP, saying the latters demand for demilitarization is not based on sincerity but aimed at misleading the people in view of the upcoming elections in Jammu and Kashmir. Mufti Mohammad Sayeed never talked of withdrawal of troops when he was the Chief Minister for three years. He is harping on demilitarisation now as he is preparing schemes to mislead the people during the coming elections, NC President Omar Abdullah told party workers in Anantnag, 55 km from here. He asked people not to be misled by PDP's hollow slogans as both India and Pakistan are engaged in talks over demilitarisation in the State. People of the State are wise enough to know the political machinations. Omar said when Mufti took over as the States Chief Minister four years ago, he had promised that Special Operations Group SOG of police would be disbanded, peace restored and people would not be killed in custody. But what happened during his rule is history, Omar said. Meanwhile, in Jammu, Omar Abdullah in a statement urged the Union Government to take immediate steps to stop the harassment of Kashmiris residing in the country outside Jammu and Kashmir.

Kashmir Times, 7 March 2007

### **Pak will consider proposal on working group: Shabir**

Srinagar, Mar 6: Shabir Ahmad Shah, President of Democratic Freedom Party DFP, today said Pakistani government has agreed to consider his proposal for forming a working group for talks with Kashmiri separatists. Talking to KTNS, he said he mooted the proposal during his recent meeting with the Pakistani foreign minister Khurshid Mehmood Kasuri in New Delhi. Kasuri sahib told me that his government would consider my proposal. He also agreed to take up the matter with president Gen Pervez Musharaf and Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz, Shah said. Stating that the Pakistani leaders are holding talks with Kashmiri leadership without any prior ground work, the DFP president said that whenever any Pakistani leader visits New Delhi separatists are suddenly being invited for talks. These talks are held without any ground work. Every dialogue process has a proper mechanism through which informal talks are held at the lower level, first for setting up agenda for the formal level talks at the highest level, the DFP president said.

Daily Excelsior, 7 March 2007

### **Editorial: No half way**

A law is not worth the paper on which it is written if it is not implemented in letter and

spirit. This appears to be the fate of legal provisions governing travel expenses of ruling politicians and bureaucrats. The State Vigilance Organisation SVO has dusted at least two of them off the pigeonholes of the Secretariat. One envisages that a person using an official vehicle for private purposes must pay Rs 500 every month. The other is that the employees are entitled only to first class bus fare during their transfer from Jammu division to Kashmir division and vice versa. According to a detailed report in this newspaper the reason why the SVO has been persuaded to draw attention to these standing orders is that the beneficiaries appear to have forgotten them. This is a very mild way of saying that the instructions are being flouted with impunity. Yet another measure stipulates that officers taking their spouses along with them in government cars for personal functions including wedding receptions are required to deposit half of the bus fare of that particular route in the treasury.

Greater Kashmir, 7 March 2007

### **Demilitarization! Army constructing air base in Manasbal**

Manasbal, Mar 6: At a time when pro-India leaders of the state and moderate faction of Hurriyat Conference are making round the clock statements about demilitarization in the state, Army is strengthening its presence in Manasbal and its adjoining villages by building concrete structures and requisitioning for more land. Sources told Greater Kashmir that Defence authorities are building an airfield and ammunition depot at Baran Pathar, Manasbal where sector headquarter of 3 Rashtriya Rifles is situated. Army is holding more than 1500 kanals of state land here, which belonged to Sheri Kashmir Agricultural University Shalimar till 1991. A big cattle breeding farm and research center operated here till 1991, which has almost gone defunct now. There is massive construction work going on inside the camp and Army doesn't allow anybody to move near the site. Most of the contractors and laborers working inside the camp are outsiders as locals are only being engaged for outside works. Dozens of trucks have been engaged by the Army to carry the construction material inside the camp and on two sides of the camp concrete fencing has been completed, the sources said.

Kashmir Times, 7 March 2007

### **PM asks Soz to broker peace with PDP**

Jammu, Mar 6: Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh, who has stepped in to broker peace with the coalition ally in the state Peoples Democratic Party PDP, has asked veteran Congress leader Prof SaifudDin Soz to coordinate the proposed meeting scheduled to be held next week to discuss the sticking points threatening their ties. According to authoritative sources, the Prime Minister today telephoned Mufti Mohammed Sayeed in this connection. While there are indications that the formal invitations for the meeting, to be chaired by the Prime Minister himself, would soon be sent to the PDP patron Mufti Mohammed Sayeed and Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad after the finalization of date, PDP president Mehbooba Mufti is returning to the winter capital tomorrow after her much hyped and hectic schedule in the union capital. In the proposed meeting, which is aimed at dissipating the crisis between the warring partners by discussing the demands of PDP under focus and reviewing the security scenario of the state, Minister for External Affairs Pranab Mukherjee too will participate.

The Hindu, 8 March 2007

**Centre trying out non-Army anti-terror forces in J&K' (Praveen Swami)**

New Delhi: Even as a decision has been taken to withdraw over 11,000 Border Security Force personnel from Jammu and Kashmir by next weekend, there are signs that New Delhi is experimenting with non-Army counter-terrorism forces at the local level. For example, a Central Reserve Police Force CRPF battalion is due to be inducted later this month in Kokernag, a sensitive area in southern Jammu and Kashmir often used by terrorists to transit from mountain hideouts in Kishtwar. If terrorist violence does not escalate in these areas, a larger withdrawal of troops can be considered, officials say. New Delhi decided to hand over urban counter-terrorism operations to the CRPF in 2003, as a consequence of a Group of Ministers report on internal security. BSF troops were gradually withdrawn from urban areas north of the Jhelum. However, the withdrawal plan got bogged down in concerns over the CRPFs ability to deal with the continuing terrorism. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh overrode these concerns in 2005 in an effort to consolidate his dialogue with the All Parties Hurriyat Conference.

Daily Excelsior, 8 March 2007

**Hurriyat to send three member delegation to Pak**

Srinagar, Mar 7: Moderate faction of Hurriyat Conference headed by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq today announced a three-member delegation to take part in the International Kashmir Conference to be held in Pakistan later this month. Former Chairmen Abdul Gani Bhat and Moulana Abbass Ansari and senior member Nayeem Ahmad Khan will take part in the Kashmir Conference being organised by Kashmir Institute of International Relations in Islamabad on March 16 and 17, a Hurriyat spokesman said. The names of the delegation were cleared at an extra-ordinary meeting of the Hurriyat Chaired by Mirwaiz here today. However, Mirwaiz, who received the invitation to attend the conference recently, decided not to attend it. The spokesman said the meeting also discussed in details the prevailing political situation and organisational matters.

Greater Kashmir, 8 March 2007

**Bodies of 3 men being exhumed from LoC graves (Shafiq Mir)**

Rajouri, Mar 7: The special police team probing the enforced custodial disappearance of three men of Kotdhara village in Rajouri by army in October 1997 on Wednesday identified two graves at Line of Control in which the disappeared men are feared to have been buried after their murder. The graves were identified and marked by the police team on the information provided by three army informers who were picked up by the police for interrogation. The deputy superintendent of police headquarters Rajouri, K S Jasrotia who heads the investigation team told Greater Kashmir that bodies would be exhumed within few days. The investigations were started on the orders of the Deputy Commissioner Rajouri Pervez Ahmed Malik after the relatives of the disappeared men wrote to him that on October 9, 1997 the troops of 18 Dogra Regiment picked up three men from village Kotdhara and were never seen again.

Kashmir Times, 8 March 2007

**PDP asks NC to come clear on demilitarisation, AFSPA**

Jammu, Mar 7: Peoples Democratic Party PDP has regretted that the National Conference

NC President Omar Abdullah instead of taking a clear position on troop reduction, revocation of Armed Forces Special Powers Act AFSPA and vacation of civil properties by the security forces in Jammu & Kashmir, is following the old party tradition of subverting the people's interests for power. Responding to some recent statements of NC President, a PDP spokesman today said that NC is once again performing its historic role of working against the people of Jammu and Kashmir as they have been doing at every crucial hour of our history dotted by the party's betrayals. The spokesman said ideally the party should have lent its voice to the very genuine demand of reducing the presence of troops in civilian areas and withdrawal of the draconian laws applicable to the State, but the NC has its eyes only on power. The party leadership has relegated the once mighty organization into a virtual political stepney as Omar Abdullah has been every now and then offering his support even while there are no takers. NC leadership, the spokesman said is aware that even the rank and file of the party, not the people of Jammu & Kashmir alone, are getting disillusioned with them.

Kashmir Times, 8 March 2007

**Opinion: Self rule and autonomy through soft borders (Dr. MA Beg)**

Since India and Pakistan have entered into a process of dialogue and negotiations with renewed enthusiasm it has definitely created a ray of hope for peace in the subcontinent. History is witness that when the two nuclear neighbors fought bloody wars on Kashmir they never bothered to take the people of the state into confidence. By now the two nations seem to have matured to understand that in order to take their peace process to a logical end it is essential for both to involve the people of the state as a nation in the process. Otherwise howsoever lucrative the plans for the solution may look; these are unlikely to see the light of day if applied through individuals or groups. Unfortunately, India and Pakistan, for vested interests during the last six decades, played politics of interests through their henchmen in the state. All types of corruption were encouraged. In the process majority of politicians in Jammu and Kashmir lost their credibility with the result there seems a vacuum of leadership to deliver the goods at a crucial juncture now. It is no wonder that people have lost faith in the institutions of politics too. This was evident through the recent street fights in Srinagar between the functionaries of the once pro freedom organizations.

Greater Kashmir, 8 March 2007

**Editorial: Chasing Shadows**

The happenings of last few months in the sub-continent especially those related to the perennially volatile problem of Kashmir give a lie to the euphoria raised by some of the leaders in regard to the solution being round the corner. The hopes of the people were raised sky high through dramatic declarations only to be dashed by counter declarations. The leaders seem to be playing games as usual with the sole motive of keeping every one in good humour. For the top political leaders of the sub-continent it is not a new game. They have become past masters at the art of playing diplomatic games over the years. However, what is tragic and unfortunate is that the leaders in Kashmir both young and old from both the mainstream as well as those supposed to be leading popular movement appear to be chasing the ever elusive shadows. One wonders whether there are any leaders at all representing the real and genuine sentiments and aspirations of the people'

Most of our leaders from all the sides seem to be self imposed and not genuinely thrown up through political movements after a hard struggle. Again they are mostly selected and not elected through true democratic process. In a number of cases they are there simply because of being sons and daughters of former leaders.

Daily Excelsior, 9 March 2007

#### **Azad to decide troops withdrawal: Farooq**

Srinagar, Mar 8: National Conference today remained non-committal on the issue of withdrawal of troops from Jammu and Kashmir, saying Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad was competent enough to take a decision on the matter. As far as withdrawal of troops is concerned, the Chief Minister of the State is competent enough to take a decision on the issue, chief patron of opposition NC Farooq Abdullah told reporters on the sidelines of a function here today. He said the Chief Minister is well versed with the situation having inputs from intelligence and other State agencies and can take an appropriate decision. On the growing differences between the two coalition partners in the State Congress and PDP Abdullah said PDP ruled the State for the first three years under the powersharing agreement between the two parties. Now they PDP are out of power and are creating problems for its partner Congress to run the Government.

Kashmir Times, 9 March 2007

#### **Police produces challan in Padder fake encounter case (S Basharat)**

Srinagar, Mar 8: Police today produced a challan in the Ganderbal fake encounter case before the court of Principal District and Sessions judge who fixed Mar 17 as the next date for the hearing. Meanwhile, two people were arrested by police today in Showket Ahmad Kataria fake encounter case. More arrests are expected said the police authorities. The charge sheet produced before the court was against the accused SSP H R Parihar, Dy SP Bahadur Ram, ASI Farooq Gudoo, selection grade constable Farooq Padder, selection grade constable Manzoor Ahmad Malik, selection grade constable Bhansi Lal and constable Zaheer Abbas Choudry. The accused have been charged with hatching a criminal conspiracy under section 120 B RPC, kidnapping with the intention to kill under section 364 RPC, destruction of some evidence under section 201 RPC and murder under section 302 RPC. It is in place to mention here that Farooq Ahmad Padder and Farooq Gudoo were represented by the Advocate Yasir Ahmad Sheikh and Advocate Mushtaq Ahmad Dar respectively. The rest of the accused have not so far engaged any lawyer for their defense.

Greater Kashmir, 9 March 2007

#### **Geelani gets passport**

Srinagar, Mar 8: Ailing Syed Ali Shah Geelani, chairman of Hurriyat Conference G, and his son were issued passports by the Regional Passport Officer RPO here this afternoon to go abroad for specialised medical treatment. We have received the passport of Mr Geelani and his son Naseem Geelani, a spokesman of the HC Aiyaz Akbar said. According to the RPO, the passport of Geelani's wife was under process, he said. The three had applied for the passport yesterday in the Regional Passport Office RPO here. When asked if Geelani will go to United States or England, the spokesman said it would be decided by the HC constituents with the consultation of others. Geelani's

passport was impounded by the authorities in 1981 and since then his applications for issuing fresh passport or travel documents were denied. However, he was allowed to perform Hajj pilgrimage last year along with his wife. Jammu and Kashmir High Court has also directed that Geelani, suffering from cancer, be issued a passport so that he could travel abroad for treatment.

Daily Excelsior, 9 March 2007

**Editorial: Much relevant**

The information on hand about the latest deliberations on Jammu and Kashmir in the European Unions Foreign Affairs Committee reveals that the world is being much wiser. No more is it swayed by copious tears and motivated propaganda. As all of us know British Member of European Parliament Baroness Emma Nicholson has prepared a detailed report titled Kashmir, present situation and future prospects in a bid to find a key to the supposedly knotty issue. Her painstaking effort has irked Pakistan, its sympathisers and self styled champions of the Kashmir cause. They had proposed a record number of amendments in the document. In the first meeting of the EU panel to discuss the modifications Pakistan had invited criticism for having launched an all out campaign to condemn the Nicholson report. Finding himself cornered, the Pakistan representative had thrown tantrums in order to divert attention. He had jumped out of his seat shouting outrageous, outrageous reminding one of the manner in which his predecessor had acted during the United Nations get togethers in the late 1940s.

Kashmir Times, 9 March 2007

**Editorial: Quarreling over peace**

Demilitarisation has now turned out to be an issue of explosive proportions. It has long been discussed as a step toward peace in troubled Jammu and Kashmir. Peace and human rights activists and many militant groups and their supporters have asked for it to bring down the political temperature of the state and to put a stop to the lengthening list of the dead in violence. But, it was only after President Musharraf had emphasised it as the first of his four point formula for the settlement of the Kashmir dispute that the demand for demilitarisation received the importance in political circles that it had always deserved. Then further weight was added to it when even Syed Salahuddin, the chairman of the United Jihad Council, welcomed the 4 point proposal as a first step toward a settlement of the dispute. Not only he but even those who disagreed with him, the Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, and President Musharraf are now asking for demilitarisation as an essential pre condition for peace. While the Congress divided as it is between the hawks and the doves it yet to make up its mind on this issue their allies in the state, the PDP, has come out in the open with the demand for demilitarisation as their main plank to launch their political initiative.

Daily Excelsior, 10 March 2007

**De militarization only after reduction in terror threat**

New Delhi, Mar 9: New Delhi today made it clear any decision on de-militarization in Jammu and Kashmir will be made solely by it in its own interest. New Delhi has told Islamabad that it wants to undertake demilitarization in J&K but the decision will depend on reduction of threat coming from across the border as well as from within, official

sources said here today. We would undertake demilitarization tomorrow but it will depend on the security situation, they said. India will also press Pakistan to take effective action to end cross border terrorism. The sources said the terror infrastructure in PoK, Pakistani Punjab and North West Frontier province is still in tact, which is a major concern for India. Besides, there is no reduction in infiltration figures. Meanwhile, a cross LoC truck service is expected to be launched in a few months and modalities in this regard will be discussed at the next weeks Foreign Secretary level talks in Islamabad to launch the fourth round of composite dialogue.

Indian Express, 10 March 2007

**Opinion: A uniformed cover up' (Muzamil Jaleel)**

Last year, Army Chief General J.J. Singh said that the army had reworked its evaluation system, making it clear that fake militant kills were not acceptable. Nine months later when a J&K police investigation accidentally exposed how its own men and three battalions of Rashtriya Rifles staged a series of fake encounters in which five innocent villagers were killed and dubbed as Pakistani militants, it exposed that General Singh's message had not reached the army's counter insurgency campaign. Kills as the militant casualties are described in army parlance remain the main thrust of success for army units operating in Kashmir. But there is no effective mechanism to check killings of innocent civilians in fake encounters. And the army has shown reservation in producing its erring officers before the police or civilian courts, making it difficult for the J&K government to curb serious human rights violations. The J&K police investigations into fake encounters began when the family of Abdul Rehman Padroo approached the police for help after he went missing last year. Padroo had gone missing along with his mobile phone, and the police traced it to one of its own officers. It exposed a network of fake encounters.

The Tribune, 10 March 2007

**People raid hotel, damage vehicles**

Srinagar, March 9: Hundreds of people, including women, raided a hotel, damaged furniture and parked vehicles in the city this afternoon. Official sources said a large number of people raided Hotel Le-Meridian near Iqbal Park on the airport road this afternoon immediately after the Friday prayers were over. They alleged the hotel was being used for immoral activities. The agitators later damaged furniture in the hotel. They also damaged about half a dozen parked vehicles and set on fire another vehicle of the hotel owner before the police could reach there. About six persons, including a photo journalist, were injured in the stone pelting and police action. The raid on the hotel came five days after two militants outfits, Al Badr and Al Madina, imposed a ban on some cable channels in the valley.

The Hindu, 10 March 2007

**Editorial: Time to demilitarise'**

Over the weekend, a hundred odd trucks will start transporting the last of 11,000 Border Security Force troops committed to counter terrorism duties in five Jammu and Kashmir towns to peace stations in the plains. A wide spectrum of politicians in the State have been arguing that the time has come to go further and demilitarise all of J & K. Bar the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party both have substantial political stakes in the

Jammu and Ladakh regions all the States major political forces, both secessionist and unionist, have supported the demilitarisation idea. If the debate on demilitarisation has acquired such intensity, this is in no small part due to the unfolding politics of the India Pakistan dialogue process. Fearing that the All Parties Hurriyat Conference may fight elections after a peace deal, the Peoples Democratic Party and the National Conference are seeking to pre-empt the secessionists likely platform. Advocates of demilitarisation point to a steady decline in violence from 2002, with the focus of jihadi terror groups shifting to major Indian cities outside the State. This is good reason, they say, to free the people of J & K from the day to day harassment that large scale security force deployment brings in its wake.

Greater Kashmir, 10 March 2007

**Editorial: Public good**

The subject of demilitarization might have been debated differently in different forums, but the truth remains. Kashmir is in a dire need of breathing a fresh air of fearlessness and towards the same this step will be instrumental. Whatever the political conflict between parties in power and out of power, we must not rule out the truth behind the very concept of demilitarization. If someone is using it for cheap publicity or someone is upholding it only to project his own political ambitions, that is an issue which merits a separate discussion. As of now lets suspend it for some better results to achieve. At present what we need is to build a consensus on troop withdrawal. If India and Pakistan together including those in Kashmir who are serious in making it a possibility work in tandem, things can change for better. Political disagreements can wait a while, but what is in public interest must be prioritized accordingly. There is an increasing need to make peace a possibility and for that party politics is to be set aside. There is no doubt that slogans are meant to be cashed by those who invent them, but if the slogan is directed to a greater common good of the people, there is no harm. A serious departure from the workaday politics where we aim at more and more power grab can make things easier in this regard.

Kashmir Times, 10 March 2007

**CM beats a retreat from Nowshera**

Jammu, Mar 9: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today cut short his visit to Nowshera as the people started shouting slogan against him while he was delivering his speech in a rally organized by Congress workers this afternoon. However, sources said that the protesters chased his cavalcade up to the helipad but the police and other security agencies brought the situation under control by preventing them to move further. The protesters were demanding a Degree College at Nowshera which the CM didnt announce. Giving details, sources said, a group of people started anti Azad and anti MLA slogans when the CM was about to finish his speech. The people started sloganeeing against the CM when they found that CM didnt utter even a single word regarding their long pending demand Degree College at Nowshera. However, the police and other security agencies pushed the mob back and didnt allow any one to enter the helipad premises. The protests even continued hours after the CM had left for Jammu.

Indian Express, 11 March 2007

**A uniformed cover up' (M Jaleel)**

Last year, Army Chief General J.J. Singh said that the army had reworked its evaluation system, making it clear that fake militant kills were not acceptable. Nine months later when a J&K police investigation accidentally exposed how its own men and three battalions of Rashtriya Rifles staged a series of fake encounters in which five innocent villagers were killed and dubbed as Pakistani militants, it exposed that General Singh's message had not reached the army's counter insurgency campaign. Kills as the militant casualties are described in army parlance remain the main thrust of success for army units operating in Kashmir. But there is no effective mechanism to check killings of innocent civilians in fake encounters. And the army has shown reservation in producing its erring officers before the police or civilian courts, making it difficult for the J&K government to curb serious human rights violations. The J&K police investigations into fake encounters began when the family of Abdul Rehman Padroo approached the police for help after he went missing last year. Padroo had gone missing along with his mobile phone, and the police traced it to one of its own officers.

Indian Express, 11 March 2007

**Stick to alliance or leave, Cong to PDP**

New Delhi, March 10: Irked by PDP's decision to boycott a meeting of Jammu and Kashmir cabinet, Congress leaders have started publicly airing their disquiet asking their coalition partner in the State to make it clear whether it wanted to stick to the alliance or opt out. While majority of Congress leaders have preferred to express their anger silently, state unit's senior Vice President Abdul Ahad Vakil bluntly stated that the action of the PDP was unacceptable. He went on to say that PDP was a frustrated lot because of the increasing popularity of state Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad for his pro-people policies which included creating of more districts, fight against corruption and vigorously pursuing missing cases. Congress is doing the job that has been entrusted to it and it is for them PDP to decide as their decision to boycott is creating a confusion, a candid Vakil told PTI over phone.

Daily Excelsior, 11 March 2007

**J&K situation reviewed at high level meeting**

New Delhi, Mar 10: The Congress today held a high level meeting here chaired by Manmohan Singh to discuss the political situation in Jammu and Kashmir in the backdrop of its strained relationship with coalition partner People's Democratic Party. The three hour meeting, attended by Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee and Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, discussed the situation that has arisen since the PDP started distancing itself from the Government by not attending two successive Cabinet meetings. Though there was no official comment from any of the leaders, sources said the Congress favoured exploring all political measures to salvage the coalition but made it clear that this should not be seen as a sign of weakness. The meeting also deliberated options available to the Congress if the PDP, which has 17 MLAs in the State Assembly, decided to withdraw support to the four and half year old coalition Government, they said.

Greater Kashmir, 11 March 2007

**Opinion: Kashmir Solution, Jinxed by Disunity! (M Ashraf)**

Every time an atmosphere of peace starts developing in the sub continent which revives hope for the settlement of the most vexed problem of Kashmir, something terrible happens without any warning bringing us back to square one! There is no other explanation than the fact that this unfortunate land and its people are Jinxed. Different people advance different reasons for this misfortune of Kashmiris. Some say that Kashmir is the most beautiful place on this planet and is popularly called Paradise on Earth. The beauty of this land has been its undoing. Everyone wants to own it! This rivalry among its neighbouring countries to somehow own this piece of God forsaken land has made the life of its people miserable. Others blame the people of this land themselves for all the mess surrounding them. It is said that the mass conversion of its inhabitants in the twelfth century has been their major sin for bringing all the suffering and misery on them. For thousands of years Kashmir had been a Hindu state with a glorious past. It was famous as a seat of learning throughout the world and some of the most important discourses on Hinduism and Buddhism have been held here.

Greater Kashmir, 12 March 2007

**MASSIVE PROTESTS IN TRAL**

Aripal Tral, Mar 11: People staged massive anti army and anti government demonstration in Tral accusing Army of killing two innocent civilians on Saturday evening in Aripal village even as police filed a case of murder against the Army's 50 RR battalion. After killing the two civilians, Majid Jehangir and Ghulam Muhammad Mir, the troops had besieged the village saying they were hunting for militants. On Sunday as soon as the Army lifted the cordon at 2.30 PM, the people from several villages assembled outside the government subsidiary health centre where the bodies of the killed civilians were kept since their death yesterday evening. The protesters carrying the bodies of the dead civilians on shoulders shouted slogans against the troops and government of India. The bodies were taken to the burial grounds only after media persons reached there as the people had refused to bury them. The troops did not allow media persons to move towards the village which, 13 kilometres from Tral. We stayed out of our homes and outside the hospital for whole night as troops didn't allow us to go to our homes, Nazir Ahmad, a protester told Greater Kashmir.

Kashmir Times, 12 March 2007

**No threat to govt: Cong, PDP**

Jammu, Mar 11: The frayed tempers of two warring partners in the state government are finally cooling down thus dissipating the possibility of any threat to the coalition. This became evident once again on Sunday when the Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad after his meeting with the central leadership on Saturday today ruled out any threat to the coalition government. While on the other side Minister for Agriculture and senior Peoples Democratic Party PDP leader Abdul Aziz Zargar, while talking to KTNS, also rubbished the reports anticipating withdrawal of support to the coalition by PDP. The Chief Minister was talking to the media persons on the sidelines of a function organized to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee celebration of the state High Court. When asked as

whether there was any threat to the coalition government, the Chief Minister averred that he did not perceive any threat to his government. There are no hiccups in the smooth running of coalition government and it is quite stable, he asserted.

Daily Excelsior, 12 March 2007

**Editorial: Nothing to despair**

A report that the Union Government has not found the construction of a railway line from this city to Poonch via Rajouri a feasible project should not cause any anguish. The reason cited for the purpose stands to logic at least at this juncture. The Railways Ministry does not expect any returns if it goes ahead with the scheme. It has conducted a survey at a cost of Rs 15 lakhs which says that it is possible to build a 223 kilometre long line. There is estimated to be whopping expenditure of Rs 4574 crores. By and large, however, it will remain unutilised. Clearly the finding is that there is not enough movement of passengers and goods on this route to justify the heavy expenses. Therefore, the Government wants to utilise the available resources for completion of its ongoing jobs. Admittedly, it makes sound economic sense. It is better to fruitfully spend the money on hand. One can always argue that successive Railway ministers have not been able to resist the temptation of frittering away the funds at their disposal on the upkeep and growth of stations and other infrastructure in their constituencies. They have even been exposed to the charge of bending the machinery in their favour.

The Tribune, 12 March 2007

**Hopes of POWs wife revives after 36 years (ML Kak)**

Jammu, March 11: For the 70 year old Nirmal Kour, a fresh hope has dawned on her and her seven children after she received a phone from the Ministry of External Affairs suggesting her to submit details of her background so that required travel documents could be prepared for enabling her and her children to travel to Pakistan in search of her husband, Subedar Assa Singh, who was taken as a prisoner of war by the Pakistani troops in 1971. When a team of mediemen visited her residence today in Nanak Nagar, Nirmal Kour and her children were engaged in filling the form for securing passports. Nirmal Kour said: I have been told by Delhi to submit the details and documents so that travel documents could be prepared. She said this message was received after India and Pakistan agreed to allow families of those POWs, whose whereabouts are not known, to visit Pakistan and trace them. With moist eyes she said: It was December 1971 when Assa Singh went to the battlefield. He was deployed in Chhamb sector of Jammu as a member of the Five Sikh Light Infantry.

Greater Kashmir, 12 March 2007

**Opinion: Contradiction within (Nissar Bhat)**

Barely some hours after Mirwaiz Umar Farooq expressed his firm belief that Kashmiri masses would soon witness the withdrawal of troops from Kashmir, Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh aired his rebuttal ruling out any such possibility in near future. Whether or not the Mirwaiz's assertion that Pakistan and India had agreed on reduction of troops on both sides of the divided Jammu and Kashmir and that, according to him, would be the first step towards resolution of the Kashmir issue, had raised any hope among the battered Kashmiris, the PM's rebuff, which some believe was aimed at keeping

the electorate in many states in India undergoing polls in a good humor, hardly surprised the Kashmir observers, for the checkered political history of this place is replete with instances where the genuine public demands have always been mocked at. Even as the slogan of demilitarization is not new to Kashmir yet in the current political scenario obtaining in the state the demand has essentially become more significant given its support by the pro India political parties including the major ally in the Congress led ruling coalition in the state.

Kashmir Times, 13 March 2007

### **Hurriyat A flays Tral killings**

Srinagar, Mar 12: Expressing their sympathy with the families of the two civilians in Tral who were killed in a firing incident, the Hurriyat Conference today said that the killing of these people goes contrary to the statement of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh that the security forces posted in the state are here for the security of the people. In a statement, a spokesman of conglomerate said that these views were expressed in a meeting of the conglomerate leaders chaired by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, chairman of the conglomerate. The participants of the meeting said that the security forces have been given a free hand and they are killing the common people at their own will without any fear from any quarter. The conglomerate leaders said that due to the huge concentration of the security forces personnel and due to the extraordinary powers given to them the common man has to face the music on daily basis.

Greater Kashmir, 13 March 2007

### **Opinion: Good police, please! (Riyaz Masroor)**

Whether or not the peace process attains a logical conclusion the India versus Kashmir image of the J&K conflict appears no longer in the interest of a rising India. That is, perhaps, the reason why the well wishers of the Indian Union have broached the idea of replacing the armed forces with the states own regular police force. Seen from afar Mufti Muhammad Sayeed's doctrine of handing over the task of counter insurgency to the indigenous forces looks heavily populist, up close it reflects the urgent security needs of the Indian state. Should India want to be seen as the country battling a separatist movement in a strategic state for sixty years and not securing any successes? Any true Indian would answer in negative. It, therefore, becomes imperative that New Delhi works out a more localized response to what it calls terrorism and Pakistan refers to as freedom struggle.

Kashmir Times, 13 March 2007

### **Editorial: Civilians killings in Aripal**

The incidents at Aripal, Tral on Saturday and the following day fully demonstrate that despite the tall claims being made by the government on zero tolerance to human rights violations by responding with immediate investigation in recently unearthed cases of fake encounters in Kashmir Valley, the security forces enjoy the unbridled freedom to violate both the law and its spirit. The injuries being inflicted on the people are not just physical but also psychological. What adds to the injury is the bid to cover up the follies of the security forces, which is obviously perpetrated as part of a policy encouraged by both exercise of extra judicial powers and the policy of rewarding security personnel who kill

a maximum number of people. This is exactly what seems to have happened in the Tral case, where official reports on the day one were contradictory.

Daily Excelsior, 13 March 2007

### **No official communication between two Govt partners**

Jam, Mar 12: As there is no official communication between Congress and Peoples Democratic Party PDP for the last three days, both the coalition partners have decided to organize public meetings in each others citadels to display their strength. Contrary to the reports in a section of media, neither former Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed nor any leader of PDP have so far received communication from Union or State Government to break the stalemate. After getting cold response from its coalition partner PDP has already decided to launch mass communication programmes, Congress, on the other hand, today convened a high level meeting and discussed how to respond formers programmes. It was decided in todays meeting to organize public meetings in different parts of State especially in Kashmir valle. Although Pradesh Congress Committee PCC chief Peerzada Mohammed Sayed termed these scheduled rallies as part of partys programmes, sources said that main aim of organizing these functioning was to take on PDP in its own strong hold.

Kashmir Times, 14 March 2007

### **Time not ripe for withdrawal of forces**

Jammu, Mar 13: J&K Human Rights Watch held a meeting today under the chairmanship of its chairman B.L.Kapoor, to discuss the present political scenario in the state, with special reference to the question of withdrawal of forces. The meeting observed that the conditions in the state have not all turned stable and peaceful and thus the demand for the withdrawal of the forces at this stage is immature. The forces are for the protection and have been doing their job well as the situation demands, the participants maintained. They also observed that the demand putforth by some political parties is in no way genuine and not in the national interests and even not in the interests of the public. They claimed that even at this stage the people from a number of areas demand more concentration of troops to make their lives secure and safe.

Kashmir Times, 14 March 2007

### **Opinion: The labyrinth of Kashmir talks (KN Pandita)**

The role of undisclosed but otherwise well-known external actors in two year old Kashmir talks is more than that of mere facilitators. To make them agree to a step-by-step movement forward is their real and solid contribution. Respective stances have changed considerably. It is no more the core issue for Pakistani leadership and not the customary rhetoric with the Indian side. The realisation of resolving the tangle is much more intense and sincere now than ever before. Some progress has been made along this roadmap. Kashmir dissident leadership has been moving across the LoC to talk to the Pakistani leaders. They may not divulge what they actually talk but one can speculate its parameters. They have been talking to the Indian leadership as well. Thus their long standing demand that the Kashmiris being a party to the dispute should be involved i8n talks has been virtually met.

Kashmir Times, 14 March 2007

**Cong, PDP ministers sit together for disaster Mgt alone**

Jammu, Mar 13: After an impasse of almost a fortnight, the worst of its kind threatening the existence of coalition even, finally the Congress and Peoples Democratic Party PDP ministers sat together today forgetting about their own issues for a while to discuss pressing public issues. Occasion was Disaster Management Committee meeting hurriedly convened by the Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad to take on the emergency situation emerged out of havoc created by rains and incessant rains. This was a paradox, however, that the meeting aimed at mainly tackling natural disaster brought the two warring partners together and provided an opportunity in ironing out their differences a bit and thus managing impending political disaster as well looming large over the coalition.

Indian Express, 15 March 2007

**More CBMs, J-K out of terror loop: Pak (Ajay Kaul)**

Islamabad: Pakistan today sought to keep the militant violence in Jammu and Kashmir out of the ambit of the joint anti-terror mechanism even as it agreed with India on putting in place a slew of measures like launch of Kargil-Skardu bus service and an early meeting on the Siachen issue. At the end of two-day Foreign Secretary-level talks here, Pakistan proposed some new cross-LoC confidence building measures, including allowing sports activities and launch of helicopter and postal services between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad. For the first time since the two countries agreed to set up a joint working group JWG on tackling terrorism in Havana in September last, Pakistan openly expressed its opposition to discussing the violence in J&K within the confines of the mechanism. At a joint press conference with Indian Foreign Secretary Shiv Shankar Menon, his Pakistani counterpart Riaz Mohammad Khan said J-K was disputed and should not be mixed with the initiative that is between India and Pakistan only. On J-K, India and Pakistan are engaged in the most sustained and intensive dialogue that they have ever had, Menon said.

Kashmir Times, 15 March 2007

**Beig to meet PM, will seek ST status for Paharis (Shuchimita)**

Jammu, Mar 14: Former Deputy Chief Minister and senior Peoples Democratic Party PDP leader Muzaffar Hussain Beig will meet Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh tomorrow to plead the cause of Pahari people for Scheduled Tribe ST status, a demand which is taking a volcanic turn in the border belts of the state. However, contrary to speculations during his meeting with the Prime Minister, Beig, who is leaving tomorrow for the union capital, would not take up the issue of demilitarization or any other controversial issue, presently the cause of bone of contention between Congress and PDP. He would meet Manmohan in the capacity of a Pahari leader thus would confine his one-to-one conversation with him only to the extent of seeking ST status for the Pahari people. Talking to KTNS, Beig maintained that he had requested the Prime Minister to grant an audience on this issue last month and the request was acceded to. Although the Prime Minister was kind enough to give appointment last month only but because of my pre-occupations, I could not go then. So as per the rescheduled programme in response to my request, I've been granted appointment for tomorrow. There as a Pahari, I'm going to request to the Prime Minister to give due consideration to the just and genuine demand of

the Pahari people for ST status, stated Beig.

Daily Excelsior, 15 March 2007

**Ensure presence of IRCON enggs in sex scandal: HC to CJM**

Srinagar, Mar 14: Justice Bashir A Kirmani of the State High Court Srinagar Wing, in a much publicized sex-scandal involving lady-police constables, has asked the Chief Judicial Magistrate CJM Srinagar to take all lawful steps to ensure presence of IRCON engineers, if involved, before the Investigating Agency for the probe. The High Court also issued necessary orders to Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited BSNL for extending full cooperation to Crime Branch for concluding the investigation. This order was issued in a writ petition filed by the petitioner Feroz Ahmed Nazar, an ASI but demoted to the rank of Head Constable for his alleged involvement in the sex scandal. The Court directed the Crime Branch Police to take note of the criminal aspects of the case percolating from statements of the witnesses purporting to have been recorded against petitioner by the concerned enquiry officer where from it transpired that the petitioner Feroz Ahmed Nazar while posted as Incharge deployment ladies contingent was extracting money from lady constables for letting them off the duty unauthorized and also indulged in their sexual exploitation by coercing them into illicit sex.

Kashmir Times, 15 March 2007

**Editorial: Differences over de-militarisation**

Differences over de-militarisation between the PDP and the Congress, partners in the ruling coalition of our state, have, by now, assumed the proportions of almost a civil war. The PDP members have absented themselves from two successive meetings of our state cabinet, and are consistently pressing the Congress to ask for a gradual demilitarisation of Jammu and Kashmir. Mehbooba Mufti was recently in Delhi to impress upon the UPA chairperson, Sonia Gandhi, the immediate need for de-militarisation, in the interest both of peace in the state and also for the healthy survival of the present coalition government. Although Sonia Gandhi, reportedly, asked the state Congress not to appear as opposed to de-militarisation and requested, first, Pranab Mukherji and, then, Saifuddin Soz to mediate between the PDP and the Congress, her response to Mehbooba's request was not sufficiently warm or encouraging. Now, her father, Mufti Mohammad Syed, has received an invitation from the PMO, and is likely to meet the prime minister soon in an effort to smoothen out the differences between the coalition partners. While the PDP has, so far, received full-throated support from the main moderate wing of the Hurriyat and a guarded one from the NC, Chief Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad's response to their demand is still one of stern rejection.

The Tribune, 15 March 2007

**Opinion: Peace with Pakistan (Sushant Sareen)**

Ever since the peace process between India and Pakistan began in January 2004, two correlated issues have continuously exercised the minds of all those involved in this process. The first is the time frame that is available to the two sides in arriving at some negotiated settlement. The second is how to create space for each other so that bold and innovative initiatives can be taken without being accused of a sellout by those opposed to the process. On the issue of the time dimension, almost everyone in both India and Pakistan

accepts that an issue of Jammu and Kashmir is extremely complicated and will take a long time to solve. Yet, there remains a degree of impatience in Pakistan with the pace of the peace process. This is routinely expressed through the demand for a firm time-frame for settling the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. Interestingly, hardly anyone in Pakistan is willing to spell out what constitutes a realistic time-frame. One important reason for this is that it is practically impossible to give any kind of a firm time-frame especially since the two sides are nowhere near to reconciling their positions on Kashmir. The higher echelons of the Pakistani establishment at least seem to accept that quick-fix solutions to vexed issues like Kashmir are not possible.

Daily Excelsior, 16 March 2007

### **PMs letter to Mufti again rules out troop cut, AFSPA withdrawal**

Jammu, Mar 15: Leaving Congress main coalition partner, the Peoples Democratic Party, high and dry, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh today rejected demand for troop reduction in civilian areas of Kashmir saying any decision on this can be taken only after assessing the infiltration level after summer months. In his three page letter to former Chief Minister and PDP patron Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, he said the Centre appreciated his concern but the Government felt that the security situation was not ripe and conducive at the moment to take any decision in this regard demilitarisation. Government fully shares your concern about the welfare and security of the people..As it has been observed that the infiltration level is on the maximum side during summer months so the Government will assess the situation on the ground after the summer months for deciding minimising or redeploying of troops, authoritative sources said quoting from the letter, which was written by Dr Singh in response to a letter written by Mufti Sayeed and delivered to PMO by PDP president Mehbooba Mufti and her party colleague, Dilawar Mir, Minister for PHE, Irrigation & Flood Control.

Daily Excelsior, 16 March 2007

### **CRPF units replace BSF in Kashmir**

Srinagar, Mar 15: The CRPF today replaced the BSF for counter-insurgency operations in 10 towns of the Kashmir valley hit hardest by militant violence, completing the phasing out of the border guards from such duties in the region. Ten CRPF units took charge in as many villages of north and south Kashmir, a CRPF spokesman said. The towns where the BSF was replaced included two each in Sopore, Budgam and Baramulla in north Kashmir and two each at Tral and Pulwama in the southern part of the State. The CRPF has replaced the BSF in counter-insurgency operations in Srinagar three years ago but two units of the BSF have been retained at the Raj Bhavan and the airport, the spokesman said. The Central Government had decided some time ago to phase out the BSF from counter-insurgency operations so that it could focus on its primary duty of guarding the frontiers. The process was, however, delayed as the CRPF personnel did not have adequate training and support in key areas like intelligence gathering.

Kashmir Times, 16 March 2007

### **After prolonged silence, families seeking justice (SJ Hashmi)**

Jammu, Mar 15: Immediately after state government ordered probe into the custodial killings of five innocents persons in Kashmir, parents of disappeared persons from border

districts of Rajouri and Poonch, after years of silence, have finally started coming out with complaints and vow to seek justice. Though district administration is skeptical about people turning up with applications seeking information about the disappeared, those seeking information are identifying army units and even in some cases officers responsible for that. Those who are turning up with applications say that they are seeking inquiry and not compensation. If our issue would have been compensation, we would have managed that somehow, but we want justice as has been done in Abdul Rehman Paddars case, they should not be reluctant to inquire. After all we have a right to know where our children have gone and why were they picked up, said Syed Mohammed, who is one of those six persons who have approached Deputy Commissioners Office with applications seeking probes into the alleged disappearance and killings of their kiths and kins at Rajouri.

Dawn, 16 March 2007

**Opinion: EUs biased report on Kashmir (S Akhtar)**

THE European Union report prepared by Baroness Emma Nicholson will be discussed by the European Parliaments foreign affairs committee on March 21 before it is put to vote some time towards the end of May. Besides making one wonder as to what prompted the European leaders to mull over a dispute which they had long forgotten, the report, by implicating China in the Kashmir imbroglio, tends to make the problem even more intractable. The report transforms what India had hitherto been treating as a bilateral dispute into a triangular dispute by bringing in another contender the Peoples Republic of China and enjoins Pakistan to ensure the evacuation of Aksai-Chin by Beijing. The EU reports demand that Pakistan unilaterally withdraw its troops from Azad Kashmir is unfair unless India also withdraws its half a million troops and paramilitary forces from the embattled state. The Indian troops are an occupation army since they are drawn from different parts of India and not from Kashmir. They have massacred 80,000 Kashmiris so far. But India denies the figure and instead admits to killing 35,000. Amnesty International has stated that more than 1,000 Kashmiris have disappeared while in custody of the occupying army.

Daily Excelsior, 16 March 2007

**Editorial: Reject twin evils**

Once again we have come across twin manifestations of the nauseating corruption misuse of official position and outright tax evasion at the same time. Two reports in this newspaper on Wednesday provide enough evidence on both the counts. These underline some of the bitter truths about our crooked administrative dispensation. One tells us how a police officer of the rank of Senior Superintendent of Police SSP has used a government truck to move bricks and cement bags all the way from Srinagar for constructing his house in this city. The State Vigilance Organisation SVO has seized the vehicle along with the material. For his part the uniformed officer has claimed that the house under construction was not his but that of his relative. However, he finds himself in soup on more than one ground. Why should the building objects be purchased in Srinagar where they are more expensive' Jammu on the other hand offers competitive rates. The difference in prices in the two Capital cities is mainly made by the distance that pushes up transportation costs across the Pir Panjal.

Daily Excelsior, 17 March 2007

**Mirwaiz to coalition Govt: solve peoples problems or vacate**

Srinagar, Mar 16: Chairman of moderate faction of the separatist Hurriyat Conference has asked the coalition Government in the State to step down if, according to him, it continued to fail in solving the peoples mundane problems. Mirwaiz as well as the hardline faction of the Hurriyat, led by the ailing separatist leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, have lashed out on Mufti Mohammad Sayeed's Peoples Democratic Party PDP for making cheap politics over demilitarisation in Jammu & Kashmir. Significantly steering clear of his traditional political assertions over Azadi and Sacrifices, Mirwaiz Umar Farooq dwelt in length on Sadak, Bijli, Pani and asserted in his Friday speech at Jamia Masjid that the coalition Government had miserably failed to mitigate the peoples sufferings created in the wake of a usual snowfall in Kashmir valley. He complained that the Divisional administration had failed on all fronts and the people of the Valley had been subject to untold suffering.

Daily Excelsior, 17 March 2007

**Pak ready to show flexibility on Kashmir: Aziz**

Islamabad, Mar 16: Pakistan is ready to show courage and flexibility in its efforts to resolve the Kashmir issue in a sincere, purposeful and constructive manner, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said today. Pakistan is ready to show courage and flexibility if all other stakeholders reciprocate, Aziz said addressing a conference on Kashmir here. Pakistan has entered into a dialogue process with India with a firm commitment and a sincere hope that it would result in a just and lasting solution of this dispute in accordance with the wishes of the Kashmiri people, Aziz said. He said durable peace in the region could only be ensured if the Kashmir issue is resolved peacefully in accordance with the aspirations and wishes of the Kashmiris. The Pakistan Prime Minister said the peace process will have roadblocks as there are different views about resolving it. We recognise the process will have its ups and downs, there will also be attempts to derail the process as there are different views on all sides, APP quoted him as saying.

Kashmir Times, 17 March 2007

**Ganderbal fake encounter killings: Investigations leading to conclusive evidence**

Srinagar, Mar 16: While reports of DNA tests in three out of the five fake encounter killings cases, in which bodies have been exhumed from Ganderbal, are still awaited, the investigating officers are sure that several other evidences also conclusively confirm the innocence of those killed and branded as foreign militants. Sources in the police maintain that the investigations into the fake encounter cases had led to many positive evidences which can confirm that the bodies exhumed were that of the innocent civilians and not that of any foreign militants. The police have found some conclusive evidences as even without DNA report, the police can claim that the bodies were that of the innocent civilians, said sources. However, the evidence, they maintain, cannot be divulged at this stage. Meanwhile, Deputy Inspector General DIG Central Kashmir Range Farooq Ahmad who is supervising the Special Investigation Team SIT today said that the investigation in these cases is progressing very well. He viewed that the police may produce challan in Showket Ahmad Kataria case in a week or ten days as the investigations in this case are

almost complete. The police have already produced challan in Abdul Rehman's case.

Greater Kashmir, 17 March 2007

**Opinion: Row over Baghlihar (AS Qureshi)**

The Baghlihar dam project is a fully hydroelectric project on the river Chenab in Kashmir. Pakistan government refers to as an infringement of the Indus Water Treaty IWT. As per the Pakistani arguments the construction of the dam will temporarily deplete the vital flow in the river during the sowing season in Punjab province in Pakistan. The monsoons may further worsen their condition. The World Bank announced in February this year that it would appoint a neutral expert to arbitrate in the row after it was approached by Pakistan. But the arbitration almost fully benefited India which Pakistan rejects and again approached the World Bank for some modifications in the dam being their legitimate points. India has strategic concerns as the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline which is planned to fulfill the growing industry and domestic usage of the Indian sub continent will be at the disposal of Pakistan. A tense situation arising between the governments due to these issues could affect the supply. Besides, talks on terrorism, demilitarization could be badly hit. Now it's of utmost importance for India that it taps all energy sources for the welfare of the people of J&K to meet their energy requirements.

Kashmir Times, 17 March 2007

**Opinion: Mirpur 1947 the untold story (Khalid Hasan)**

The savagery that gripped the Subcontinent at a moment in history which should have been its most glorious remains inexplicable. While a great deal of academic work has been completed in India on the massacres and the movement of millions from one part of the divided land to the other, little of that has been done on our side, which is yet another pity that can be added to the long list of pities that every Pakistani carries in his heart. Some years ago, I published a book of reminiscences about Jammu and how its Muslim population had been all but decimated in 1947, ironically with the connivance, if not at the directions, of the Maharaja's government, which was supposed to have protected them. That slim book remains the only first-hand account, as far as I know, of what life was like for the Muslims of Jammu before 1947 and what happened to them as India and Pakistan awoke to freedom. Some copies of the book, Memory Lane to Jammu, found their way to Jammu and several people who read it later said that they really had no idea what had happened to the Muslims of Jammu city and outlying areas in 1947.

Greater Kashmir, 18 March 2007

**PM MOOTS COMMITTEE ON TROOPS CUT**

Srinagar, Mar 17: With Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh's move to set up a high level committee to look into Mufti's demands of troop reduction, prospects of PDPs pull out from the Azad led coalition has for the time being dimmed. However in the midst of thick rumors about the collapse of coalition government Peoples Democratic Party PDP supremo Mufti Muhammad Sayeed has finally made it clear to his party's ministers that they will have to resign in case PDP walks away from the Ghulam Nabi Azad-led coalition government. However Prime Minister is learnt to have consented to form a high level committee to study the contours of Mufti's formula of demilitarization for at least three months. Immediately after the word about PM's move reached Jammu, PDP

leadership postponed its March 18 meeting of Political Affairs Committee PAC. Sources said it will now be held in Srinagar on March 25.

Daily Excelsior, 18 March 2007

**Opinion: Kashmirs fluid political scene exposes all ! (Dr. J Singh)**

Peoples Democratic Party raises the hype demanding withdrawal of troops from the Kashmir Valley even as its patriarch Mufti Mohd Sayeed is shrewd enough to know that this will not happen atleast for the time being but may help the PDP cut some ice with its voter constituency. National Conference tries its best to woo the Kashmiris away from the PDP campaign even as its patron Farooq Abdullah calls upon his partymen to brace up for a mid-term poll and once again reiterates that they are very soon coming back to power but while Dr Abdullah has been making such declarations for the last four years this time he has gone to the extent of announcing the name of Finance Minister in the soon-to-be formed NC Government. Indian National Congress INC continues to struggle with its internal factionalism even as the chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad may be secretly regretting over several hastily issued statements but still hoping to continue a ruling coalition with any of the prospective allies available. The Bharatiya Janata Party BJP continues to falter in getting its act together in Jammu and Kashmir despite the euphoria of its recent victories in Punjab and Uttarakhand.

The Tribune, 18 March 2007

**Kargil-Skardoo bus service welcomed**

Srinagar, March 17: People residing in Kargil district of Ladakh have hailed the reported Indo-Pak agreement on resuming trans-LoC bus service on the Kargil-Skardoo road, which is being considered among other confidence-building measures between the two neighbouring countries. This bus service, after the already operational two services on the Srinagar-Muzaffarbad and the Poonch-Rawlakote axes, was discussed at the recently concluded meeting of the foreign secretaries of the two countries in Islamabad. It is a matter of satisfaction that the two sides have agreed in principle to resume the bus service, said minister for social welfare Haji Nissar Ali, representing Kargil constituency in the state Assembly. It would fulfill the aspirations of the people of this region, he added. The minister pointed out that Haj pilgrims could also travel by road via Iraq and Iran. Chief executive officer of the Kargil Autonomous Hill Development Council Asghar Karbalai said it was a welcome step after the division six decades ago. He claimed that the opening of the 200-km-long Kargil-Skardoo road would benefit 5,000 divided families of the area, with only about 6-km of the road falling in Kargil district.

Daily Excelsior, 19 March 2007

**PM invites Mufti for talks, PDP stays away from Cabinet meet**

New Delhi, Mar 18: Amidst strains in ties between Congress leading the ruling coalition in Jammu and Kashmir and its key junior partner PDP which stayed away from a Cabinet meet today, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has invited PDP leader Mufti Mohammed Sayeed for talks here on Tuesday to resolve differences on withdrawal of troops from the State. PDP sources said the Prime Minister spoke to the Mufti last night and asked him to come to Delhi for the parleys and the PDP patron is understood to have agreed for the talks. Ahead of the possible talks, Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad is already here and

is likely to hold talks with the Central leadership. PDP, which is reported to be considering pulling out from the ruling coalition to press for its demand for withdrawal of troops from civilian areas and armed forces special powers act, had been sending feelers to Congress to work out a face-saving solution. The Prime Minister had in a letter to the Mufti last week turned down "for time being", the proposal about troop reduction.

Kashmir Times, 19 March 2007

### **Hopes of missing youths survival afloat amidst fight for justice**

Srinagar, Mar 18: Whisked away by various security force agencies, families of the disappeared youth have no clues about their whereabouts. Still hopes about their being alive prevails. Sharing this common dilemma are Ghulam Hassan Koka, Ghulam Mohammad Dar and Ghulam Ahmad Rather. Ghulam Hassan Koka's 22 year old son, Mohammad Ashraf Koka disappeared on October 27, 2001. The family pleads that Ashraf was picked up by 10 BN ITBP Indo-Tibetan Border Police camp Verinag during midnight. They came to our house in search of a Numberdar, who used to be my father but that time he wasnt alive. They picked him up for questioning and said that he would be released soon. We, however, impatiently wait for that day, said grey-bearded Koka. Revealing further details about his son, Koka said that he worked in Sub Judge Court, Bijbehara as Junior Assistant. He had just put in 5 years and 4 months in the service when he was picked up by the said agency. Later they denied that my son was in their custody.

The Tribune, 19 March 2007

### **Sex scandal: Accused IAS officer reinstated**

Jammu, March 18: In a surprise development, the state cabinet today reinstated a top IAS officer, Mohammad Iqbal Khandey, who was one of the prime accused in the Srinagar sex scandal that rocked Jammu and Kashmir a few months ago. The meeting of the cabinet was presided by Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad. Ministers belonging to the PDP again abstained. Khandey was placed under suspension in June last year as he was arrested by the CBI for his alleged involvement in the sex scandal. He was currently facing trial in a Chandigarh court that released him on bail. Khandey, who was principal secretary to the Chief Minister when Mufti Sayeed led the coalition government, has now been appointed chairman of the Bureau of Public Enterprises. Sources said the cabinet deliberated on various aspects before reinstating Khandey. Some ministers were reportedly of the view that when the two MLAs also allegedly involved in the sex scandal were allowed to attend the budget session of the assembly after their release on bail, why should the bureaucrat be prevented from joining his duties until or unless the case was proved against him by the court.

Greater Kashmir, 19 March 2007

### **GK GOES GREATER**

Muzaffarabad, Mar 18: Greater Kashmir added another feather to its cap by formally opening its bureau office in the capital of Pakistan-administered Kashmir on Sunday thus becoming the first ever newspaper from Jammu and Kashmir to make foray across the Line of Control. Located in Shaukat Lines, an area housing most of the capital's quality educational institutions, the office was inaugurated by the newspapers Editor in Chief Fayaz Ahmad Kaloo in a simple but impressive ceremony attended by many prominent

Kashmiris. Speaking on the occasion Mr Kaloo explained the rationale behind opening GK bureau in Muzaffarabad. Kashmir is witnessing significant developments at a fast pace and being the voice of the Kashmiris GK has to live up to its traditions and keep the nation abreast of each and every move taking place anywhere in the Himalayan region, he said.

Daily Excelsior, 20 March 2007

**Azad hardens stand, rules out troop cut**

New Delhi, Mar 19: Hardening his stand against ally PDP, Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today ruled out troop reduction in the State saying any complacency would jeopardise peace in the region. We are at a crucial and decisive phase in our fight against terrorism and militancy. Any complacency in security will jeopardise our desired goal of peace and stability in the region, Azad said after his 30-minute meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at Parliament House. The remarks by Azad clearly reflected the stand of Congress heading the coalition Government in the State ahead of the scheduled meeting between Singh and PDP patron Mufti Mohammed Sayeed. Sayeed will be meeting the Prime Minister to discuss the issues of troops reduction from civilian areas, repeal of Armed Forces Special Powers Act and vacation of civilian properties used by security forces for anti-militancy drive. The PDP has stayed away from three consecutive Cabinet meetings to press its demands.

Daily Excelsior, 20 March 2007

**Afzal seeks end of solitary confinement**

New Delhi, Mar 19: Mohd Afzal, the Jaish-e-Mohammed militant sentenced to death for plotting attack on Parliament, today moved an application before a Delhi court pleading for an end to his solitary confinement in Tihar jail here. In an application moved before Additional Sessions Judge Ravinder Kaur, who had issued his death warrant on September 26 last year, Afzal said that his continuous solitary confinement was leading to mental complications. The court has sought a report on the issue from the Tihar Jail Superintendent by March 24. Afzal's death sentence by the trial court, which came on December 18, 2002, has been confirmed by the Delhi High Court and upheld by the Supreme Court.

Greater Kashmir, 20 March 2007

**Opinion: Towards solution (Prof. MI Khan)**

Historically, the idea of Self-Rule is not a new concept in the context of the Kashmiris struggle against the Dogra rule for the establishment of what their leadership then termed Responsible Government. Designated, later, as a freedom movement, rightly or wrongly, their struggle first under the Muslim Conference and later under the National Conference was not aimed at seeking the separation of the Kashmir valley from Jammu and Ladakh. True, Shaikh Mohammad Abdullahs denunciation of the sale of Kashmir to Gulab Singh by virtue of the Treaty of Amritsar in the severest terms always provided an impetus to the movement launched by him against the Dogra autocracy. But there is no evidence to suggest that he ever favoured the creation of an independent Kashmir to the exclusion of Jammu and Ladakh the territories that were not part of Kashmir before the emergence of Jammu and Kashmir state in 1846. As a matter of fact, the Kashmiri Muslim leadership

acquiesced in the amalgamation of the Kashmir valley into the larger political entity known as Jammu and Kashmir for several pragmatic considerations of vital significance.

The Tribune, 20 March 2007

**Editorial: Countering insurgency**

WITH the replacing of over 11,000 Border Security Force BSF personnel on counter-terrorism duties in five Jammu and Kashmir locations, with battalions of the Central Reserve Police Force CRPF, one of the key recommendations of the post-Kargil Group of Ministers GoM Report on National Security has started coming to fruition. The Kargil Review Committee had recommended an in-depth review of border management, and the GoM had entrusted the job to a task-force under Dr Madhav Godbole. The task force report strongly disapproved of detailing border guarding forces for counter-insurgency operations, and asked the ministry of home affairs to come up with a well-considered plan to enlarge, upgrade, equip and train the CRPF for this job. The slightly larger formations of the CRPF deployment and the fact that they have all been specifically trained for this job, augurs well. They are heading for Tral, Sopore, Pulwama, Char-e-Sharif and Doda, locations which have faced intense militancy.

Daily Excelsior, 20 March 2007

**Militant-politicians nexus in J&K: Niaz**

Jammu, Mar 19: Mohd Sharief Niaz, former Minister for Power and cousin of Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad has alleged that militants-politicians' nexus was operative in Jammu and Kashmir under the very nose of some security agencies. Addressing a press conference here today, Mr Niaz, a Congress legislator in the Upper House of the J&K legislature alleged that several over-ground workers OGWs connected with various militant outfits were carrying on the activities smoothly and working under the nose of some security agencies. He alleged that such OGWs of high influence had connections at the top in the political corridors, bureaucracy and remain unharmed since long despite the knowledge of several top officers of the security agencies, intelligence and others in the Administration.

Daily Excelsior, 21 March 2007

**India ready for cooperative, consultative mechanism on J&K**

New Delhi, Mar 20: Ruling out any redrawing of its boundaries, India today said it was open to cooperative and consultative mechanisms on Jammu and Kashmir involving the two parts of the State that were actively encouraged by New Delhi and Islamabad. Such cooperative mechanisms can multiply the gains of cooperation in solving the problems of social and economic development of the region, according to the Defence Ministry's annual report placed in Parliament today. Emphasizing that India wanted good neighbourly relations with Pakistan, for which it had taken several initiatives, the Defence Ministry said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had already declared a readiness to find a pragmatic solution to the Kashmir problem. Singh has envisaged a situation where the two parts of Jammu and Kashmir can, with active encouragement of the Governments of India and Pakistan, work out cooperative, consultative mechanisms so as to maximise the gains of cooperation.

Kashmir Times, 21 March 2007

**Coalition rift adding to peoples problems: NC**

Srinagar, Mar 20: Senior National Conference leader and MLA Khanyar, Ali Mohammad Sagar today said that the rift between the coalition partners on the demilitarization issue has compounded the problems for the people. In a statement a spokesman of the party said that Sagar made these observations while addressing people at Kalashpora. He added that before this the NC leader visited areas like Makhdoom Mandow, Babademb, Naid Kadal, Nallahmar, Rainawari, Anzimar, Aquilmir and Khanyar and listen to the problems being faced by the common man. During his address, the MLA Khanyar said during his three year tenure at power Mufti Mohammad Sayeed never made a mention of the demilitarization issue and today he is threatening to come out of coalition on this issue. He added that Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh has already rejected the demand for the reduction of troops but still the PDP has not left the government.

Greater Kashmir, 21 March 2007

**JK Police on path of introspection**

Srinagar, Mar 20: The Jammu and Kashmir police perceiving its larger role in case of demilitarization has set in motion measures that could bring in rapport between it and civilian population and hosting police-public meet or organizing debate on human rights are such moves thought by it as image-building exercise. On Tuesday, rank and file of police were grilled by students, journalists, and people from other forays and those officials even accepted that human rights violations take place under their nose. Also the killing of civilians in fake encounters for rewards and promotions in Ganderbal and other human rights violations prominently figured in the annual debate organised by Jammu and Kashmir Police here. The debate titled There should be equal condemnation of violations committed by security forces and terrorists was interesting as some police officers spoke against and others in favour of the topic. But those who defended the human rights violations by police and other security agencies had to face a tough time at the hands of students.

Daily Excelsior, 21 March 2007

**Editorial: Pay more get less**

The hot pursuit by the State Vigilance Organisation SVO is causing skeletons to rattle in the Governments closet. According to its latest finding there is a nexus between businesspersons, mostly contractors and suppliers, and top officers robbing the State exchequer worth lakhs of rupees. Their modus operandi is to first inflate rates in response to the tenders, then pass them and eventually share the booty. A detailed report in this newspaper has revealed the murky multi-faceted dimensions of the scandal. A close scrutiny of contracts and supply orders has revealed that in some cases the quoted prices have been 300 to 500 per cent above the market rates. In simple terms it means that an item costing Rs 50 is offered at a cost between Rs 150 and Rs 250. It will be subsequently approved. This is one side of the story. The other is equally repulsive. In some cases the SVO has found that the departmental heads have permitted the rates higher than those proffered by manufacturers! How can anyone indulge in such audacious violation of the prescribed procedures?

The Hindu, 21 March 2007

### **Mufti delays meeting with Manmohan**

Srinagar: A day after Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad rejected the demand for reduction of troops and withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, Peoples Democratic Party leader Mufti Mohammad Sayeed postponed his meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh by a day. He is continuing consultations with his party leaders on the possibilities of the emerging political situation. Mr. Sayeed, who was scheduled to meet Dr. Singh on Wednesday, has conveyed to his office that the meeting should be fixed for Thursday, sources said. However, there is no change in his scheduled arrival in Delhi on Wednesday. The former Chief Minister, who was invited by the Prime Minister on Sunday for further discussions on the PDPs demands, delayed the meeting after Mr. Azad made the strongly worded statement in New Delhi on Monday. Though advisers counselled Mr. Sayeed to give a second thought to his meeting Dr. Singh, he said: I am committed to meeting the Prime Minister.

Dawn, 22 March 2007

### **EU clears Kashmir report opposing demilitarisation**

New Delhi, Mar 21: The European Unions Foreign Affairs Committee FAC today cleared with minor changes the much talked report on Kashmir authored by Parliamentarian Baroness Nicholson, who had highlighted Pakistans failure to check cross-border infiltration. The report with 28 compromised amendments was cleared by the FAC with an overwhelming majority of 60 votes in favour of it and a lone vote against it. There were 11 abstentions, Nicholson said on phone from Brussels. She said a total of 450 amendments were proposed to her report Kashmir: Present Situation and Future Prospects, and 200 of these were shortlisted. Out of these, 28 compromised amendments were agreed on during the voting today, she said. The new report will be available after a week.

Dawn, 22 March 2007

### **Charges framed against 2 MLAs, IAS officer**

Chandigarh, Mar 21: A court here today framed charges against all the 14 accused, including two sitting MLAs, a senior bureaucrat and a suspended BSF official in the Kashmir sex scandal. District and Sessions Judge B S Mehandiratta framed the charges against all the 14 accused who pleaded not guilty. Charges were framed against four of the accused MLAs Raman Mattoo independent and Ghulam Ahmed Mir Congress, IAS officer Iqbal Khandey and suspended Deputy Superintendent of Police Mohammad Yousuf Mir under section 5 of the Prevention of Immoral Trafficking Act PITA. Riyaz Ahmed Kawa, another co-accused, has been charged under section 3 of the Immoral Trafficking Act. Charges against the seven accused booked in the main case have been framed under section 5 of the PITA read with charges of rape under section 376 of the IPC. They were K C Padhi, suspended Deputy Inspector General, BSF, Mohammad Ashraf Mir, Shabeer Ahmed Langoo, Shabeer Ahmed Laway, Anil Sethi, the former Additional Advocate General of Jammu and Kashmir, Masood Ahmed and Mehrazuddin Malik.

Greater Kashmir, 22 March 2007

### **UJC to reject imposed solutions**

Srinagar: United Jihad Council UJC chairman Syed Salah-ud-Din Wednesday expressed regret over what he called flexible approach of Pakistan towards Kashmir dispute and said India was taking undue advantage of Pakistans position and wanted to thrust its own solution on Kashmiris. However, he said, any imposed solution will not be acceptable and vowed to continue struggle to achieve the right of self-determination. Describing right to self-determination as irrevocable, the UJC chairman, addressing a press conference in Muzaffarabad on Wednesday, said Kashmiris could not be deprived of this right. UJC spokesman Syed Sadaqat Hussain in a faxed statement quoted Syed Salah-ud-Din saying the recent secretary level talks between India and Pakistan had failed to achieve any breakthrough regarding Kashmir dispute. Launching attack on the bilateral talks, Syed Salah-ud-Din said in the dialogue process Kashmir dispute had been ignored and instead confidence building and easing tensions between the two countries remained in focus.

Daily Excelsior, 22 March 2007

### **Editorial: Terror in figures**

Every session of Parliament gives us a deep insight into the prevailing terrorism scenario in the country. It provides a study in statistics, among other analyses. Its just-concluded sitting in the national capital brings us up to date on the subject which is so relevant for all of us in the State. There is no doubt that the security forces have done a commendable job to contain the militant violence on either side of the Pir Panjal. There has been a gradual improvement in the security situation after 1990. One and all can vouch for it. Nevertheless, the threat persists. Time to relax, therefore, has not yet come. According to the latest assessment of the Union Home Ministry, security situation in Jammu and Kashmir continued to show improvement in 2006. There has been a significant decline both in terms of incidents and casualties of civilians and security forces in the State. The preceding year witnessed 1667 terror-related incidents in the State. These resulted in the killing of 151 uniformed men, 389 civilians and 593 terrorists/extremists. The corresponding data for January 2007 is: 74, 11, 11 and 25. What does this point out except that we have some more ground to cover?

Daily Excelsior, 23 March 2007

### **Mufti gets no assurance on troop cut from PM**

New Delhi, Mar 22: After raising the pitch for troop reduction in Jammu and Kashmir, the PDP, a partner in the State's ruling coalition, today got no assurance on this issue from the Centre other than an indication that discussions would continue. PDP's patron and former Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, who had a 45-minute luncheon meeting with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh here, said that the issues raised by his party were being discussed. Discussions on these issue troop reduction from civilian areas, repeal of anti-terror laws and vacating security forces from civilian areas will continue, Sayeed told reporters. Though both sides refrained from giving details about the meeting, sources privy to the parleys said Sayeed was asked to wait till summer, after which the demand for troop reduction will be reviewed. But Sayeed demanded something immediately as a face saving measure for the PDP, the sources said. Following this,

Sayeed was asked to wait in the national capital for some more days and to speak to National Security Advisor M K Narayanan.

Greater Kashmir, 23 March 2007

### **European Parliament clears revised Kashmir report**

Srinagar, Mar 22: The European Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee Thursday with amendments cleared the report authored by its rapporteur on Kashmir Emma Nicholson. The earlier report had drawn criticism from pro-freedom leadership in two Kashmirs, Kashmiri diaspora, and Pakistan for its pro-India tilt. The amended report has called upon India and Pakistan to significantly reduce troops on both sides of LoC, to allow international humanitarian organisations like Freedom House, Amnesty International, and Human Rights Watch into two Kashmirs that would allow these organisations to 'compile regular independent reports,' asking both the governments to 'publicly commit to full co-operation with such international human rights organisations'; Significantly, the report has included in the Article 1.1 of United Nations Covenant of Civil and Political Rights that affirms right of self-determination.

Indian Express, 23 March 2007

### **Opinion: Kashmir shadows on Congress-PDP face-off (Muzamil Jaleel)**

As the political drama surrounding the Peoples Democratic Party's threat to walk out of Congress-led coalition government on the issue of demilitarising J&K unfolds, it raises several questions. But the survival of the state government is not among them. In case the PDP does withdraw support to Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad's government, that will not immediately lead to its fall. The numbers may not favour the Congress as the coalition needs the PDP's 18 legislators to remain in a majority; but the largest opposition party in J&K the National Conference with 25 legislators is sure to abstain from a no-confidence vote and allow Azad to run a minority government. Nevertheless, if the Centre decides to reject PDP's demand for demilitarisation outright, the issue will have much more significant consequences than the fall of a state government. For one, it will jeopardise the credibility of the Centre's much publicised peace efforts after the 2002 assembly elections, which had won New Delhi considerable goodwill internationally. The PDP's demand is in fact in sync with the Centre's Kashmir policy, as it has evolved over the past five years.

Kashmir Times, 23 March 2007

### **Coalition's fate continues to hang in balance**

NEW DELHI, Mar 22: Uncertainty continues over the fate of Congress-People Democratic Party PDP led Jammu and Kashmir coalition as the first round of talks between former chief minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh remained inconclusive over the reduction of troops and withdrawal of Armed Forces Special Powers Act AFSPA. Mufti told The Kashmir Times that there has not been any breakthrough in the first one to one meeting between him and Dr Singh over lunch here this afternoon. He said that he has conveyed to Dr Singh the concerns of his party over these major issues which involve gradual reduction of troops and draconian anti-terror laws. Sources close to both the parties said that the imbroglio on troop reduction remains unresolved. The meeting remained inconclusive, but there is no deadlock, said

sources privy to the meeting. Mufti is reported to have rejected the offer of constituting a committee to discuss the pull out of troops. Sources said that former Chief Minister wanted a definite time table to start the gradual reduction of forces.

Daily Excelsior, 24 March 2007

### **Centre to set up panel to study troop cut**

New Delhi, Mar 23: The PDP, a partner of the ruling Congress in Jammu and Kashmir, has managed to save face over its demand for withdrawal of troops from the State with the Centre assuring it will give due consideration to its proposal to form a Committee to study the issue. According to sources, the Committee, to be finalised by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh after consulting Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad, will identify areas where the level of violence is low so that troops could possibly be withdrawn from there. After having raised the stakes on the issue by indicating the PDP might snap its ties with the Congress, party patron Mufti Mohammed Sayeed entered into parleys with the Centre and insisted that some reduction of troops should take place. He also said the PDP could not wait till summer for this. The PDP, after failing to get any clear cut assurance on troop cuts from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh yesterday, agreed on the Committee which will study all issues raised by the party including the reduction of security forces in civilian areas, repeal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and vacation of civilian properties occupied by security forces.

Indian Express, 24 March 2007

### **Kashmir shadows on Congress-PDP face-off**

As the political drama surrounding the Peoples Democratic Partys threat to walk out of Congress led coalition government on the issue of demilitarising J&K unfolds, it raises several questions. But the survival of the state government is not among them. In case the PDP does withdraw support to Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azads government, that will not immediately lead to its fall. The numbers may not favour the Congress as the coalition needs the PDPs 18 legislators to remain in a majority; but the largest opposition party in J&K the National Conference with 25 legislators is sure to abstain from a no confidence vote and allow Azad to run a minority government. Nevertheless, if the Centre decides to reject PDP s demand for demilitarisation outright, the issue will have much more significant consequences than the fall of a state government. For one, it will jeopardise the credibility of the Centres much publicised peace efforts after the 2002 assembly elections, which had won New Delhi considerable goodwill internationally.

Indian Express, 24 March 2007

### **Editorial: Mainstream in Mufti**

Could political intrigue be a measure of the deepening of democracy in Jammu and Kashmir? There has been these past days much reason to suspect that the Peoples Democratic Partys demand for troop reduction is only partially based on principle. It is felt that former J&K Chief Minister Mufti Mohammed Sayeed is in fact raising the issue to reset the centre of gravity in his coalition with the Congress in the state and to re-mark his turf in local politics. The repercussions for the power balance in the coalition will be watched in days to come. But there is a more significant outcome of this public debate between the PDP and the Congress which even drew Sayeed into a meeting with Prime

Minister Manmohan Singh. It shows the value of a credibly democratic government for the people to internalise the balance between populist desire and pragmatic strategy.

Kashmir Times, 24 March 2007

### **Ganderbal fake encounters**

Jammu, Mar 23: Acting upon a criminal transfer application the Jammu wing of State High Court has stayed the trial of infamous fake encounters case against seven policemen, including two senior officers, who have been charge-sheeted in Sessions Judge Court Srinagar. The interim directions were passed by Justice YP Nargotra-High Court judge of Jammu Wing in a criminal transfer application filed by Sudesh Parihar-wife of one of the key accused and the then Senior Superintendent of Police SSP Ganderbal Hans Raj Parihar allegedly involved in fake encounter case. The application was listed for today but the Additional Advocate General BS Salathia on behalf of the respondents government requested time for filing objections. Accordingly Additional Advocate General was directed by the court to file objections within ten days and the proceedings on criminal transfer application will be taken up on April 5.

Indian Express, 24 March 2007

### **Opinion: Dont politicise troop reduction in J&K (VP Malik)**

The threat of the Peoples Democratic Party to break up the ruling alliance, if Jammu and Kashmir is not demilitarised and if the Armed Forces Special Powers Act is not repealed, has again raised the ultra sensitive issue of the politicisation of national security. Having experienced similar situations in the past and written about it in my book, Kargil From Surprise to Victory, it may be useful to make a few observations in this regard. But first, two important points. One, in a democratic country, all security decisions are finally in the domain of politics. Two, excessive or protracted utilisation of troops for internal security and law and order problems is neither good for the nation nor for the security forces. After a while, it has an adverse impact on the public mind, the professional psyche of the troops and their operational effectiveness. Frequent operational review of troop deployment in such situations is, therefore, essential. Thus there can be no objection to the PDP raising issues of troops' reduction or repeal of the AFSPA with its ruling partner in the state or even with the Centre.

Indian Express, 25 March 2007

### **Army should vacate J&K permanently**

Srinagar, March 24: Attacking the advocates of demilitarisation in Jammu and Kashmir, hardline faction of Hurriyat Conference said Army and other security forces should instead vacate the state permanently. By calling for return of troops to the barracks, the pro-India political parties are only benefitting New Delhi which has to face a lot of flak from international community over the human rights abuses committed by the armed forces in Kashmir, a spokesman of the Hurriyat said in a statement. Ruling Peoples Democratic Party and moderate faction of Hurriyat have been calling for demilitarisation in the state as the first step towards resolution of Kashmir issue with the former at the loggerheads with its coalition partner Congress in the state. The spokesman said Hurriyat Conference was of the opinion that demilitarisation means the armed forces should leave the state once and for all.

The Tribune, 25 March 2007

**J&K drug hub: Study (SS Negi)**

New Delhi, March 24: As the worldwide drug trade has witnessed a phenomenal rise of an estimated \$800 billion per annum, larger than the oil business and second only to arms trade, the militancy-infested Jammu and Kashmir has emerged as a major source of illegal drug supply in India during the past few years. This has been revealed by the Indian Law Institute ILI, the apex body of judicial research in India, in its special volume brought out on the occasion of its golden jubilee celebrations and presented to President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam at the concluding function here last week. Kashmir is considered to be one of the biggest centres for the production of charas from hemp plant and with the ever-increasing demand of narcotics in the international market, more and more persons have come to engage themselves in its cultivation. Men of power and prestige have joined the trade, estimated to be worth millions every year, says Abdul Latif Wani of the department of law in the University of Kashmir in his paper published in the volume.

Daily Excelsior, 25 March 2007

**Political crisis in J&K blows over**

New Delhi, Mar 24: The present political crisis in Jammu and Kashmir seems to have temporarily blown over with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Peoples Democratic Party PDP leader Mufti Mohammed Sayeed stressing the importance of a coalition Government in the State and the need to maintain peace. The Prime Minister and Mr Sayeed in an one on one at the Prime Ministers 7 Race Course Road residence here this evening also agreed on the vital need to implement the shared vision of peace and tranquillity in the state, which is emphasised in the National Common Minimum Programme CMP. The PDP has sought a political face for the Committee, but the Centre politely turned down this demand, saying the panel, if formed, would be headed by a security expert, official sources said. The Centre has agreed in principle to hold discussions with the PDP on forming the Committee to study the demand for troop cuts. Though details of the deliberations were not officially announced, sources said the Centre had agreed that once the Committee was formed, it would visit Kashmir and assess areas where troop cuts could be made.

Greater Kashmir, 26 March 2007

**Sonia steps in to prevent coalition crumbling**

Srinagar, Mar 25: In a bid to bring about rapprochement between Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad and PDP supreme Mufti Muhammad Sayeed, who have been engaged in a war of words over the troop withdrawal issue, UPA chairperson and Congress president Sonia Gandhi has called the two leaders for a dinner-meeting on Monday. Sources told UNI that the dinner-meeting at her 10, Janpath residence in the capital was likely to be attended by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh besides several Union ministers and senior Congress leaders. Sayeed has been camping in New Delhi for the past few days and held a series of discussions with the Prime Minister and National Security Advisor M K Narayanan over his partys demands for troop reduction, revocation of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act AFSPA and vacation of agricultural and orchard land besides private and government buildings by security forces in the state.

Kashmir Times, 26 March 2007

**Investigation proves custodial death but justice remains elusive**

Jammu, Mar 25: Branded as a foreign ultra, his son was killed in cold blood and a full dressed investigation of the case revealed that it was a custodial killing committed by army. A depressed father continues to knock at the doors of the state administration but justice remains elusive while ex-gratia relief demands completion of formalities. Ghulam Qadir Malik, resident of Zandfaran, Zum Zumpora in Baramulla finds comfort in praying to almighty for giving solace to the departed soul of his son. He is convinced of his sons innocence and even the investigations conducted by independent agencies established that his son was innocent. But his long wait for justice continues and in a meek voice he murmurs Mujhey Insaaf Nahin Mileyga I will not get justice. Registered with state human rights commission SHRC, his complaint number is SHRC/2003/334 and his case pertains to custodial killing of his son Sonaullah Malik.

Daily Excelsior, 26 March 2007

**No troop reduction in J&K at present juncture: Antony**

Car Nicobar, Mar 25: Ruling out any cut-back in force levels in militancy hit Jammu and Kashmir at the present juncture, Defence Minister A K Antony today said any troop reduction would depend on threat levels coming down and security objectives and concerns being met. I dream of returning the soldiers back to barracks. But for this we have to be convinced that threat levels are down. At such an appropriate time, we can consider pulling back troops. Threat is still there. Terrorist camps are still being run across the Line of Control, he told reporters after a security review of the countrys island territories, in the face of increasing threats of terrorists strikes in the high seas. The Defence Ministers remarks came in the wake of recent threats by Congress coalition partner PDP in Jammu and Kashmir threatening to pull out from the ruling alliance, if its demand for troop pullout from the State was not met. Referring to such emerging situations, Antony, on a two-day visit here, said though infiltration levels from across the LoC had stabilised, terrorists were now looking at infiltration from sea lanes and from routes in Bangladesh and Nepal to sneak into India.

The Hindu, 26 March 2007

**New light on J&K killings (Praveen Swami)**

New Delhi: Forensic evidence on the fake encounter scandal that rocked Jammu and Kashmir in January could compel the investigators to re-examine parts of their case, highly placed official sources told The Hindu. Based on DNA fingerprinting, scientists of the Forensic Sciences Laboratory FSL in Chandigarh were able to confirm that the bodies of three of the five civilians killed by a rogue ring of police and Army officers in 2006 are those of south Kashmir residents Shaukat Khan, Ghulam Nabi Wani and Farooq Ahmad Paddar. However, the DNA fingerprints of two other suspected victims of fake encounters, and identified by their next of kin as south Kashmir residents Ali Mohammad Padroo and Nasir Ahmad Deka, have proved to be inconsistent with the samples taken from their blood relatives. The investigators had sought to confirm Deka's identity, using blood samples from his son. A sample was also taken from his wife, under public pressure, though it was of no value for the purpose of DNA fingerprinting. However, the

FSL has determined that Deka was not the child's biological parent.

The Hindu, 26 March 2007

**Editorial: The politics of demilitarisation**

A fortnight after his Peoples Democratic Party threatened to bring down the Congress led coalition government in Jammu and Kashmir in which it is a partner unless New Delhi agreed to demilitarisation, former Chief Minister Mufti Mohammad Saeed is going home without securing the withdrawal of a single soldier. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has said that a group of security experts will determine if there are any enclaves from which troops can safely be pulled back and the Armed Forces Special Powers Act withdrawn. Over the next year, as more Central Reserve Police Force battalions become available for duties in J&K reflecting New Delhis long-standing conviction that the police must have the primary responsibility for counter terrorism some forward movement is likely. But the expert group will have to assess the danger that enclaves set up to push forward the peace process could become magnets for terror groups, and rapid progress seems unlikely. The Prime Ministers flat refusal to give in to the demilitarisation demand may in this sense seem to be a defeat for the PDP.

Daily Excelsior, 27 March 2007

**Mufti meets Sonia, talks of problems with J&K Govt**

New Delhi, Mar 26: The differences between the Congress and PDP today attained a new dimension with PDP patron Mufti Mohammed Sayeed today highlighting the problems with the Government led by Ghulam Nabi Azad. During his 20 minute long meeting with UPA chairperson Sonia Gandhi here, Sayeed raised the issues of coordination between the Congress and PDP besides discussing issues like troop reduction, repeal of special laws to fight terror and vacation of Government schools and orchards occupied by the security forces in Jammu and Kashmir. There are some problems with the coordination in smooth running of the Government and the UPA chairperson has assured us that these will be sorted out as soon as possible, Sayeed, who has been camping in the national capital for last five days, told reporters after his meeting with Gandhi. Referring to his demands of troop reduction and other issues, Sayeed said we are expecting an announcement from the Prime Ministers Office in a day or two after which we will be holding our Political Affairs Committee meeting on March 29.

Greater Kashmir, 27 March 2007

**Pak for balanced EU report on Kashmir**

Islamabad: Pakistan today expressed the hope that the European Union Parliament would amend and rectify glaring errors in its report on Jammu and Kashmir. We hope that the EU will bring the report in consonance with the principles of the UN charter, international law and aspirations of the people of Kashmiri, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Tasim Aslam told a press briefing here. The European Parliament recently finalised a draft report after considering major amendments in the initial controversial report on Jammu and Kashmir presented to its Foreign Affairs Committee last December by British Member of EP Baroness Emma Nicholson. Ms Nicholson, who is the vice-chairperson of the foreign relations committee, was appointed by the EP to write a report on a final solution to the Jammu and Kashmir problem. She had visited the strife-torn

state as well as Pakistan and India in June 2006.

Greater Kashmir, 27 March 2007

**SHRC recommends ex-gratia to kin of disappeared person**

Srinagar, Mar 26: The Single Bench of the Jammu and Kashmir High Court Monday recommended Rs 1 lakh ex gratia in favor of a next of kin person subjected to enforced disappearance by the government gunmen. Local news agency CNS said Ghulam Muhammad Shah son of Muhammad Subhan of Takerpora Kupwara disappeared in 2000. The family members of the disappeared person accused government gunmen of kidnapping on April 12, 2000 when he was on way to his office and took away Rs 1 lakh. The relatives had filed petition in the State Human Rights Commission.

Daily Excelsior, 28 March 2007

**Azad favours consensus on troop withdrawal**

Jammu, Mar 27: Asserting that the safety of people cannot be endangered, Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today called for a consensus decision by the States political parties on the most sensitive issue of reduction and redeployment of security forces. Even as the Central leadership of the Congress was trying to bring about a truce on the issue between him and Mufti Mohammed Sayeed, patron of its ally PDP in the State Government, Azad said that all political parties in the State had to be taken on board. The regional, national and international ramifications of any troop withdrawal can also not be overlooked, the Chief Minister asserted in an interview to PTI here. My first and last responsibility as the Chief Minister of the State is to protect the life and property of every man, woman and child without any political consideration. I will also have to take all the political parties on board on this matter, he said.

Daily Excelsior, 28 March 2007

**PDP sabotaging peace process: Hurriyat**

Jammu, Mar 27: Hurriyat Conference moderate today charged Peoples Democratic Party PDP with trying to sabotage peace process in the State by raising the single issue of demilitarization for its vested interests. While peace process between India and Pakistan is moving forward which augurs well for people of the State, who have witnessed violence for the last 17 years, the PDP has played spoilsport by raising one way demand of demilitarisation in J&K, Hurriyat Conference leader Billal Lone, who had accompanied Mirwaiz Moulvi Farooq in his meetings with Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh and Pakistan President Gen Pervez Musharraf last year, told the Excelsior during his brief stay here. De-militarisation has to be there but not only in this part of the State. We want demilitarisation in entire Jammu and Kashmir including the areas under control of Pakistan, he said charging the PDP leadership including former Chief Minister Mufti Mohd Sayeed and party president Mehbooba Mufti with playing in the hands of certain vested interests in both J&K and New Delhi for raising the demand to divert focus from peace process which was moving ahead.

Indian Express, 28 March 2007

**Thousands orphaned and widowed in J&K**

Jammu, March 27: With cross-border terrorism yet to end, as many as 11,336 children have been orphaned and 3,654 women widowed during the 17-year long insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir, official sources said. About 1,017 youth have gone missing in the state during the period, they said. There were 2,045 orphans in Kupwara, 1,640 orphans in Doda, 1,580 in Baramulla, 1,149 in Budgam, 1,019 in Pulwama, 843 in Srinagar, 858 in Anantnag, 884 in Rajouri, 868 in Poonch and 521 in Udhampur. Of the 3,654 widows, the number of widows was 528 in Kupwara, 502 in Baramulla, 415 in Anantnag, 373 in Budgam, 369 in Pulwama, 272 in Rajouri, 232 in Poonch, 220 in Srinagar and 173 in Udhampur.

Greater Kashmir, 28 March 2007

**Opinion: The Stagnant Détente (M Ashraf)**

Détente is a French word meaning easing of tensions or strained relations especially between nations. We are using a simplified form of the word which we call the Peace Process. It was a tremendous relief when after decades of enmity and mutual bickering India and Pakistan held each others hands in a very symbolic and dramatic way. No doubt the tensions have eased. There has been peace on the borders. For last three years or so the villagers on both sides of the Line of Control are having sound sleep and are cultivating their agricultural lands right up to the border. However, the people who have been facing the brunt of Indo-Pak tension have yet to heave a sigh of relief. It has been often given out in the past that it is the Kashmiris who are at the core of the whole problem. On the contrary the experience has shown that the reverse is true.

Indian Express, 29 March 2007

**Top UPA leaders meet on troop pullout demand**

New Delhi, March 28: In the backdrop of PDP insistence on troop pullout from civilian areas in Jammu and Kashmir, top UPA leaders met here this evening to discuss various aspects. The meeting held at Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's residence was attended by UPA Chairperson Sonia Gandhi, Union Ministers Pranab Mukherjee, Shivraj Patil and A K Antony and Political Secretary to Congress President Ahmed Patel. The meeting lasting over two hours comes a day after PDP patron and former Chief Minister Mufti Mohd Sayeed said he would await the outcome of the discussions of the UPA leadership on the issue. As part of efforts to iron out differences within the coalition government in the state, the Prime Minister last week held talks with Sayeed on the troops reduction issue. The two leaders had discussed establishment of a committee to examine the issue of troop cuts in civilian areas, vacation of civilian properties occupied by security forces and the repeal of anti-terror laws.

Daily Excelsior, 29 March 2007

**Azad alleges politician-militant nexus in J&K**

SRINAGAR, Mar 28: Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad today asserted that politics of hypocrisy was root cause to this State's unrest and turbulence as some mainstream politicians were hand-in-glove with militancy and insincere to the common people in

Jammu & Kashmir. He resolved to be softer to the common people but tougher to militants, making it clear that all disputes would be resolved with Pakistan and the local separatist leadership by way of a sustained dialogue which, according to him, was part of a larger peace process between New Delhi and Islamabad. Addressing a public meeting, which was attended by nearly 6,000 people at the newly created district headquarters of Kulgam in south Kashmir, Ghulam Nabi Azad sounded tough not only against militants and sections of armed forces indulging in human rights abuse but also against certain politicians hobnobbing with militants for personal vested interests. Without naming any individual or party, Chief Minister said that politics of hypocrisy was the root cause of Kashmir's turmoil and unrest.

KashmirTimes, 29 March 2007

#### **Editorial: Killings and alienation**

How many have actually died in violence in the killing fields of Kashmir, since this paradise on earth had erupted in blood and bombs, is a highly debated question that agitates virtually all people. The estimated figures of those killed, wounded and missing vary widely. While the Geelani led Hurriyat claims that over a lakh have lost their lives in violence, since the end of 1989, the J&K Coalition of Civil Society, a non-political NGO, puts this figure at over 80,000 only. The state government, however, has come out with its official release, on the 26th, that only 42,147 had lost their lives till the middle of February this year and this figure includes 20,647 militants, 5024 security personnel and 11,221 civilians. There is reason to believe a number of victims desented by officials as militants are innocent citizens. The official release also claims that violence has, so far, left 12,124 security personnel and 21,659 civilians wounded. While the Association of the Parents of Disappeared Persons APDP claims that over 10,000 are missing, the official release speaks nothing about them.

Greater Kashmir, 29 March 2007

#### **After PMs call, PDP defers decision on demilitarization**

Srinagar, Mar 28: Amid rumors that the Peoples Democratic Party supremo Mufti Muhammad Sayeed would announce his pullout from the Coalition government on March 29, Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh Wednesday reassured Mufti over phone that it would take yet another couple of days to convince the relevant quarters about PDPs troop-cut proposal. Earlier the party had deferred its response over New Delhis denial on March 25 following Muftis second meeting with the PM and Congress Chief Sonia Gandhi and also indications that the PMO would set up committees to implement the proposals including revocation of AFSPA and evacuation of armed forces from private property and orchards.

Daily Excelsior, 30 March 2007

#### **Heated arguments on autonomy in WG meeting**

Jammu, Mar 29: Third meeting of Working Group on Strengthening Centre-State relations, held in New Delhi today was marked by arguments and counter arguments on autonomy between National Conference and members from Jammu and Ladakh. Presided over by Justice Sageer Ahmed, chairman of the Group, the meeting held at Kashmir House, Prithvi Raj Road for three and a half hours also saw several members resenting

agenda of the Group which ignored disturbed areas of Jammu, Udhampur and Kathua districts. They, however, appreciated inclusion for a discussion the plight of 1947, 1965 and 1971 refugees.

KashmirTimes, 30 March 2007

**Infiltration in J&K down to zero: army**

Srinagar, Mar 29: Seventeen years after the eruption of militancy the army on Thursday said infiltration level has come down to zero, while averting the troop withdrawal will take place only after complete normalcy is resolved. At present, the infiltration level has come down to zero. One of the reasons could be the heavy snowfall this winter. The mountain peaks have witnessed heavy snowfall this winter, XV Corps General Officer-in-Commanding GOC Lt Gen A S Sekhon told reporters on the sidelines of a felicitation function here. However, he said the militant infrastructure across the Line of Control LoC in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir was intact.

Daily Excelsior, 30 March 2007

**Editorial: Never too late**

The State police's decision to register families of its men who had died fighting militancy has not come too soon. According to a newspaper report, it has hit upon the idea of issuing them multi-purpose identity cards. These documents will give them access to government offices. Moreover, these will help them to secure concessions in various official services. About 900 families have been identified for the purpose. There are proposals to provide them free ration and concessions in bus fares, apart from free medicines from police hospitals. Hopefully, the planned facilities cover hospital treatment as well. One thought that such a beneficial dispensation was already in place. It is only to be expected that kith and kin of the uniformed men are looked after they attain martyrdom.

Greater Kashmir, 30 March 2007

**Opinion: We dont mean what we say**

So if we blow the trumpets of demilitarization we mean something else, Hilal Ahmad comments on the blow hot blow cold approach of mainstream political parties Kashmir has become a laboratory for political experimentation. The pro-Indian political establishment comprising PDP, NC, PDF, and Congress has taken the absolute control of this laboratory. Marginalised separatists and transformed Pakistani leaders hold little sway while this unfettered experimentation is showing astonishing results, the foremost being that all the people in Kashmir are being fooled all the time. The PDP has perfected the art of fooling all the people all the time. National Conference has been fooling all the people all the time for many decades now, but they overdid it so much that they began to lose the ground.

Daily Excelsior, 30 March 2007

**Justice Aftab being appointed J&K CJdd**

Srinagar, Mar 29: Following the retirement of Mr Justice Bashir Ahmed Khan on March 31, Justice Aftab Alam of Patna High Court is likely to be appointed as the new Chief Justice of Jammu & Kashmir High Court. His warrant of appointment is expected to be

issued by President of India some time in April. Highly placed sources in the State judiciary and bureaucracy confirmed to the EXCELSIOR that the Collegium, comprising Chief Justice of India and two seniormost judges of Supreme Court of India, had earlier this month initiated the proposal of the transfer of Mr Justice Aftab Alam of Patna High Court from Bihar to Jammu & Kashmir and subsequently his appointment as the next Chief Justice of J&K High Court.

Daily Excelsior, 31 March 2007

**Army has given evaluation of J&K situation: JJ Singh**

New Delhi, Mar 30: Amidst demands for a troop cut in Jammu and Kashmir, Army Chief Gen J J Singh today said his force had given its professional assessment of the situation there to the Centre and claimed the level of violence in the State had been brought down. Singh, who took over today as the new Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, did not give details of the assessment and said a decision on troop reduction would have to be taken by the Government. It is a political decision, he said, asserting that the Army had compiled the professional evaluation and assessment of the situation in Kashmir and given it to the Government. Pointing out that the situation had dimensions other than the military one, Singh said: Our task was to bring down the level of violence and we have done it. Describing the situation in Jammu and Kashmir and the northeast as stable, Singh said this could be gauged from the fact that insurgent groups were coming forward for negotiations.

The Hindu, 31 March 2007

**Coalition crisis in Kashmir resolved**

NEW DELHI: The political crisis in Jammu and Kashmir was finally resolved on Friday with the Centre announcing a mechanism to look into the demands for gradual withdrawal of troops from civilian areas and review of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act AFSPA. However, no time frame was set for the mechanism to give its recommendations. A high-power committee, headed by the Defence Minister and comprising representatives from the Centre and State Governments, would be empowered to take a decision on the recommendations of an expert panel and a review committee also part of the mechanism.