

Kashmir Sentinel

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FIFTIETH ISSUE

To our Readers

With this issue Kashmir Sentinel is 50 -issues old. Exactly four years back this fortnightly was launched with a twin objective - to create an awareness about the ethnic cleansing of Hindu minority at national and global level; and secondly, to present the other side of the story of Kashmir.

In the municipalisation of politics that has overtaken this great country, the political class cutting across all shades has become reconciled to playing games of competitive vote-bank politics. In the process, vital security interests are being undermined and patriotic groups alienated.

The country today faces a regular war from Pan-Islamists, abetted by hostile western imperialist powers. The nation is aghast why this political class continues to speak about this war from a low moral pedestal. Why instead of exposing the communal and fundamentalist dimensions of proxy war in Kashmir, it has been shamelessly talking about the alienation of Kashmiri Muslims caused due to economic grievances? Even the recent events in Reasi, Doda and Poonch have not made these political merchants wiser. This dithering must end.

A proxy war has to be fought at many levels - ideological, political, administrative and military. Dousing immediate fires may serve the expediency of the political class, but can never become a substitute for completion of nation-building process in Kashmir. Politics of gimmickry and publicity stunts has no scope in this.

Pluralism in J&K has to be preserved at any cost. If country fails to restore this in Kashmir, what guarantee is there that it can be preserved in the mainland. This is where perception of Kashmiri Pandits about their long-term survival in their homeland needs to be pondered on seriously taken into account.

Fighting a proxy war can not be left alone to the political class. The nation has to be mobilised for this. In the past also Indian unity was preserved not by its rulers but by the great Indian people and by the thread of cultural unity that pervaded through various ethnic entities. This holds true even today. The nation has to be sensitised to the ramifications of proxy war. Kashmir Sentinel would continue to make its modest efforts towards this end and solicits the cooperation of all concerned Indians and the members of civilized world.

--Editor

One more massacre

They came, killed and escaped



Kishtwar Town under curfew after killing of 16 innocents.

Courtesy-Rajesh Parihar

KS Correspondent

A large number of terrorists swooped into the village Shanna Thakarai of Kishtwar Tehsil on the night of 28 th-29th July. It was just like a Military Combing Operation. They straightway barged into the house of Munshi Ram - a Sepoy in the Army who had returned from his place of posting in Nagaland on some days leave. After entering the house they opened

fire on the sleeping inmates. Five persons were killed on the spot. Out of the injured eight, three scumbled to injuries later on.

A few kilometres away from this house, terrorists entered into another Hindu house at Sarvan village. Terrorist pumped bullets into the sleeping inmates killing eight men and injuring two women. The same group of

terrorists which struck at Shanna- Thakarai are suspected to be involved in killings at Sarvan. After completing their task at one village the terrorists moved to another.

This is the seventh gruesome massacre in Jammu region this year. A total of 104 people, almost all Hindus have been killed. How many more massacre to follow!

Freeze Kashmir issue-Farooq

KS Correspondent

Dr Farooq Abdullah, Chief Minister Jammu & Kashmir, has suggested Pakistan to freeze Kashmir issue for 25 years and build up relations with India on trade, tourism and cultural exchange.

Mr Farooq Abdullah expressed these views in an interview with "The Times of India" correspondent, published in the paper on 16th July.

It is strange that Indian leaders are playing defensive and shying away from making it a core issue to discuss Pak sponsored terrorism and illegal occupation of POK with Pak government.

Thus speaks Home Minister

* Home Minister asserted that the situation in Kashmir was far better than what it was two years ago.

* He said three years ago only 300 tourists visited Jammu and Kashmir and this year the number would be 15,000.

* Film Units from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and other parts of the country have started shooting there which was not done for years because the area was out of bound for them.

* Home Minister told that Chief Minister told him very recently that an important hotel in Srinagar had its

rooms fully booked and people were provided cottages outside for stay.

August 1

Sh L K Advani, Union Home Minister said that the increase in the number of tourists in the Kashmir Valley is an indication of the change in the situation for the better. The movement towards normalcy which is an indicator of the failure of the Pakistan Proxy War has made the strategist in that country to shift their attention to Doda Region of Jammu, which is a large district where it is not difficult to find soft targets.

Letters

Normalcy-An illusion

Dear Sir,

The tragedy with J&K is that the leadership at helm of affairs tries to project rosy picture of state without taking cognisance of ground realities. Either the leadership is suffering from political myopia or feign ignorance for petty political interests.

At a time, when militants after succeeding in ethnic cleansing of minorities from Valley, are repeating their nefarious game plan in Doda and other hilly regions of Jammu the central government is misleading nation. Recently, Mr LK Advani, Home Minister Indian Union, told Parliament that situation in Kashmir is returning to normal as ISI (Inter Service Intelligence), the notorious intelligence agency of Pakistan, activities have been contained and more tourists are visiting Valley. He further said that there was no information of militants running civil administration or collecting revenues.

Increase in number of tourists to Valley or shooting of films can not be taken as parameters of normalcy. Nor-

malcy can be claimed if civil population living in the state can feel secure, people can not be victimised for their nationalism or professing a particular faith and above all migrants can return to their 'Homeland' with honour and dignity and socio-political guarantee. Mr Advani has himself declared that return of Pandits will be a touch stone of normalcy. These criteria are still elusive and distant dreams.

When state administration was engaged in organising 'National Winter Games' at Gulmarg to make people believe the improvement in situation and nation was going to celebrate Republic Day, Kashmiri Pandits were massacred in most barbaric way by Pak sponsored militants at Wandhama, Ganderbal, the home constituency of the Chief Minister.

Again, close on heels of shooting film 'Mere Apne', reportedly in 'Z' type security by a hired film crew, and Madan Lal Khurana's enjoying 'Shikara ride' in Dal, the militants butchered 25 Hindus at Prankot followed

by another gruesome carnage at Chapnari (Doda). These are few instances to bring home the situation.

Mr Ali Mohd Sagar's recent confession that Amir Khan, dreaded Hizbul Mujahideen militant, controls an area in tral where even army cannot enter without proper fortification should serve as an eye opener Mr Advani and others. This is tip of an ice berg and there are reported many rural areas were militants mainly foreigners are ruling the roost with a definite influence on administration. Moreover, militants charge their share in big business and property deals and even are reportedly collecting money on monthly basis.

Government has no right to mislead the nation. Defence ministry brochure, released recently is self explanatory how militants are in possession of dreaded and modern weapons ranging from Pistol to UMG and Rocket Launchers to Anti Aircraft Guns. Of late Pakistan has kept border alive to facilitate infiltration, scare Indian people in border areas and internationalise Kashmir issue.

S.M. Pandita
Janipora, Jammu.

Dear Sir,

It is a pleasure reading your paper, I wish all progress to your paper.

Thanking you

Maj Gen B.N. Dhar
PVSM

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THOSE WHO LEFT US

14-7-98-31-7-98

1. Smt Rajni Tikoo W/o Sh ML Tikoo; presently at Vinayak Nagar Muthi Jammu. 15/7/98.
2. Sh Nath Ji Dervish (Pandita), R/o Waterkhani Kupwara; presently at Community Hall Purkhoo, Jammu. 17/7/98
3. Smt Dhanwati Jalali, R/o Naidyar Rainawari; presently at 345 Block-Q Govt. Qtr. Toph Sherkhania, Jammu. 16/7/98
4. Smt Tarawati Raina, R/o Mattan Anantnag; presently at Muthi near Swayawanand Ashram, Jammu. 15/7/98
5. Smt Indrawati Kuchroo, R/o Baramullah; presently at Opp. Mahajan Fashion, Near Shiv Mandir Bohri T.Tillo, Jammu. 18/7/98.
6. Smt Radha Krishan Reshi, R/o Akungam; presently at Muthi Camp Phase-II Block-A, Jammu. 20/7/98
7. Smt Shobawati Koul, R/o Lok Bhawan Anantnag; presently at Muthi Camp, Jammu. 19/7/98.
8. Sh Janki Nath Pandita, R/o Jablipura Bijbehara; presently at L-5, Om Nagar Udeywala, Jammu. 20/7/98.
9. Smt Satyawati Raina, R/o Karan Nagar, Sgr; presently at H.No: 487 Sec. 31 Faridabad. 15/7/98.
10. Sh Radh Krishan Razdan, R/o Druoo Pulwama; presently at 212/B Friends Sector Subash Nagar, Jammu. 22/7/98.
11. Sh Dwarika Nath Pandita, R/o Hakcherpori Kupwara; presently at at Mishriwala Camp Qtr No: 507, Jammu. 15/7/98.
12. Sh Ashok Kumar Razdan S/o Maheshwar Nath, R/o Alikadal Sgr; presently at Dinanagar Bernai, Jammu. 19/7/98.
13. Smt Raj Laxmi Dhar W/o Sh GL Dhar, R/o Sant Nagar, Sgr; presently at EME House Opp Hanuman Mandir Satwari, Jammu. 25/7/98.
14. Sh Bishembar Nath Koul, R/o Uttersoo Anantnag; presently at 43, Laker Mandi Janipur, Jammu. 25/7/98.
15. Sh Hriday Nath Koul, R/o Batapora Shopian; presently at J2/257, Sec: 2 Durga Nagar, Jammu. 27/7/98.
16. Sh Brij Krishan Koul S/o Lt Sh Gana Koul; presently at Flat No: 6, Reshi Appatments Sec:9 Rohini N.Delhi. 24/7/98.
17. Smt Dhanwati Naqaib, R/o Kralyar Rainawari; presently at 736 near Ramlila Ground, Janipur, Jammu. 28/7/98.
18. Smt Asha Bhat W/o Sh Bushan Lal Bhat, R/o Safapora; presently at 43 Indra Vihar Lakkad Mandi, Janipur, Jammu. 26/7/98.
19. Smt Arnadati W/o Lt Sh Sarwanand Bhagwan, R/o Bana Mohala, Srinagar; presently at Mumbai. 21/7/98.
20. Smt Tulsu Devi Koul, R/o Mahend Bijbehara; presently at 57/2 A Ext. Trikuta Nagar, Jammu. 29/7/98.
21. Sh Iqbal Krishan Koul, R/o Shashiyar Habba Kadal, Srinagar; presently at B-2/32 Govt. Qtrs Janipura, Jammu. 27/7/98.
22. Smt Roopa Bhat W/o Sh Amar Malmohi; presently at 1/141 Vikas Nagar, Jammu. 28/7/98.

With compliments from

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Buffers policy-For Riddance from Kashmir Albatross

By Dr. K.N. Pandita

There is nothing wrong in changing horses in political mid-stream. Values have abandoned Indian polity and political ethics. The situation is conducive to populist democracy where illiterates, sectarianists, regionalists and opportunists can have a field day.

Dr. Farooq plays realpolitik given the contours of Indian political landscape. Though only a screw short of the Indian left and Congressites in castigating BJP as communalists, he did have close rapport with the UF government which came into being on the plea of keeping BJP out of power. Nobody should, therefore, raise accusing finger towards him. The question how far will he remain faithful to BJP regime is meaningless. He will change his stand with the change of political wind. The essential component of NC (under Dr. Farooq) policy towards New Delhi is to bleed it white. New Delhi, following the principal of internal buffer diplomacy, finds a good riddance from Kashmir albatross by putting all of its eggs in Farooq's basket which he sometimes swings up and down so dangerously as to send shock waves down the spine of New Delhi. The tactic is to coerce it in forgetting about accountability and offering fresh doles.

BJP has not only patched up with Farooq but has now found in him the traditional buffer to bail it out in Kashmir... This is BJP's political gameplan in Kashmir. Both BJP and Farooq know very well that the embarrassing question is of the Pandit internally displaced persons.

BJP believes that three thousand Kashmiri Pandits is an expendable chunk on whose dead bodies it can build its secular credentials. For Dr. Farooq Abdullah, return of the Pandits, preferably without any tangible commitment by the government, is to paint him in secularist colours in the eyes of Indian nation state and to make him acceptable for national assignment after having ensured the dynastic rule. He keeps his escape routes open. He has the leverage to say that it was BJP regime which brought the Pandits to Kashmir, and if the Pandits get destroyed at the hands of the terrorists, then again he

will bring the onus to the doorstep of BJP. He can even bail out the external mercenaries also.

It is learnt that BJP, both on party level and on government level, is making furtive efforts to goad the Pandit displaced persons into returning to the valley. Several unofficial delegations have been engaging the displaced community in Jammu into a debate on the issue. The RSS think tank, is also reported to be critically involved.

It appears that Dr. Farooq has entrusted the BJP top echelons with the task of managing the Pandit return to Kashmir. In doing so, he has used his skill in tarnishing the image of the Pandits just because he finds takers in BJP not because the takers are really convinced but because it suits their realpolitik. Now the think tank has begun to implement a two-prolonged strategy. First is to demoralise the Pandits by telling them that they are the source of all the ills in Kashmir. The litany of their crimes is stretched out to Nehrus and Saprus and Katjus and others. This is because the younger generation among the Pandits is comparatively less informed about their past history and the BJP-RSS think tank capitalises on their ignorance themselves being no less ignorant.

Second is to dole out big brotherly advice that the Pandits should learn to live with the 'Muslim brethren' and reconcile to their social milieu. They emphasise harmonious living of communities and groups and are not short of necessary rhetoric to pursue their newfound agenda for the Pandits.

Pandits have more than once expressed their thanks to BJP and its parent organisation for the succour provided to them at the critical juncture of their migration to Jammu and Delhi. All major national level political parties except BJP have been relentlessly hostile towards the Pandits. Pandits have always expressed satisfaction on BJP's espousal of their cause inside the parliament, in the public and with the broad masses of Indian people. Notwithstanding their manifold deprivations... a community without territory, community in

exile living in refugee camps, community to which most of the major political parties of the country have been hostile, community with a belligerent majoritarian dispensation in the State, community against whom unbridled disinformation campaign has been unleashed by the majoritarian administration and sections of print media with vested interests and finally a community whose avenues of economic stability have been mercilessly stifled—the Pandits lent their support and goodwill to the BJP.

It does not mean that the

dian Muslims.

A reasonable compromise on these outstanding issues which have hitherto bedeviled inter-communal relationship would not be too big a price to buy harmony among the people of two major faiths and, in the process, also ensure the right to life for three hundred thousand Pandits in Kashmir. Let charity begin at home.

And then, it is distortion of history to accuse Pandits for insertion of Article 370 and giving Kashmir a special status in Indian Union by bringing in the then Indian Prime Minister,

It is a distortion of history to accuse Pandits for insertion of Article 370 and giving Kashmir a special status in Indian Union by bringing in the then Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, as the instrument. It should be remembered by all that Nehru might be of Pandit descent, but it were the people of his constituency in Phulpur East who returned him to Parliament each time. He never contested elections from Pandit constituency so that the Pandits could be held responsible for what he did. He never represented Pandit constituency and where were 512 members of Indian Parliament when Article 370 was incorporated into Indian Constitution? There was not a single Kashmiri Pandit member in that body. Why then bring the onus of present turmoil in Kashmir to the doorsteps of the Pandits.

Pandits expected miracles from BJP if and when it came to power. No group in the country was more convinced that the Pandits than the BJP rhetoric of doing away with Article 370 or changing the demographic complexion of Kashmir was sheer nonsense. Yet they lent their full support to what BJP professed. Therefore a big change in BJP's stance is certainly disturbing for the Pandits. It forces the Pandits to open their mind.

If the agenda of the BJP is to establish its recognition with the Indian Muslims as not anti Muslim, it is a welcome move. But then the deal should not be at the expense of Pandits who have suffered persecution for last six centuries in Kashmir. The best, most effective and fruitful way of making that achievement would be to open result oriented dialogue with the Indian Muslim leadership on all issues of national importance including the Barbi Masjid. BJP and its parent organisation would not be poorer by this act of generosity towards the In-

Jawaharlal Nehru, as the instrument. It should be remembered by all that Nehru might be of Pandit descent, but it were the people of his constituency in Phulpur East who returned him to Parliament each time. He never contested elections from Pandit constituency so that the Pandits could be held responsible for what he did. He never represented Pandit constituency And where were 512 members of Indian Parliament when Article 370 was incorporated into Indian Constitution? There was not a single Kashmiri Pandit member in that body. Why then bring the onus of present turmoil in Kashmir to the doorsteps of the Pandits.

People have short memory. When this disastrous step was being taken by Nehru and supported by his majority of Congress parliamentarians in 1949, Kashmiri Pandit leaders like Jia Lal Kilam and Shiv Narayan Fotedar had raised their voice demanding protection of the rights of Pandits as a religious minority in Kashmir.

Sheikh Abdullah dubbed them as communalists and got the endorsement of this dubbing from his bosom friend, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru. Brokers approached Pandit leadership remonstrating that inclusion of Article 370 was in national interests and they should not oppose it. Pandits have been sensitive to national interests indeed. And in Sheikh Abdullah's perception, they were the "spies" of the Government of India. His son also nurtures same sentiment and that speaks for his outpourings against Pandits mostly in private as at a recent meeting, and occasionally in public.

Misusing this Article, the State government excluded the Pandits and other minorities of the valley from the jurisdiction of the National Minority Commission of India. In this way it ensured political, economic, administrative and institutional domination by the majority group in the valley. New Delhi endorsed this policy from time to time thereby giving practical shape to the colonial concept of creating a buffer between the ruler and the ruled.

The buffer policy of successive Congress regimes in Kashmir spelt disaster to the Pandits, to the State and to India Today, the BJP is also drifting towards the same direction blinded by the sole objective of keeping as many loose ends together and stay put in the seat of power.

The BJP should dismantle its Kashmir cell and induct pragmatic, knowledgeable, far-sighted experts including representatives of all major faiths in J&K into the reconstituted cell to give dispassionate and sane advice of handling Kashmir issue. Coercing the Pandit internally displaced persons into returning to uncertain fate in Kashmir where four massacres of Hindus have taken place during the one and a half year of elected government's administration will be an act in contravention of the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Commission. In particular when this coercion is manifestly politically oriented, its consequences will be disastrous. We do not think that it will be the BJP which would drive the last nail into the coffin of Indian secularism.

News Briefs

Congress team visits migrant camps

A Congress team lead by newly appointed Pradesh Congress Committee Chief Chowdhary Mohd. Aslam, visited migrant camps at Muthi Jammu. Mr. Chowdhary condemned Farooq government for plight of migrants and said that Congress will raise the issue of their plight in Parliament and the state assembly.

It may be recalled that since the exodus of KPs from Valley all political parties remained criminally silent and indifferent towards the plight of KPs but BJP and its sister organisations highlighted the plight of these Pandits vociferously in Parliament and other fora and promised to wipe out their tears after coming into power.

Blast in Army camp

July 23, there was a powerful explosion in Army transit camp at Bari Brahmana (Jammu) in which two Army jawans were killed and four others injured. Though authorities have ruled out hand of militants in the blast, it is second mysterious blast in Army areas in Jammu in less than two months. In earlier blast at Maheshpora, two KP youth were killed mysteriously.

Farooq Holidaying

At a time when state is in flames of militancy and financial crunch, and all important Amarnath yatra is under way, Mr Farooq Abdullah, Chief Minister J&K, was holidaying at London with his family. Mr Farooq Abdulah has proved famous Kashmiri Proverb "ATE DARE WUCHE NAY MAYANE AACH MA WOOCHNAY" which loosely translated means "let you suffer and me not see".

Pak shelling continues unabated

Heavy Pakistani shelling from across the border is continuing unabated in many sectors in J&K state. The shelling is continuing since May 28 when Pakistan conducted nuclear tests. In the continued shelling many civilians and army personnel including an commanding officer

were killed. Many people have migrated to safer places and thousands of acres of land has been left uncultivated. Pakistan is resorting to unprovoked firing in a bid to infiltrate more and more militants and internationalise Kashmir issue.

Shabir Shah's hide and seek

Since his release from jail, separatist leader Shabir Shah is in dilemma. He has lost his charisma, public support and credibility in politics. To regain a foothold in state politics, Mr Shah is trying various options. Recently he floated Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party and presently is engaged in a hide and seek (arrest and release) with state police to remain at least, in news.

Doda girls taken to POK by militant

At least three young girls of a particular community, of 18 to 20 years age have been taken to POK by foreign mercenaries.

The girls were reportedly lured by militants on promise to marry them in their homes in POK. However there, these girls were forced to go for subversive training in the training camps.

This is not an incident in isolation. Infact, the woman are being used by these militants to satisfy their lust and for transportation of weapons etc.

Separatist leaders 'stooges'-Lord Avebury

Lord Avebury, member house of lords, an India baiter and supporter of Kashmiri separatist, described Kashmiri separatist leaders as 'stooges' and assumed them to take part in elections to represent people. He said that though he was a supporter of "arms struggle", but it failed. It speaks of change in the thinking of even Indian baiters.

Mr Avebury was speaking in a meeting organised at London by JKLF (Aman-ullah group) to reflect on Khan's recent suggestion of "demonstration of Kashmir and allowing a cooling off period under internationally supervised reunification". Mr Avebury lauded Khan's efforts but rejected the suggestion as impractical.



BJP President Mr Kusha Bhao Thakre addressing BJP workers at Jammu on Wednesday.

Thakre visit fails to enthuse BJP cadres

KS Correspondent

JAMMU: Much publicised visit of National President of Bhartiya Janata Party, Sh Kusha Bhao Thakre failed to infused the party workers to rally round the partyline adopted by central leadership on Kashmir issue.

Disenchantment of party cadres was evident in the only public function organised at the city palace on 29th of this month. Party workers were seen totally uneffected to whatever was being spoken by the State Leaders and the National President of BJP on the occasion. The hall which could accommodate no more than 600 persons was half empty. Most of the senior workers were seen squatting outside indifferent to the speeches of their leaders.

The constraints of the party were quite evident in the speech of Sh Thakre. Entire

speech was devoid of any reference to the latest massacre of Hindus in the two villages of Kishtwar Tehsil. National President appeared to be at loss of words to explain the rationale of government of India's line on Kashmir.

State party leaders particularly the state President Sh Daykrishan Kotwal and the former state President Sh Vaid Vishnu Dutt Sharma have reportedly conveyed their strong opposition to centre's hesitation in declaring Doda as a disturbed area. It has caused serious misgivings in party cadres and erosion of support among people, they are reportedly to have communicated to party supremo.

Sh Thakre in the subsequent press conference tried to distance itself from NC line on Kashmir. He accepted

the role of subversive elements in the administration in sabotaging the government strategies to fight terrorism in the state. He said untill 'a definite visible change' will come in the terrorist infested state he would not be satisfied. He also tried to assuage the feelings of party cadres and initiate a damage control on the issue of BJP-led alliance's ambivalence in declaring Doda as disturbed. "BJP is still of the view that Doda district should be declared a disturbed area".

Internal sources in the party confirmed their disenchantment on the party line of continued alliance and soft-peddling with ruling National Conference. Party cadres from Doda are particularly angry with the role of Central government in not ensuring proper security cover to the district.

'J&K situation grave'-counter insurgents

Leaders of various counter insurgent groups have described situation in J&K grave and apprehended the return of 1989 situation.

The reformed militant leaders, messers Javed Shah, Papa Kishtwari, Umar Mukhtar and Samad Khan, were in Delhi to apprise central leadership about the gravity of situation. They said that correct situation is not being conveyed to central government as whenever a central team visits state, it is taken to places, where it does not get correct picture of situation. Mr Javed Shah, a front ranking counter insurgent leader and presently an MLC on

NC ticket, accused state government for all round failure that lead to disillusionment among reformed militants and common people. He also contested the government claims on appointment of surrendered militants in central security forces and said most of the appointees are "favoured ones" Mr Papa Kishtwari, another leader, said that counter insurgent movement against proxy war prepared way for Lok Sabha and state assembly elections. He said that they risked their lives to save J&K for India but are treated as 'criminals' instead of rehabilitation. The leaders said that their sacrifices were

thrown into 'drain' by state government and the Pak militants were after their lives. They branded local press as "ISI agents" for publishing cooked tales.

Earlier, recently appointed Amir Alia of J&K Ikhwan, accused Farooq government for resurgence of militancy and threatened to expose government. Before elections there were many strong bastions of counter insurgents where reportedly mercenaries are ruling the roost presently.

Meanwhile, on return from Delhi, in a major development, these counter insurgent leaders have decided to take

(Contd on page 11)

High Court comes to Rescue of Gandhi College teachers

Saga of Struggle Bears Fruits

KS Correspondent

JAMMU: 54 displaced teachers of Gandhi Memorial College persevered many years of protracted legal battle with the state government to be treated at par with other displaced teachers from Valley. For eight years they somehow managed without their salaries but continued their struggle to ensure survival of the institution which had given them bread.

Subsequent to the displacement in 1989, entire management of Gandhi Memorial College and the teaching staff were not sure about the future of their institution. The attempts by the hostile administration to usurp the institution and handover its management to handpicked persons galvanised all of them to undo the wrongs committed by administration by seeking judicial remedy and establishing their institution in Jammu as well.

State administration did not treat these displaced teachers at par with other displaced employees and as such their salaries which constituted major portion of grant and aid to the Gandhi Memorial College were withheld. It was in stark contrast to the treatment meted out to the displaced staff of Islamia College of Science and Commerce Srinagar.

This institution was a government aided private institution just like Gandhi Memorial College. The displaced staff of Islamia college was not only given their due sala-

ries at par with other displaced employees but were also adjusted in various educational institutions locally.

These teachers of Gandhi Memorial College not only offered their voluntary services to the institution but took their case to the High Court so that proper redressal is sought. In their petition they sought 'parity with teachers working in another institutions getting grant and aid.'

Protracted legal battle ultimately ended with single judge judgement of J&K High Court on 19/3/1998. Justice TS Doabia while upholding the main contentions of the petitioners opined, "...there is no justification to deny that benefit to the migrants of private educational institutions. The above is the narrow argument advanced by the learned counsel for the petitioners. The larger question to be examined is as to whether these teachers can seek parity with teachers working in government schools". In his categorical verdict the honourable judge viewed.

i) That the state aided institution should be treated at par with employees of government schools in the matter of pay and allowances.

ii) The pay allowances and benefits which are being given to teacher and employees working in government institutions has also to be given to the employees working in state aided schools.

iii) That in any case no distinction has been pointed out to differentiate between the teachers and employees

in the present petition and those teachers are employees who are working in the institutions referred to in para 15 of the petition.

On the state of affairs of the administration the judgement very obliquely refers in its concluding remarks. "It would be again apt to get work from the migrant teachers by utilising their services in some other institutions".

State government however refused to be sanitised by this detailed judgement of Justice Doabia and appealed to the division bench of Jammu Kashmir High Court.

After hearing the plea the division bench comprising of Justice RC Gandhi and Mr Justice GD Sharma directed the state of Jammu & Kashmir and others that they shall pay salary to the staff of Gandhi Memorial College, who have migrated to Jammu on the same line and parity which has been granted and extended to the staff of Islamia College of Science and Commerce migrated to Jammu in consonance with Govt. Order No: EDU/AC/PAY/90 dated: 24/4/1990 issued by the Financial Advisor Chief Accounts officer, Education department.

Apparently relieved by the judgements the teachers of Gandhi Memorial College are waiting for the proper implementation of the judgement "we fought this battle to save an institution which has contributed to the state. The judgement will certainly benefit all those who have suffered similar discrimination," said one of the petitioners.

Displaced Doctors Reject Dr. Kamal's offer

KS Correspondent

JAMMU: In a unanimous decision taken by the displaced doctors from Kashmir valley, Dr. Kamal's offer to them for return to valley was rejected. The meeting which was held in Rajinder Park Jammu, on 26th. July 1998 and attended by over a hundred doctors discussed the offer of Dr. Kamal in detail.

The displaced doctors opined that Dr. Kamal, while underlining the purpose of his offer appeared quite concerned about the falling standard of health care and medical education in Kashmir Valley demonstrated little sen-

sitivity towards the issue of forced displacement of Kashmiri Pandits.

The doctors were of the general view that the offer of the minister appeared not to be guided at all by the concern of the government to ensure the right to live of the displaced community.

Fear of derocognition of Medical College Sgr. and inadequate health care at various health centres, due to running away of Muslim doctors of valley to various overseas countries, particularly to Gulf, to earn easy money, seemed to be the prime motivation behind Dr.Kamal's

gesture.

The displaced doctors did not find any commitment of state government on the safe and honourable return of Pandits to valley in the presentation of Dr. Kamal to displaced doctors earlier.

The resolution adopted clearly points out that the doctors did not consider the situation in Kashmir Valley 'Conducive' for their return. It also emphasised that the return of displaced doctors was inseparably linked to the return of the entire Kashmiri Pandit Community which has been subjected to 'genocide' over the years.

Fraudulent Grab of Pandit Properties

Not only Helplessness but also Connivance

Special Correspondent

The usual answer to the question as to why government has failed to evacuate the illegal or fraudulent occupation of Pandit Properties in Valley speaks for itself about the writ of the present government and also its intentions. 'Farooq Sahib's intentions are very clear. He wants to help but lower down in administration people are non-cooperative'. Such explanations are given by senior Cabinet ministers in their informal chats with the Pandit delegations seeking intervention of government on the issue of occupation of their properties. Some of the Senior ministers are frank enough to even admit non-cooperation of Party carders down the line.

The standard answers to the above question or queries of similar nature appear to convey the serious constraints and compulsions of the ruling party to govern in a atmosphere of widespread subversion. Helplessness of a government which has an unprecedented mandate in the legislative assembly and unanimous support of political establishment cutting across party lines appears only a disguise for its lack of commitment.

Displaced Pandits who are seeking government intervention to salvage their properties illegally or fraudulently occupied are exposed to this attitude. However what is more appalling for them is the connivance of government agencies in such matters.

Bihari Kak has a shop in building adjacent Iqbal Park in Srinagar. In 1990 alongwith rest of the Kashmiri Pandit community he had to run away from Srinagar in the wake of ethnic cleansing unleashed by Terrorists in the valley. In 1997 he received a shock when he heard that his shop had been occupied by some local Muslims. Personal enquiry into the matter revealed that not only his shop but three more shops belonging to displaced Pandits in the same building were also occupied.

At personal risk they pursued the matter and were amazed to find that the

occupants had actually been allotted these shops by the Srinagar Municipality. The reallocation had taken place without any intimation or required notice by the Municipality to the original owners.

Not only were shops forcibly reallocated, the victims do not know as to what happened to the goods and properties in these shops. As per reports they have been either usurped, looted or partly burnt.

Surprisingly shops have been allotted at throw away prices, Rs. 30,000/- per shop when current market value of the shops is around Rs. 7.00 lakhs each. Such a decision by the Srinagar Municipality, besides favouring the new owners appears also aimed to belittle the value of Pandit assets and property in the valley, and deny any choice of proper compensation of the actual losses.

The victims have charged the Municipality of breaking open the locks of these shops and stealing goods worth lakhs of rupees. "I had lenses, equipment, frames of spectacles besides the showcase which costs not less than 10.00 lakhs rupees in my shop." Says Behari Kak.

The government after the matter was pursued by the displaced shopkeepers virtually accepted their contention, when they suspended the concerned Municipality Officer on the charges of corruption. However, no action has been taken so far to get illegal allotments cancelled.

"I met all the concerned Ministers but nobody acts" said one of the victim. In one such meeting the minister told the aggrieved shopowner to talk to the concerned bureaucrat who was a Pandit and was at that time handling the issue of return and rehabilitation. When he approached the bureaucrat he was plainly told "Tell the Minister Sahib that the way this government is handling the issue it appears that they are not at all interested in return of Pandit properties." The bureaucrat conveyed his frustration and the poor victim felt helpless as never before.

KASHMIR SENTINEL**The Self - delusion and disinformation**

The Union Minister for Home Affairs avers that the spate of massacres in the Jammu region is in fact a diversionary ploy employed by ISI in the wake of improvement of situation in Kashmir Valley. He informs the Parliament that the Pakistan is trying to shift attention to Jammu region as the proxy-war in Kashmir is failing.

This assessment not only is an attempt to paint a rosy picture of a disaster which has engulfed the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir, but also an indirect acceptance of a premise that the thrust of Pakistani operatives in India is only Kashmir specific. The dimensions of the conflict with Pakistan are thus confined to a very myopic spectrum. Such an assessment can at best be termed as a self-delusion.

The arguments propounded by the Honourable Home Minister are in fact not new. Every time terrorists struck in Jammu, be it exodus of Hindus from Gandoh, the Barshalla massacre or the bomb blasts in Jammu city, same explanations were forwarded for public consumption by his predecessors. Given the stature of Sh. Advani, particularly when he also happens to be the Home Minister of the Country, one expected that the national discourse on Kashmir would shift from wishful assessments to realistic premises.

However, what is more appalling is taking recourse to simplistic parameters to define the situation in the Valley. It is an attempt of self-disinformation when the proxy-war unleashed by Pakistan is assessed in terms of a 'successful yatra' or 'tourist bookings' of prominent hotel in Srinagar.

The nation needs to be awakened to the ideological contours of the proxy-war unleashed by Pakistan. The nation should become aware of the strategies employed in this war of attrition.

Instead of consoling ourselves with misleading statistics, like the number of tourists visiting Valley, we should try to seek answers for more vital questions. Who is supporting foreign mercenaries within the state? How many youth in Kashmir have been exposed to the use of fire arms? What is the number of civilians in Kashmir valley who are armed? What is the number of civilians who are trained but are not armed? What is the status of internal subversion? We should also endeavour seriously to find the potential of Kashmiri Muslim society to export terrorist know how and subversive expertise to other vulnerable parts of our country.

A decade of terrorist warfare in Kashmir has already created a situation whereby crossing over to Pakistan or any other country to get training in terrorism and subversion is not required at all. One has only to go to Kashmir valley for the same if one has proper contacts.

Nobody doubts the patriotism and sincerity of Sh Advani. The nation is also aware that one of the motives of the spate of massacre in Jammu and Kashmir is to destabilise and discredit BJP led alliance at the centre. But indulging in self-disinformation is only playing into hands of Pakistan.

OPINION**Kashmir****Agenda of Indian Pa**

By Dr. M.K. Teng

The Congress awoke to the dangerous consequences of the isolation of the States almost, after it had virtually accepted the partition, when it realised that the British, in collaboration with the Muslim League, were conspiring to break up India in to several imbecile political entities with the Muslim State of Pakistan strategically placed at their epicentre. It had lost the initiative to forge a unified movement against the British colonial rule in the Princely states.

At the time when the British and the Muslim League settled down to decide the fate of India, the Congress turned to the people in the States, whom they had neglected throughout the long history of the Indian struggle against the British. Once again the Congress leaders fell prey to their own indecision and made a half-hearted plea for the right of the people of the states, to determine their future. Not backed by conviction, the Congress demand created little impression upon the British and the Muslim League.

The League leaders turned the bend at the most appropriate time and in an astute move, pledged their support to the British designs to exclude the States from the constitutional arrangements envisaged by the Partition Plan and the withdrawal of the Paramountcy, to restore to the

Princes, the powers which the British Crown exercised over them. The Muslim League realised that most of the States were populated by Hindu majorities and any arrangements to transfer Paramountcy to the two Dominions, would definitely place them in India. The Muslim League shared the optimism of British about independence of the States and their eventual alignment with the Muslim State of Pakistan, as a counterweight against India.

The Congress resolve, having been broken by the partition and the Congress leaders, still groping for a new rationale of the Indian freedom, after their basic commitment to the unity of India was broken, did not stick to their demand for the right of the States people to determine the future disposition of the States. Instead they acquiesced, without demur, with the British proposals to terminate the Paramountcy and restore the Princes the power to decide their future affiliations with the two successor Dominions of India and Pakistan. The States were thus removed from the agenda of the Indian partition on the insistence of the British, the machinations of the Muslim League as well as the unconditional acceptance of the lapse of Paramountcy by the Congress.

It was once again, the

invisible hand of the British struck and sought to alter the balances created by the partition plan and this time. It was no other person than Mountbatten himself, who, perhaps, having realised the force of the States peoples' movements for unity with India, attempted to prepare the ground for a division of the Princely States between the two Dominions on the basis of the partition.

Mountbatten realised that none of the Princes, whose States were geographically situated within the territories of the Indian Dominion, would be able to hold out against the will of his subjects and the States would sooner or later join the Indian Dominion. He did not share the optimism of the British Officers in India and at home and the leaders of the Muslim League, that the Muslim ruled States could be saved from India. Instead he feared that the tide of the events would wipe off the Princes and India would absorb the States, perhaps sooner than anticipated.

He was, more concerned about the Princely States, situated within the proposed boundaries of Pakistan, among which was the Kalat State where the ruler refused to accede to Pakistan. He was also apprehensive of the Jammu and Kashmir State, which could be left with contigeous borders with both the Indian Dominion and

Special Report**Amnesty International**

Fifty years after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the very foundation of refugee protection is under increasing threat. The world is faced with unprecedented numbers of victims of forced displacement. At the same time, many states are denying protection to refugees and asylum seekers and have ignored the very principles of protection they themselves agreed on.

It is clear that mass human rights abuses trigger mass movements of refugees, yet increasingly the international community is failing to prevent those abuses, and is standing by as the numbers flee-

ing violations multiply. Then, faced with the flight of millions, states have responded by closing their borders, shifting responsibility to the countries and regions which refugees have fled from.

The very countries which were instrumental in the initial drafting and adoption of the 1951 Refugees convention, have put in place barriers to obstruct access to the asylum process, are incorrectly found to not meet the refugee definition, are sent back to countries in which they will not be safe.

Some states refuse to provide protection to refugees fleeing persecution meted out by armed groups or other

non-state actors, granting protection only to those fleeing human rights violations at the hands of governments. Refugees are interdicted on the

A new system of checks and balances is needed to help a growing number of uprooted peoples

seas and forcibly returned to their countries without any attempt at identifying those needing protection. Hundreds of thousands of refugees seeking shelter in refugee camps have been forcibly returned to countries which are not safe and remain unaccounted for.

The Barriers are

Partition-III

an and of which the ruler of favourably disposed as a settlement with tan. His fears about u and Kashmir were ned by Hari Singh, the of Jammu and Kashmir, ad refused to accept his e when the Viceroy the State in June 1947, posed the accession of u and Kashmir to n.

Mountbatten went to the ensuring India a viable with Pakistan and safe in the division of per Bara Doab, and d the inclusion of the s of Amritsar and pur in India. On the Mountbatten had a t commitment, which tated by the interests of ish empire. By the close month of July 1947, he partition had begun me effect, Mountbatten nvinced that the borders a should be confined to jhab, leaving the northern rier of Jammu and mir in safer and more hands of the Muslim f Pakistan.

his last address he d to the Princes on 25th 1947, in Delhi, atten spelt out certain guidelines for them to in the determination of re disposition of their He advised the Princes de to either of the two ons on the basis of the

geographical contiguity of their States and the composition of their population.

The Muslim League secretly counselled the Muslim Princes to ignore the advice of the Viceroy. They communicated to the Princes their readiness to support them in their independence.

Evidently Pakistan did not accept that the Princely States had ever been put on the agenda of the Indian partition and the League leaders manifestly rejected Mountbatten's overtures to divide the Princely States between the two Dominions on the basis of the partition of the British India.

The Indian leaders entrusted the task of negotiations with the Princes to Menon and Mountbatten. Mountbatten, deliberately avoided to take a bold initiative on the Muslim ruled States and Jammu and Kashmir to bring about their integration with India. Junagarh acceded to Pakistan, Hyderabad refused to join India and Jammu and Kashmir was pushed into the oblivion. V.P. Menon, who was appointed the Secretary of the States Department, succeeded where the going was easy, with Mountbatten adding an element of diplomatic intrigue to an otherwise versatile comedy which the Princes enacted to accede to India. Mountbatten provided a long handle to Pakistan which that country used in Kashmir with devastating effect.

The going up

is is what more and ates are doing to avoid ing refugees, what is done to call them to ? Unfortunately, the is that there is scant ing and little account- to ensure countries their protection obli- The unchecked ac- f these states means e principles of refu- tection are being re- in a manner which dering the principle re foulment a mean- standard.

imental questions of ility of the current regime must now be d and urgent consid- given to the proper

implementation of existing standards and principles. Efforts to formulate new stand- dards in light of complex displacement issues must be guided by the highest stan- dards of human rights. And most importantly, a mecha- nism for effective monitor- ing and reporting of all as- pects of refugee protection must be introduced. Refugee protection is an important di- mension of overall human rights protection, but moni- toring the rights of refugees is one of the weakest parts of the system. International human rights treaties often have a monitoring mechanism, allowing independent experts

(Contd on page 11)

Perspective

Welcoming the downtrodden

By Mary Robinson

The United Nations must create a sense of renewed purpose to protect the human rights of everyone.

Shortly before Human Rights Day in December, I recorded a television message to Ireland where there is currently an intense debate on asylum seekers and refugees. My initial argument was simple; that millions of Irish in the past 150 years were forced to seek a new life elsewhere and this exodus had been met with prejudice, rejection and hostility. I asked that Ireland should be sensitive to this historic role as a source of refugees by welcoming those seeking asylum from other lands.

My other point was more challenging. I argued that just as the Irish exodus enriched communities in North America and Australia, so Ireland can now be enriched by those seeking safety from persecution in Africa, eastern Europe or Asia.

In contributing to this special edition of REFUGEES MAGAZINE, I take pleasure in becoming part of UNHCR's work with refugees and protection of their human rights. This advocacy role underlines what UNHCR and my Office have in common - a commitment to the protection of the rights of individuals and to the international obligation to respect those rights.

The 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees elaborates on Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which provides that "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." The Convention was the first in a series of treaties which turned the ideals of the Declaration into legally binding obligations. The language of the Convention is clear and compelling, defining a refugee as someone with a well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.

The evolution of international standards in human rights and in refugee law has produced an obligation to protect individuals who are forced to seek asylum. The admission of asylum seekers, their treatment and the granting of refugees status are, themselves, crucial elements of the international system of pro-

tection of human rights. Protecting, ensuring and enhancing these rights are at the core of UNHCR's work.

Increasingly, our common concern, concerns not only refugees but the internally displaced. There are recent examples of both groups returning to areas where the causes of their flight - inevitably in-

Human Rights as a "living document" - one which speaks directly to today's world, demanding greater reflection and more committed implementation.

The alternative is that Declarations, covenants and conventions become little more than transitory snapshots of rights as understood at a par-



An elderly Somali at a home for displaced persons expresses the anguish of everyone who has suffered human rights abuses.

volving human rights violations - are still present. Return under such circumstances is bound to be not only short-lived, but often dangerous. The Secretary-General's Representative on internally displaced, Francis Deng, is finalising a set of Guiding Principles addressing protection against arbitrary displacement, protection for the internally displaced and protection for returning displaced persons.

It is no coincidence that in the last four years major human rights offices have been established in countries where there have been large-scale movements of refugees, returnees and internally displaced people including Rwanda, Cambodia, Angola, Burundi and Colombia. Human rights field officers there, help train justice officials, work with local authorities and communities to prevent or remedy human rights abuses and help develop and strengthen local organizations and institutions. This is crucial work in consolidating peace and stability and establishing the basis for truly durable solutions to refugee problems.

Another area of common commitment is the development of human rights law - maintaining and asserting the continuing relevance of established standards to contemporary situations. In this anniversary year, I believe we should see the Universal Declaration of

particular time and place. UNHCR has been assiduous in keeping fresh the obligations of the 1951 convention on the status of Refugees and its regional counterpart, the 1969 OAU Convention governing the situation of refugees in Africa.

UNHCR must ensure that international protection is extended to refugees in accordance with the terms of these conventions. Perseverance and ingenuity are needed to remind and persuade governments to fulfill their obligations under these instruments. As part of its task of supervising States' implementation of these treaties, UNHCR has to ensure that the obligations are interpreted in a manner consistent with their essential object and purpose: the protection of rights.

This work is part of a wider United Nations dialogue with governments and civil society aimed at eliminating abuses and protecting rights. The current structure of international human rights treaty obligations and the mechanisms established by the Commission on Human Rights provided powerful tools for analysing problems and proposing remedial action.

The ties that bind my office with UNHCR are obvious, but it is important we go further and recognize the role of human rights in all aspects of U.N. work. Secretary General Kofi Annan has scheduled a Spring

The New Target

Foreign mercenaries are now increasingly targeting the Jammu region, forcing security agencies to re-work their strategies.

--ROHIT BHAN--

● **April 19:** Twenty-one persons are shot by foreign mercenaries reportedly belonging to the Harkat-ul-Ansar at Prankote in Udhampur district.

● **May 25:** Four persons are killed and four injured when foreign mercenaries attack the house of a retired forest official at Surankote in Poonch.

● **June 11:** Five persons are killed when they are caught in a crossfire between foreign mercenaries and security forces at Phagla-Bin Poonch.

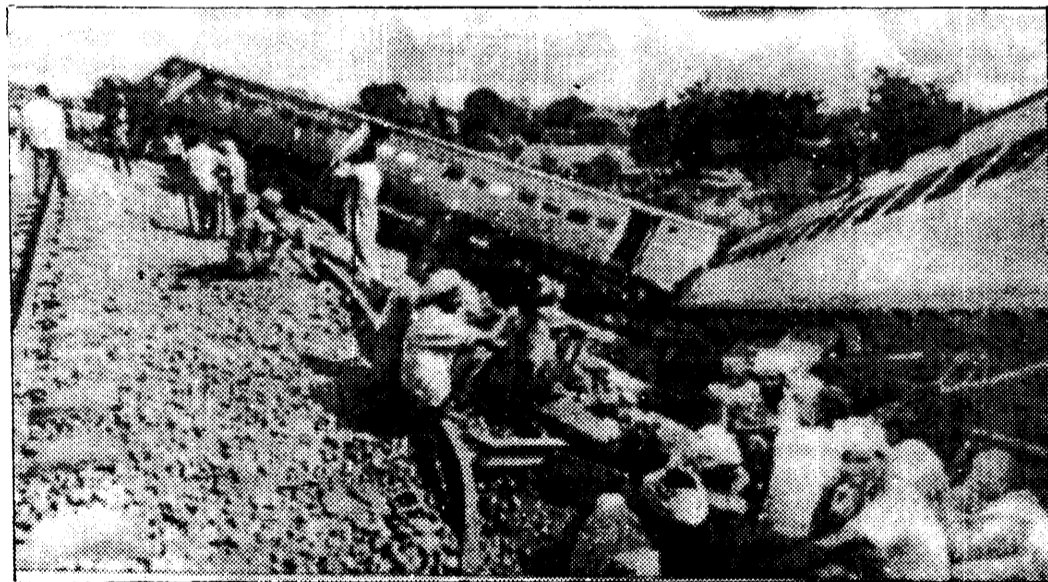
● **June 19:** Twenty-six people of a wedding procession shot by militants at Chapnari in Doda district. Mass migration follows.

MILITANCY IN THE JAMMU REGION								
(Figures of the first six months of 1997 and 1998)								
District	Militants killed		Security forces casualty		Civilians killed		Militancy-related incidents	
	1997	1998	1997	1998	1997	1998	1997	1998
Doda	30	32	11	10	26	63	100	179
Poonch	2	3	0	24	3	23	38	98
Rajouri	21	19	1	9	4	19	13	46
Udhampur	0	10	2	2	6	29	24	38

the region from that in the Valley is the involvement of foreign mercenaries here. "Here the attacks are being carried out mainly by mercenaries and the local cadre has been virtually out of picture," says the Inspector General of Police, Jammu province, Kuldeep Khoda.

With foreign mercenaries moving centre stage, the war between the security forces and the militants is getting increasingly intense. Intelligence sources say that Pakistan's ISI has floated a new outfit, Harkat-ul-Jehad-

Officials point out that till 1996 end, Poonch-Rajouri range was merely used as transit route for militants destined for Kashmir valley or Doda, but since last year end they have gradually built up bases in these areas and started carrying out attacks on security forces. This move gives the militants a strategic advantage. "Once they established their bases they started carrying out attacks on security forces which resulted in diversion of security forces to these regions. The pressure eases a little bit on the



A derailed train on the Jammu-Pathankot line after militants blew up a section of the track.

At a time when there are signs of decline in the militant activity in the Kashmir Valley, an increasing number of such incidents are being reported from the Jammu region. The security agencies are worried as not long ago militancy was confined to the hilly Doda district in the region.

Now the gamut of militancy has extended to other districts--Poonch, Rajouri and Udhampur--as well. The worst-affected have been the twin border districts of Poonch-Rajouri and Udhampur which has come on the militancy map at the end of last year.

Officials say that what

Islamee Tanzeem to give filip to militancy in the Poonch-Rajouri range and the counter insurgency agencies are re-working their strategy.

The shift in targets and the consequent spurt in militancy in the province is being attributed to various factors ranging from attempt to widen the militant bases to altering of the demography in this region. Explains Khoda: "There is a growing realisation in the ISI think-tank that globally the problem should not be perceived as a Kashmir-specific trouble but it should look more like a problem in Jammu and Kashmir and hence new areas in the Jammu province

militants in the Kashmir Valley," says a senior Intelligence officer.

Besides, he adds, the militants are able to explore more transit routes and new destination other than the Kashmir Valley for strikes. For instance, Udhampur rarely witnessed militant activities last year but in the first half of this year, major strikes, including the one at Prankote, have taken place. "Once they manage to cross over from the Rajouri-Poonch border, they can move towards Udhampur and Doda via Budhal using the difficult passes of the border district," says Army officer.

Khoda says that the for-

Will Jammu go the Kashmir way?

Kavita Suri

Some among the Kashmiri Pandits who had to migrate from the Valley earlier are wondering whether they will be forced to move again.

Will history repeat itself and will there be another migration? Some residents of Jammu are seriously pondering these questions. The fear is not entirely baseless. And the reasons are more than one. Recently, the circulation of some anonymous letters to a few Kashmiri Pandit families - living in Trikuta Nagar, a posh locality in Jammu city and Durga Nagar (Bantalab), situated on the outskirts of city - asking them to vacate their houses, has sent shivers down the spines of Pandits relocated here.

The recent threats are reminiscent of similar ones received by Kashmiri Pandits in 1989-90 when each family had received threatening calls, letters and even notices in the local papers asking them to leave the Valley. (The Hizbul Mujahideen's open threats asking KPs to leave within 48 hours were published in a local Urdu paper, Al Safa). Fearful of their safety then, they had left.

Similarly, the once sleepy town of Reasi in Jammu is agog with activity these days as a number of people from villages like Dharmari, Arnas etc. in the upper reaches of Udhampur district are migrating to Reasi to escape the wrath of the militants.

The entire hilly belt, spread over 1,000 square kilometers, was rocked by the massacre of 28 persons on the night of April 17 when militants struck in village Prankote. This incident was the first of its kind in the trouble-torn state. When militants had earlier attacked Sangrampora and Wandhama (January 25, 1998 when 20 KP residents were killed) and Gool Gulabgarh earlier this year, the killings had not been so bestial as in Prankote that fateful night. Not a single bullet was fired but the hapless villagers were killed with sharp-edged weapons and even burnt alive. Since this incident, there has been some migration of the Hindus living in that region. Anywhere from 300 -1,000 families have already migrated from this belt in the upper reaches of Jammu after the April 17 massacre.

ter placed Kashmir Pandits, victims of the forced migration from the Valley earlier, see this as one more step in the well-planned strategy of the ISI and other Islamic forces to wipe out the community ethnically from the valley. J.N.Koul, President of All India Kashmiri Samaj (AIKS) who is also the president of SOS Villages of India, feels that what is happening even in the Jammu region now is also part of the Pan-Islamic movement.

"They are planning to wipe out areas of Hindu-domination and thus make a comfortable place for themselves to live", he says. The KP leaders who gathered at Chandigarh on May 2 to participate in a two-day zonal conference were aware of the fact that anonymous letters had been received by a few KP houses in Jammu.

"We know about it but we do not want to publicise it because then it will create a feeling of insecurity among the Hindu community," said H.N.Jattu, a KP leader. He added that after their organisation has ascertained all the facts, they will be taking the matter with the Administration. On the question of return of the KPs to the Valley, however, Jattu remains sceptical. He feels that whenever any concrete step is taken towards the return of the Pandits, some militant-inspired incident occurs.

Does this mean that the people in the Valley do not want them back or that those now in control of the movement are blatantly communalising the issue? The KP leadership is of the belief that the situation has become sharply communalised, a fact manifest in the recent selective massacres. The government, in their opinion, has been shockingly silent, allowing Hindus to become victims to the nefarious designs of Islamic forces.

The Jammu and Kashmir Human Right Commission, which has recently submitted its report to the state government on the Wandhama massacre, had observed that serious security lapses were responsible for the carnage. The JKHRC has also recommended security cover for the Kashmiri Pandits, who live in the valley.

KP migrants settled in Jammu are also being resented by the local Dogras of Jammu

'Talk to children in Mother tongue'-Prem Nath Shastri

Interview with Jyotshi Prem Nath Shastri:

Jyotshi Prem Nath Shastri needs no introduction. He is a house-hold name today. He will continue to remain so far his immense contribution in preserving and carrying forward a three centuries old legacy on to the sixth generation. For fifty years now, Shastriji, as he is reverentially called, has given a new dimension and new look to a subject which otherwise would have been lost for ever. He has made a significant contribution in upholding the tradition, customs and rituals of Kashmiri Pandits in particular and Hindus in general.

Calm and composed, Shastriji in a free wheeling tete-tete with Kashmir Sentinel revealed details of his life and achievements.

EXCERPTS

Q. Has Astronomy its origin in Kashmir?

A. No. The subject originated and flourished outside Kashmir. As skies in Kashmir usually remained packed with clouds, it was not easy to read the position of stars and hence make subsequent numerical calculations.

Q. Then how did the subject pass to your ancestors?

A. Some Pandits from Chender dynasty are believed to have mastered the art some 300 years ago. Legend has it that one of our ancestors Vasudevji- who had a melodious voice used to entertain people with his signing. One day while he was entertaining the rich from Village Kelen in present Anantnag district, on the banks of river Jhelum, a boat enroute to Lok Bhawan in same district, carrying some Pandits from Srinagar who had to perform funeral rites stopped near where Vasudevji was singing.

Captivated by his melody they enquired about the singer. Mesmerised by the melody, they beseeched him to accompany them. Even though he readily agreed, they had something different in mind. Besides relishing his singing, the Pandits also wanted to use him for attending to their domestic chores.

Vasudevji performed his job with dedication. Being a keen observer and an intelligent man, he would watch the Chander Pundits working out calculations, drawing charts and converting these into Panchangs. He also observed them calculating work charts and making horoscopes. Slowly but with a determined will, he mastered the art. One day he drew his own almanac. This, however, was at variance in many respects to what elder Pandits of the family had produced. On checking the almanac of Vasudevji was found to be correct and accurate. The elder Pandit, however, made him to pledge that till he was alive, Vasudev will not make any Panchang. It was only after the death of the elder Pandit, whom he had, in the meantime, adopted as a Guru that Vasudevji started to produce a Panchang based on his own calculations.

Vasudev is believed to have calculated in advance Panchangs for nearly two decades. After his death, there were some troubles and wrong calculations. These according to a legend prevalent in the family were rectified after one of our ancestors was directed in a dream by Vasudevji as to how to calculate correctly. Since then Panchang, now known as Vijeshwar Panchang has been coming out regularly.

Q. What is Panchang? And why is your almanac called Vijeshwar Panchang?

A. Panchang is set of five

basics. These are: Tithi (Date) Var (Day), Yoge, Nakshetra, Kam.

According to Rajtarangni the present day Bijbehara was called Vijeshwara named after the Goddess Vijaya Devi. It was this name which we selected for our almanac. Thus was born the almanac Vijeshwara Panchang.



Q. Who is your Guru?

A. My Late father Jyotshi Aftab Ram is my spiritual guru. What I am today is because of him. It was his desire to see our entire family to adopt this profession. He was determined to nourish and nurture the profession and was against its abandonment. I quote an instance, which shows how he loved his profession. One of my relatives got me a teachers job after bribing a clerk. When father saw the appointment order he became so furious that he tore off his Pharen-Kashmiri long gown. He would say that even if we may have to beg or starve, we must not change our profession. He served the profession not only as a duty but also as mark of respect to the ancestors.

Q. How is your Panchang different from other Panchangs?

A. There is no difference between Panchangs. Actually what we are practising is the same as are others. It is a subject based on numerical calculations and formulae. These are same every where.

Q. Is your Panchang a per-

fect subject?

A. Yes, why not? It consists of two parts: (i) Astronomy (ii) Astrology. As astronomy is based on mathematics, so no one challenges it. However, astrology shows variation and that is why predictions sometimes do not come true.

Q. How has computerisation of Panchang helped you.

A. Computerisation has made the preparation of Panchang not only easy but more accurate as well. Now, we are in a position to devote more time to scriptures and other religious books.

Q. How can KPs protect their identity?

A. Kashmiri Pandits are at a crucial stage of history. They have to rewrite it. There are three essentials which can help retain their identity. These are: (i) Christening of Children (Namkaran Sanskar) (ii) Preservation of language and upholding tradition.

I am very much perturbed over the way things are going on. I feel sorry for the parents who name their children like Hunky, Chino, Minu, Tinu. These things accentuate identity crisis. Second is the language. Every parent should talk with their children in their mother tongue i.e. Kashmiri. It should be given priority followed by other languages. Thirdly KPs should protect the cultural heritage by upholding all the traditions and customs. I am of the firm opinion that each KP family must make it a obligation to at least train one member who can replace the present (Purohit) in Kashmiri parlance Guruji, so that he can attend to intricate Pujas and other rituals. This should not come in the way of his permanent profession. Infact, such a step would not only preserve traditions and rituals but also

spread them further. Moreover, In marriages, the tradition of Gotra should be followed in letter and spirit because deviations can, infact, have great repercussions on the society.

Born 77 year ago in Oct. 1921 at Bijbehara, Vijeshwara of the yore where once stood a great university which by the way later fell victim to the frenzy of ienoclast, Shastriji now lives in Jammu. May, be his stay at Jammu had been ordained to provide him an opportunity to pay the Guru Dakshina as he had his basic religious education at Shri Ranbeshwar Raghunath Pathshala. His early education took place at Bijbehara. After completing matriculation as a private student he had a stint as a student at Krishna Kishore Sanatan Dharm College, Lahore, where he had discontinued due to bad health. He was advised by the Principal of college to continue studies at Ranbeshwar Raghunath Pathshala. At Raghunath Pathshala, he went through the scriptures and gained knowledge about various faculties. For fifty years, he served his profession at Bijbehara. He has also serveral books to his credit, which include Karam Kand Deepak, Panchastavi, Bhawani Sahasarnama, Shivratri Pooja, Sandya, Sakarnamawali, Shsarnam, Antim Sanskar vidi and latest being Bhagwat Gita in Urdu. Besides this he has prepared various cassesets for performing rituals and festivals.

Meticulously, but simply dressed in Chodidar, a shirt and a waist coat with usually a finely starched white turban, Shastriji is a vegetarian. He also dons a beautifully stitched Pheran during winter.

In Jammu he also attends to gardening and rears cow, whom he loves very much.

Sahitya Mandal Honours Prof Shant

KS Correspondent

JAMMU: Leading Hindi poet and literary critic Prof RL Shant was honoured by 'Sahitya Mandal Jammu' recently.

Prof Shant's latest book 'Kavita Abhi Bhi' released sometime back was the main focus of discussion during the programme. Dr Bhushan Lal Koul and Sh Ramesh Mehta read papers on the latest book. Leading literary giant of Dogri

Prof Ram Nath Shastri was the chief guest on the occasion.

The book covers two decades of poetic career of Prof Shant. The poetry collection has also poems covering the period of exodus. Reading of the book provides a significant insight into the Kashmiri Psyche. Many poems carry a premonition of forced exodus. Speakers highlighted Prof Shant's contribution not

only to Hindi literature but Kashmiri literature as well.

"I have a great regard for Shant Sahib as a literary critic", said Prof Shastri. Commenting on his literary carrier Prof Shant remarked "I feel myself a poet only when I write in Hindi. However I feel satisfaction when I write short stories in Kashmiri." Prof Shant also recited his poems. Dr Raj Kumar of Jammu University presided over the function.

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BOOK REVIEW

'A Political and Social History of Jammu & Kashmir State and My Days-- By Prithvi Nath Chaku'

The book under review is a documentary written by Shri Prithvi Nath Chaku, prior to nineties and after some books were written about J&K State. But none of them comes upto the standard of this very well written one. It does not snack of the blemishes of self aggrandisement or false praise of the people in power. Being penned down by an honest unassuming very intelligent learned man living as an impartial witness to what was happening inside and outside the state, it is highly illuminating as regards the stark facts about the state, especially the beginning of the democratic rule.

Shri Chaku holds Masters Degree in History, Economic and Political Science of the Punjab University, Lahore. He did research work on population growth at the Allahabad University and as a full-bright scholar at John Hopkins University in Maryland USA. Later he did his IAS with credit.

The book makes pleasant reading neither jarring nor boring. The language is lucid, fascinating and replete with quaint humour and sarcasm. The style is almost like Kalhan's in Rajtarangni. Though the volume may not look commensurate with the span of the events yet because of its terse but preg-

nant allusion to many important problems and governance of the country as a whole it avails one a wide perspective of the pitfalls and loopholes of our democratic set up. Several aspects of the book point to many important clues for the study of an intelligent research scholar and though primarily concerned with Kashmir affairs, the book, in between gives a fair analysis of social and political problems facing many countries, India including.

Another speciality of the book is that it has not painted any person or event in an unbecoming biased manner. As a matter of fact, it is not easy to write in the manner it has been done; because they say truth is bitter.

The author gives a brief account of the tragedy of the Maharaja Hari Singh's rule. A tragedy it was! Who could expect the just Maharaja who did so much for his subjects and made elaborate plans for their upliftment, to end in that manner. His plans were taken up later by the democratic government with the substantial financial aid from the centre. For want of funds the Maharaja could not execute them. It is recorded that he started free compulsory education, reformed the SP college into a regular institution. Established Medicare for his subjects. Yet all that was brought to naught by the British who could not tolerate his raising his voice against their rule in India at the first Round Table conference in London. He refused to hand over Gilgit to them and did not grant them state subject hood. As a consequence they hatched a conspiracy by inducting an outside Muslim in the state with directions that he incite Muslim population to rise in revolt against him and loot, plunder and murder the minorities. It was on that cursed day of July 13, 1931 when the seeds of hatred against the minorities were sown. And humorously now the day is celebrated as the Martyrs Day. The author says, The Maharaja showed inadequate appreciation of the basic principles on which the Indian states of the time was based." One may not agree with it. Because a man of Maharaja Hari Singh's calibre could not be expected to be unaware of the strength of his adversary. Yet being

of the Maharana fibre he could not bend before people in power even after 1947 and preferred self exile.

The author rightly observes that "If history is in a way summation of important social, political and economic events occurring over a period, it is also the end product of emotions, attitudes and character of the chief actors on the Scene". Had not Pandit Ji played his emotions in such haste at that initial stage (What he is said to have repented later) the history of Kashmir might have been very different.

The fourth chapter gives an analysis of the start of socialism in India after its independence from the British rule. "Socialism means different things with different persons" the author says and I would add with different countries. It is quite correct as regards India. The author deals at some length with the economic planning in socialist countries, and the bureau-urcracy dispensing it. The observation of the American expert Paul Appleby is worth noting that "Indian Administration suffered from excessive bureaucracy". The author explains it when he says "Two many persons and two many steps on the ladder typify the system which is over laid with a thick lase of rules and regulations. They constitute a veritable forest that has grown over the years. Its growth has been fostered with care so that reform and improvements signify not weeding out of overgrowth, but addition of depth and variety of what is inside the forest". The author explains the consequences of overburdened bureaucracy; "If anything there has been a fall in the old standards and responsibility".

Chapter six gives the details of Bakshi Ghulam Mohd's regime, its ups and downs, as also how despite his sterling qualities of quick decision making, on spot assessment and quick disposals and a sympathetic heart towards all irrespective of religious beliefs, he ended badly because of his having sadly got surrounded by a large number of highly selfish advisors and sycophants. Yet one cannot deny the fact that whatever developments of any sort took place in the State it was all due to his vigorous drive.

He reshaped the cities of Srinagar and Jammu. It was in his regime that the colleges (Engineering, Medical as well as Agriculture) were started. There is so much to his credit. He executed the plans laid by Maharaja Hari Singh Ji what he conveyed to him when he (Bakshi) presented himself before him at Mumbai (then Bombay).

Chapter seven gives an account of the authors visit to USSR and other European Countries in the Company of Dr Karan Singh, the then Governor.

Eighth chapter reveals his joining the development administration of the planning commission at the centre and gives brief details about the quality of administration. The physical targets remained hidden, so to speak, in the blue print of projects and schemes." The chapter is full of very important details of the working of UNO. We heard that the organisation has in right earnest started combing and reducing the superfluous operational staff.

Chapter nine deals with the details about the economic development in Africa, its backwardness in education and trained labour. Here also is a field for a researcher.

About the epilogue.

Decades earlier the book was in manuscript form and it was only due to the providential coincidence that it came to be published during this militancy period in J&K. The feelings of the author

having got very much touched on knowing his home and hearth being undone and his kith and kin being hunted and hounded out from the Valley that he was forced to add an epilogue to the book.

The chapter is an analysis and elaboration of the details about the State given earlier and is quite interesting. The author explain "when the state was on the road to stability and growth" this sudden eruption and upsurge of militancy had after all, a historical background of Sheikh Sahib's sustained ambivalence towards political issues, of three wars and much more" and "divisiveness of politics of central leadership, inter-party and intra-party, vis-a-vis, Kashmir." It is quite commendable when the author says, "the inevitability of opposition to a pluralistic order under pressure of a circumstances and the misguided and over-reaching policies of the party being long in power at the centre is obvious, but we should not lose sight of perspective and the basic bearing on the matter, prominent among them being the concept of humanity".

Thoughtful readers who care very much for quality and substance would relish the book par excellence. Each chapter is pregnant with ideas and information that demand a commentary. The sale proceeds of the book would be utilised for the upliftment of hapless children.

S.C. (Pseudonym)

'NHRC' directive on migrants property

Taking cognisance of a writ petition filed by Kashmir Samiti Delhi, Panun Kashmir and Panun Kashmir Movement, National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has asked Jammu and Kashmir government to prepare a district wise data of properties left behind by Kashmiri Pandits who migrated from Valley due to militancy. The commission urged the state and central governments to suggest names of people for an advisory interaction for effective implementation of the Jammu and Kashmir Migrant Immovable Property Act 1997.

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Will Jammu go the Kashmir way?

(Contd from page 8)

who clearly see them as competing for resources and power.

Panun Kashmir (PK) a Kashmiri Pandit organisation that has been consistently demanding a separate homeland for Kashmiri Pandits, categorically rules out any question of a return of KPs to the Valley. Apart from a separate homeland for KPs in Kashmir, there demands include statehood for Jammu and Union Territory status for Ladakh. This organisation has allied itself with the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra and the BJP at the Centre, contributing to the further communalisation of the dialogue.

"We need to know whether the Indian nation wants us or not? Does the nation think that our survival is paramount for national interests?" asks Dr. Ajay Chhangoo, Vice Chairman and head of the Political Affairs Wing of Panun Kashmir. He has represented the community and PK at many human rights conferences abroad.

But the more marginalised

Pandits and other Hindus living in camps at Nagrota and Muthi in treacherous conditions, however, are quite critical of their own leadership. These ordinary Pandits who are not part of any organisation and do not identify with the more elitist PK feel strongly that leaders belonging to the All Party Hurriyat Conference and the Kashmiri Pandit community residing in the camps should be invited to discuss the issue together if the issue of their return is to be seriously pursued at all.

For them the clear cut stand taken by various sections of the leadership in the valley unequivocally condemning the massacres offers a ray of hope as the visits of both Mohd. Yaseen Malik and Shabir Ahmad Shah to the sights of the carnage (even attending the funerals) in Jammu. The valley even observed an entirely successful hartal to protest the selective killings and prominent Kashmiri nationalist leaders clearly condemned the actions of the militants.

But for PK and Dr.

Chungoo the fact that it took the Indian government about six months that an exodus of Pandits had taken place in 1990 is still a sour point. For him and the PK, their migration is still perceived as part of an engineered campaign. "Similar designs may be afoot in Jammu", he feels.

While speaking to this correspondent, Shailendra Aima, member Working Committee of PK and Editor of Kashmir Sentinel - a fortnightly published by PK Foundation, revealed that representatives of their organization were invited for discussions with the central and state leaders soon after the Wandhama carnage. The PK demand for a separate homeland for KPs within Kashmir was discussed at length and an outcome can be expected soon. He refused to go into the details of the meeting for "it may jeopardise the whole exercise". Aima did say that he hoped that it may bring out some results.

(Courtesy : *Communalism Combat*)

The new target

(Contd from page 8)

oreign mercenaries are a committed lot and "would rather get killed than give up". Statistics reveal that. In Rajouri, as against 35 killed in the first six months this year, only nine were apprehended. In Udhampur, as against 10 killed, only two were arrested, Doda 32 killed and six arrested and in Poonch three killed and two arrested.

Officials point out that the induction of the foreign component was also triggered by an apparent indifference by the local militants towards the mercenaries. "They (local militants) have in fact started helping the security forces as the mercenaries no longer trust them. The mercenaries feel that the locals are vulnerable to local compulsions," claims Khoda.

According to official estimates, out of the 600-odd militants active in the Doda province, more than 250 are foreign mercenaries. In Poonch-Rajouri, out of the 400 active militants, 90 per cent are believed to be foreigners. And 150-odd militants, including foreign mercenaries, are believed to be

operating in Udhampur.

What has alarmed the security agencies is the killings aimed at forcing large scale migration. Counter-insurgency analysts point out that selective killings have taken place in areas which fall in the routes of the militants. "They want these areas to be clear of any civilian population particularly of the community which they don't perceive to be helping the forces. That is why the selective killings are taking place," says an officer, with a central intelligence agency.

The security forces are reworking their strategy to counter the spurt in militant activities. Joint operations by the Army and the STF have been intensified in forest areas and village defence committees set up in Rajouri, Poonch, Doda and Udhampur. "It is a battle now. We have to take the fight to the mercenary camp and prevent their free movement in these areas," says an Army officer.

--Courtesy JK Newline-
Indian Express, July 18.

Welcoming the downtrodden

(Contd from page 7)

meeting of senior officials from all agencies in the U.N. to explore the challenge of mainstreaming human rights throughout the system. Mr. Annan has a very clear understanding of the impact of human rights and has been forthright in expressing it. "Human rights are the expression of those traditions of tolerance in all cultures that are the basis of peace and progress. Human rights, properly understood and justly interpreted, are foreign to no culture and native to all nations. It is the universality of human rights that gives them their strength and endows them with the power to cross any border, climb any wall, defy any force".

As we work jointly towards the attainment and maintenance of all human rights - civil and political, economic, social and cultural and the right to development and as we further coordinate our actions, we can and must create a sense of renewed purpose throughout the United Nations system, inspired and impelled by the principles of the Universal Declaration.

(Mary Robinson is the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights.)

THE BARRIERS ARE GOING UP

(Contd from page 7)

to review states' compliance and makes recommendations on state's performance. States themselves are usually required to report on the implementation of recommendations and some treaties allow individuals to file petitions alleging abuse of their rights.

As well, some treaty bodies have evolved to play an important role in both states' human rights refugee policies. In 1997, the Human Rights Committees recommended that the definition of 'persecution' be broadened to include people fleeing not only from state harassment but also from persecution by non state-actors, and said a country ignored its obligations by detaining a refugee without allowing for a regular review of the detention. Another group, The Committee against Torture, reviewed the situation of many asylum seekers and concluded that several states had threatened to return these people to their home country in violation of the governments' international obligations.

Worryingly, there is no such monitoring procedure in the Refugee Convention. While UNHCR functions as a supervisory body and states are obliged to cooperate with UNHCR and report on imple-

mentation of the Convention, information which is provided is not comprehensively publicly available. UNHCR's ability to publicly report states' performance is severely constrained because it can only operate effectively in countries where governments grant access and it needs the cooperation of major funding states. In some situations, UNHCR has been effectively silenced, caught between uncooperative host states and countries of origin and with no international support. At a time of growing mass movements of people, the lack of effective checks on how governments treat refugees and asylum seekers makes the refugee protection system extremely vulnerable. Governments which want to turn their backs on refugees are not formally challenged or reprimanded. For this reason Amnesty International believes that an effective way to monitor how or whether governments live up to their obligations is crucial. Otherwise, the erosion of refugee protection will continue and men, women and children who need protection will be betrayed

J&K Situation grave

(Contd from page 4)

up guns once again to fight Pak sponsored militancy. The reformed militants of various parties have decided to form Nation's security organisation (NSO) and merge their erstwhile counter insurgent groups in it. The leaders are reportedly in touch with Kuka Parray to persuade him to join them. The membership drive for the organisation has started and it is claimed that 1,836 people have got enrolled so far. Frustrated by apathy of state government coupled with increased attacks on the counter insurgent craders, the leaders have taken this step.

In the latest development, three important counter insurgent leaders Kuka Parrey, Javed Shah and Liaquat met at Hajin and reportedly decided to shun their differences and fight Pak militancy in cohesion.

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Pandit Return

Sponsored delegation spills the Beans

Euphoria generated by initial greetings evaporated soon into thin air. He could not stand the sight of his two houses. One house had totally collapsed and other one was just an erect structure. Its doors and windows had been taken out. When Girdhari Lal entered his home village 'Peeth Kanihama' in Budgam district there was an apparent commotion in the entire village. 'Gira Maam Choo Aamut - Girdhari Mama has come'. He was hugged by his Muslim neighbours. Encouraged by the response he rushed to see his abandoned home. View of the destroyed property conveyed the message and he broke down.

This government sponsored delegation of All Kashmir Migrant Association which visited certain areas of Budgam, Pulwama and Anantnag districts had similar experiences everywhere. Villagers greeted them but were totally indifferent to the issue of Pandit return. "Security can only be guaranteed by God. When we ourselves are not safe how can we ensure your safety", was the common answer wherever the visiting Pandits broached the issue of safety in case of their return with the Muslims of their native villages.

A prominent Pandit writer who visited his home village of Matan recently to attend the last rites of his relative had a similar

opinion. "They are totally indifferent to the issue of our return. Quite often you get a feeling as if we never existed for them, he said.

Village Vassura in Pulwama is the home village of Sh. Som Nath Koul who was one of the members of the visiting Pandit delegation. He saw a big 'Latrine' constructed at the site of house which had earlier been burnt down. Entire landed property around the house had been encroached upon by his immediate neighbour.

Other abandoned Pandit houses in the village had a similar fate. All their lands had been occupied by their Muslim neighbours. After initial welcome, the prominent Muslim villager posed a direct question, "why have you brought police with you?" Message in the very question was very clear to Soom Nath and he was terror stricken in spite of two armed security guards with them. He answered meekly "We wanted to come alone but government does not allow us without security guards". He could not muster courage to ask his neighbours as to how he had occupied his land.

The visit was arranged by the ruling National Conference. Sh. M.L. Bhat member legislative Council had reportedly arranged a meeting of representatives of All Kashmiri Migrant Association a newly created outfit, with the

Chief Minister Dr. Farooq Abdullah subsequently in a detailed meeting with the Relief Commissioner this visit was cleared by the government. The entire transport, lodging and boarding arrangements were made by the administration. It was in stark contrast to total non-cooperation by the government when a prominent all party delegation of Panun Kashmir, ASKPC and Kashmiri Pandit Sabha Jammu chose to visit Kashmir subsequent to Sangrampora massacre.

As per reliable sources, National Conference, after failing to bring round any credible Pandit organisation to its point of view, has embarked upon creating shadowy Pandit groups, who are being encouraged to articulate and legitimise NC-line on the issue of return. The visit of All Kashmir Migrant Association of Shiv Nagar appears also to be a part of the same process. Sh. B.L.Bhat, MLC of ruling party is making special efforts to ensure the success of the strategy. Sh. Bhat is reportedly seeking a re-nomination by ruling National Conference as his term in the Legislative Council is to expire very soon.

Any hope of the members of this delegation, of seeing some basic improvement in ground conditions died within few days of their visit. Interestingly instead of discussing the issue of return to Kashmir Valley with the

Divisional Commissioner Kashmir and the Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation, the Pandit delegation reportedly asked them to recommend provision of quarters or rent allowance for the non-camp displaced persons in Jammu.

Seeing the situation first hand in Kashmir, the members of the delegation refused to oblige Sh. B.L.Bhat who was insisting them to address a press Conference and declare that situation in Kashmir was conducive for return.

"RETURN IS ONLY POSSIBLE IN OUR HOME LAND"

Excerpts of interview with Soom Nath Koul who was one of the members of the visiting Pandit delegation to Kashmir.



Q. Why did you choose to visit Kashmir at this time?

A. I wanted to personally ascertain the claim of the government about normalcy in Kashmir.

Q. The press reports about your visit claimed that you were given a very warm welcome by Muslims in the Valley. Is it true?

A. They greeted us. But all these greetings were superficial.

Q. Why do you say so?

A. At many places I asked locals whether they can guarantee our safety. They bluntly refused and told us that when they are not safe how can they ensure our safety.

Q. What is your assessment of situation in Valley?

A. Our houses have been destroyed, burnt or occupied. Almost entire landed property of Pandits has been encroached and illegally occupied. We were only allowed to visit those places which the local DC, AC or Tehsildar choose. There were standing instructions from AC not to use the same route twice and we were not allowed to visit many villages.

Q. Can you give some examples?

A. I wanted to go to Chakura. I was not allowed. We were also not allowed to visit Salina, Akenia, and Wachi villages. The places we were told are under the control of Afghan mercenaries.

Q. Did you meet Pandits living there?

A. They are afraid to talk to any outsider. They do not want to become suspicious in the eyes of locals.

Q. Did Ruling party cadres meet you.

A. There are no cadres. People are hostile to National Conference. I over heard locals pointing out to NC - MLC accompanying us that he was a thief. Locals told us that ruling party was practising rampant corruption. Rs. 50,000 are being accepted as a bribe for recruitment in Police. When I pointed out that it is they who voted NC to power, they swore by Allah and told that not more than a few votes were cast in their villages during the elections.

Q. What is your final assessment after this visit.

A. Our return is only possible if we are given our own Home Land.

Shiv Sena leader arrested for cheating Amarnath Yatris

Sentinel Correspondent
JAMMU July 30 - Shiv Sena general secretary and an advisor on self-styled management of Jagriti Niketan School, Ashok Gupta was arrested by the city police and after registering a case under Section 420 of RPC was bailed out.

The police sources said that several police parties started a manhunt for the offender who has duped several Taxi operators and Amarnath pilgrims for making money. This is second time, in last three years that cases of this nature have been registered against Ashok Gupta.

In 1996, Ashok Gupta allegedly had started parallel booking of Amarnath Yatris and cheated them of thousands of Rupees. Some citizens also allege that this self-styled leader of Jammu has been blackmailing and cheating the pilgrims as well as several citizens and had turned this cheating into a profession.

Some sources also disclosed that in the ransacking of Jagriti Balwadi Sangam premises, the goons had been supplied by Ashok Gupta who has entered the self-styled management of Jagriti Niketan un-

der a plan to grab the same.

The Taxi Union members today lodged an FIR No.123/98 under section 420 RPC against Ashok Gupta. It was alleged that Ashok Gupta was illegally operating an office in Parade Ground and was charging Rs. 3000 from Yatris and providing Tata Sumo Taxis to them after cheating Rs. 500 for each Taxi. He was also issuing fake registration slips to the Yatris by charging huge money.

However, Sh Gupta denied that he had been arrested through a press release to a local paper.

Goons ransack school, traffic disrupted

KS News Service

JAMMU July 30 - Some hired goons allegedly ransacked the Jagriti Balwadi Sangam premises in Kachi Chhawani area and caused loss to furniture while the students disrupted movement of the traffic on the road as protest today.

Reports said some goons entered the premises of the school and broke open the locks. They ransacked the furniture and roughed up the

chowkidar. The matter was immediately reported to Pacca Danga police which has yet to take an action against the accused.

It was alleged in the report that this unlawful action was planned by self-styled management of Jagriti Niketan to capture the building. The involvement of some local political vested interests and land grabbers is also being pointed out.

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