

BELGIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SOLIDARITY WITH JAMMU AND KASHMIR (BASJAK)

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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
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JAMMU AND KASHMIR: DE-MILITANT-ISATION FIRST

REPORT ON THE STUDY TOUR OF BEERSMANS PAUL, PRESIDENT OF THE "BELGIAN ASSOCIATION FOR SOLIDARITY WITH JAMMU AND KASHMIR" TO INDIA AND THE INDIAN STATE OF J&K FROM 24 JANUARY TO 16 FEBRUARY 2007

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Note: Reports on previous study tours to India and the Indian State of J&K and to Pakistan and Azad Kashmir are available on our website. Visit also our photo gallery with unique photographs.

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Subject: Report on the study tour of Beersmans Paul, President of the "Belgian Association for Solidarity with Jammu and Kashmir" to India and the Indian State of J&K, 24 January to 16 February 2007

1. INTRODUCTION

- a. I spent a lot of time on meeting "the common man in the street", the "normal Kashmiri", in Jammu city, in Jammu region, in Kathua, Samba, Udhampur and Reasi districts including in Katra, in order to learn more about his feelings and his perception of the latest evolution. I also had the opportunity to meet important persons from J&K State Government and administration, from political parties, from dissident/separatist leaders, from different organisations, from social-educational institutions, from the press, etc.
- b. I did not visit the Kashmir-Valley or Ladakh. These regions will be visited in June/July 2007. I succeeded in having interviews, by telephone, with important dissident/separatist leaders residing in the Valley.
- c. The overall situation in the visited places gave me the impression to be normal. No limitations or restrictions on movement, no abnormal security measures. I was able to visit all places I wanted to visit. Shops open early in the morning and close late in the evening, busy traffic, children going to school, men and women, young and old, doing their business, their shopping, their social meetings and having a chat, conducting their day to day activities. Spring is the season of marriages: all over one could see so many marriage ceremonies going on.
- d. The railway link between Jammu and Udhampur is a success story: so many people are using this train and this brings relief for the transportation by road. The construction of the railway link with Katra is in full progress. Once ready, this will bring even more relief as then people can take this means of transportation (in 2006, there were six million worshippers, going to the shrine of Vaishnodeviji in Katra). Also the railway link between Katra and Reasi is progressing according to the schedule.
- e. Infrastructure is being improved: new bridges, new roads, existing roads are being repaired and enlarged, new official buildings, hospitals and schools, historical monuments being restored or under renovation, fountains brighten up parks and busy crossings, nice houses and shopping centres are being built, hotels are doing good business as many pilgrims are passing through Jammu on their way to the shrine in Katra and to other religious places in J&K State. Jammu is a fast expanding city.
- f. You find the "highlights" of each meeting and of each interview by telephone in Paragraph 2. In Paragraph 3 you will find the conclusions of our Association.
- g. Finally I want to thank all my friends of the Belgian Association for Solidarity with J&K for their moral support and the practical help they are giving me. I want to thank also all my friends in J&K State who received me, as usual, with open arms. It was nice to be again among them.
- h. Used abbreviations:
 - APHC: All Parties Hurriyat Conference split in two groups. A moderate group under Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, a hard-line group under Syed Ali Shah Geelani.
 - BJP: Bhartiya Janata Party, the largest opposition party in India.
 - ISI: Inter Services Intelligence. Most powerful and omnipresent military intelligence agency in Pakistan.
 - LoC: Line of Control. The line dividing J&K between India and Pakistan.
 - MLA: Member Legislative Assembly in J&K State.
 - NC: National Conference. The largest opposition party in J&K State headed by Omar Abdullah.
 - PDP: People's Democratic Party. A coalition partner in J&K State headed by Mehbooba Mufti.
 - POK: Pakistan Occupied Kashmir also called Pakistan Administrated Kashmir and Azad Kashmir.

2. HIGHLIGHTS OF MEETINGS AND VISITS

a. MEETING WITH THE COMMON MAN IN THE STREET IN JAMMU, UDHAMPUR, KATRA, REASI, SAMBA, AND KATHUA

As usual I spent as much time as possible with the common people in the street in order to learn more about their perception of the situation. I spoke to shopkeepers, taxi drivers, people in the bazaar, waiters, etc. All of them were very eager to speak to me. They are happy that someone takes interest in their fate especially those living in the forgotten corners of J&K State. Here is what I learned:

- the cease-fire along the LoC since November 2003, the reduction of tensions between India and Pakistan, the sustained dialogue between both countries, the opening of more crossing points along the LoC generate giving a lot of hope among the Kashmiris. The Kashmiris are happy with the people to people contact. They really hope the process of negotiations will continue until a peaceful solution is found. So many proposals are floated from so many corners. This makes it difficult to know what the solution will be but this doesn't seem to be that important: let peace prevail and a solution will emerge automatically;
- APHC is divided between the hard-liners, under Syed Ali Shah Geelani, who is defending the right of self-determination and the moderate leaders, under Mirwaiz Umar Farooq, who are prepared to accept other solutions. People stressed the fact that none of the APHC factions represent the people of Jammu region;
- the feelings about the performance of the State Government are divided: unemployment is a huge problem. They support the anti-corruption policy of Ghulam Nabi Azad but it is felt that not much progress has been made as yet in this regard;
- the majority of the people wants to return to "pre-militant" situation; in Jammu region many of them want to stay with India (our links are with India). This was again and again repeated while having contacts with the population in the different places I visited;
- as mentioned in previous reports, people are against the human rights violations committed by the security forces, especially custodial killings and fake encounters. They appreciate the action taken by the Government against these violations. It is a sign of seriousness and transparency;
- people again confirmed to be fed up with the gun; they are against the interference of Pakistan; they are against militancy and the interference of the foreign terrorists; they want a negotiated settlement; they do not want fundamentalism or communalism; they want the Pandits to return to their homes; they condemn strongly the killings of innocent people. The militants (or separatists, or dissidents, or extremists, or terrorists, or mujahideen, or fedayeen, or freedom fighters, or misguided youth, or jihadis, or bandits, or mercenaries, or foreign mercenaries, or nationalists, or whatever name is given to those who are using the gun) should stop the use of violence. They cannot impose their will by the gun;
- so many political leaders have been killed by the militants. This indicates that they want to destroy the political leadership and sabotage and disrupt the democratic process;
- the population in the remote rural areas and in the upper reaches along the LoC is suffering the most from this proxy-war instigated from across the border. Since so long they ask the international community to come and help them in finding a way out;
- private industries should come to J&K State. They can create a lot of jobs. As the situation is turning into normal they hope this will be favourable to attract investors.

b. MEETING WITH MR. S.D. ROHMETRA, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF 'DAILY EXCELSIOR', IN JAMMU

The Government of J&K State is sincere in tackling human rights violations. For the first time a senior police officer has been arrested. This is certainly a sign of sincerity. Custodial killings, fake encounters have taken place and now the culprits are brought to book. But when you condemn the security forces for human rights violations you should also condemn human rights violations committed by the militants: they are killing, raping, oppressing the population, especially in the remote villages with impunity. Nobody dares to protest against their activities. In fact, this is one way traffic: only the security forces are brought to book whereas the militants go free and can do whatever they want. Ghulam Nabi Azad means business when he says he will eradicate corruption in the administration and among the politicians. He passed a new anti-corruption bill: he is not giving false hopes, not using slogans

On 5 February 2007, Kashmir solidarity-day was celebrated in Pakistan. That same day the National Assembly of Pakistan passed a resolution on Kashmir. They reiterated to continue diplomatic, political and moral support to the people of Kashmir for the implementation of the UN-resolutions, including the right of self-determination. Whom are they befooling? What are they talking about? In my opinion the Indian parliament must react and confirm and repeat Kashmir is an integral part of India. It is not easy to solve

problems but the basic point is sincerity. All proposals and declarations of Musharraf and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq must be translated in a change of policy. But this is not happening: training camps are still there, violence is going on, militants' supreme commander Salahuddin, who controls militancy in the Valley, is in Muzaffarabad and giving statements he doesn't agree with the present ongoing peace process.

How can our leaders be so blind? They don't say anything against Musharraf, at the contrary they are praising him and even saying India should be as flexible as Musharraf is. The tragedy however is that Pakistan or Musharraf is not flexible at all. Notwithstanding all declarations and proposals, Pakistan sticks to its unchanged policy and ISI is omnipresent with a good number of agents.

Regarding militancy all depends on Pakistan, ISI and Musharraf. They are the masters. If Pakistan wants, militancy can stop easily. A few years back, in the first joint statement of Musharraf and the then Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee, the former confirmed that Pakistan's territory would not be used for terrorist activities. Later on he declared that POK is not Pakistani territory which means that in that part terrorists can do whatever they want. Musharraf doesn't have any scruples, he is a military dictator whereas India is a responsible state with a vibrant democracy.

c. MEETING WITH MR. VED BHASIN, CHAIRMAN KASHMIR TIMES GROUP OF PUBLICATIONS 'KASHMIR TIMES', IN JAMMU

The ground situation has not improved much. Infiltration continues although India pretends the contrary. Human Rights violations have not come down. Killings could have perhaps slightly come down but fear, insecurity, uncertainty remain. Priority must be given to stop violence: in this climate nothing can come out.

The general impression regarding Ghulam Nabi Azad is that governance is not better. The Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) are there to serve their own interest: they ask more personal security officers, bullet free cars, residential houses, plots for construction, etc. The so-called anti-corruption campaign is only rhetoric. There is no transparency and accountability regarding postings, employment, transfers, etc. As long as this is not streamlined it will maintain a corrupt system where politicians and bureaucrats earn huge amounts. After 15 month in power, Ghulam Nabi Azad didn't succeed in making the Accountability Commission function properly. It is a given fact that according to the survey from a neutral observer J&K State is the second most corrupt state of India (after Bihar).

Ghulam Nabi Azad proposes to increase the number of MLA's with 28. For this he needs a 2/3 majority and it is not clear where he will get this as NC didn't decide yet on its position. It is not clear why this proposal comes at this junction. In stead of increasing the number of MLA's at the State level he should have increased the regional bodies in order to empower them and to dilute the power of the State Government.

The peace process is going on and the relations between India and Pakistan are improving. There is no deadlock, the process continues although very slow. The Kashmir related process is not moving at all. Efforts to involve separatist leaders are not that successful because it is selective and half-hearted from the side of Delhi. More important is how we move forward. Space must be provided for the involvement of Kashmiris on both sides. Let them discuss among themselves. If they can't work out a solution, nobody can. During the recent visit of representatives of the moderate APHC faction headed by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq to Azad Kashmir (they returned on 28 January 2007) he proposed to set up two cross LoC working groups. In Azad Kashmir the leaders seem to be not very keen. In their opinion the proposal is too vague: it is not clear what the purpose is, what is the mission, how will be the composition, etc.

d. MEETING WITH PANDIT MANGAT RAM SHARMA, MINISTER OF HEALTH AND MEDICAL EDUCATION J&K STATE GOVERNMENT (CONGRESS PARTY), FORMER VICE CHIEF MINISTER, IN JAMMU

More than 300.000 educated youth are unemployed in the State and this is a huge problem. But this is not a problem for J&K particularly. Also in other IND states there is unemployment and even all over the world many countries face the problem of unemployment. I fully understand that people are really dissatisfied with this situation. They made a lot of sacrifices to give a good education to their children and once they finished their studies they don't find a proper job: that is frustrating.

Creating jobs is a first priority for the Government. So many schemes are on the way in the sport sector, in agriculture, in rural health development, in village development, etc. Jobs have been given in thousands, but this is not sufficient and we have to continue our effort. It is also clear that we can't give a government job to everyone or in the army or with police. We have already an overrated and very heavy bureaucracy. Therefore, we are promoting self employment through schemes and giving cheap loans for the young starters. Also industrial development can bring about a lot of jobs but therefore peace and stability have to be there to attract investors.

We are a coalition Government. PDP is a regional party mainly having a basis in the Valley so it is clear that they are Valley centric. Congress Party is a so called national party and so we have a different approach in politics. This is a normal situation and I am confident that we will be able to continue with this Government until next elections which are due in autumn 2008.

The peace process is going on, the direction is all right, we are on the right path. Unfortunate violence is still there and so many innocent people become the victim. Some irresponsible members of the security forces committed human rights violations for personal reasons (to receive a medal, for promotion, revenge, etc.), but we are taking strong action against those who indulge in such activities.

e. MEETING WITH MR. BALRAJ PURI, HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND DIRECTOR INSTITUTE OF J&K AFFAIRS, IN JAMMU

In J&K State, the system of governance is too much centralised. There are no panchayats (a council of elected village elders) up to the village level like in the other Indian states. On the other hand the democratic system is working better now as there is a strong opposition. Local issues of governance are more and more becoming an issue of debate. Also human rights violations have become a part of the debate among the mainstream politics.

It has been decided to create eight new districts. Many practical and important details have to be worked out (delimitation, infrastructure, equipment, recruitment, etc.) but in general this decision has been welcomed by the Kashmiris as for many of them it will facilitate a lot of things regarding administrative aspects.

The peace process has not broken down, it continuous, there is no deadlock. Negotiations continue despite up & downs. Lately Musharraf proposed a four point program towards a solution: five regions; self-rule; demilitarisation, and joint management.

Regarding the five regions, this comes closer to a solution acceptable for India. Before, he proposed seven regions, dividing Kashmir along communal, religious lines. This was unacceptable for India. Now, he proposes five regions, confirming the actual situation: three on the Indian side (Jammu, the Valley and Ladakh). Two on the Pakistani side (Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, or Northern Areas, if you wish).

Regarding self-rule nobody can have any objections if this means a clean democratic rule. In this regard Pakistan should start in replacing the military dictatorship by a democratically elected government.

Regarding demilitarisation, this should be preceded by ending terrorism and use of violence. Take out the threat against moderate separatist leaders and stop terrorism. Only then demilitarisation can be considered.

Regarding joint management it is too early to implement this as there are too much national compulsions. In a later stage this can be considered. What is possible now is a kind of separate advisory committee dealing with practical aspects like the distribution of river water, ecology, tourism, etc.

Within J&K State, federalism is taking momentum again. Regional autonomy is gaining some shape, the installation of the Autonomous Hill Council for Kargil being the latest initiative. This certainly reduces internal tensions and proves that the state Government and the Centre are really interested in bringing about a change. Like in Europe, borders should be made irrelevant.

There is disillusionment among the militants. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq disowned violence clearly and openly during his latest Pakistan trip (January 2007). People want violence to end and this is openly discussed and debated. This creates a state of confusion among the militants. They are still there but the popular response has decreased, and that is very important. A general debate is there regarding the methods to use: solve with the gun or through debate and peaceful means (like hunger strike, peaceful demonstration, etc.).

f. MEETING WITH PROF. DR. NIRMAL SINGH, PROFESSOR OF HISTORY, UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU, FORMER STATE PRESIDENT BJP – J&K STATE AND MEMBER EXECUTIVE BJP, IN JAMMU

Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and Musharraf are not honest regarding their claim of ending the use of violence. These terrorist camps can't be run without the active connivance of ISI, the Pakistani army and jihadi groups. To say that Pakistan is against terrorism is only to befool the world community. They are using terrorism to increase their bargaining power. There is a decrease in terrorist violence because there is pressure from the security forces and they are also losing local support. To say that Pakistan is also a victim of terrorism is only to befool the people and it is not digested by anybody.

The Government of Ghulam Nabi Azad couldn't make any impact on the situation. The situation is not under his control: no cohesion among the coalition partners. He became Chief Minister because he is from Jammu but till now he has done anything regarding lessening the disparities with Jammu and Ladakh. We feel discriminated. The regional discrimination must be ended and the people of Jammu and Ladakh be given just and equal share in the political system.

He promised to end corruption but the chairman of the accountability commission was made to resign and now the commission has become irrelevant. He promised a better work culture, employment, development: nothing of all this is visible. Prices are rising very high and it is becoming very difficult for the common masses to live with this.

Busses are running and people from each side are going and coming but regarding trade relations nothing has been established as yet. Important road links like Jammu-Sialkot and Skardu-Kargil are not open yet.

Hardly anybody talks about the situation in POK and Gilgit-Baltistan (or Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas as Pakistan calls these parts of J&K respectively). Whenever we mention these issues to representatives of Pakistan we meet in track II diplomacy they become very uneasy because they don't want to discuss them.

J&K is an integral part of India, legally and constituently. It became an integral part of India under the similar act which also provided for the creation of Pakistan. If Pakistan is a reality today it is also a reality that J&K is an integral part of India. POK and the Northern Areas are illegally occupied by Pakistan, that is the dispute between India and Pakistan.

Slogans of self-rule, autonomy or joint management are not acceptable to the people of Jammu, Ladakh and to a substantial number of people in the Valley. They want full integration within India by abrogating article 370 which provides a special status to J&K State. The Centre must take BJP as largest opposition party into confidence.

g. MEETING WITH MR. TAHIR NASEEM MANHAS, POLITICAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST AND CHAIRMAN SOUTH ASIAN PEOPLE'S DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION (SAPDO), IN JAMMU

Ghulam Nabi Azad has taken big steps in the developmental field. Since the last 50 years he is the first Chief Minister who got a lot of funds from the Centre for the development of J&K State. He has been developing roads, bridges, airports (even Surankote will have an airport), educational institutions, power sector, etc. These are all personal merits of Ghulam Nabi Azad. He is serious and sincere and this is good for J&K State.

The overall performance of the Government is as usual, like previous Governments. Corruption is still there. It is in the blood of politicians, security forces, bureaucrats.

In some issues Members of the Legislative Assembly are forming fronts along communal lines. This is not a good sign for the unity, the future and peace in J&K. Regarding custodial killings and fake encounters, where so many innocent people became victim, committed by some black sheep among the security forces I am of the opinion they should be treated as bandits and be punished properly. If this doesn't happen it will create new problems on the way towards a solution for the Kashmir-issue.

The peace process is a good sign. Most of the people support the peace process and want to live and give a bright future for their children. I am not giving much attention to the declarations and proposals floated by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and by Musharraf as they are coming up every three/four months with new, different proposals. At the end it is difficult to make out where they are heading exactly. I doubt they are sincere and they are promoting the peace process without disclosing their hidden agenda. When there is no transparency and sincerity, the peace process will lead to nowhere. Militancy has been reduced considerably but I think that it will flare up again if the peace process fails. So, it is better to strengthen the relations between India and Pakistan and include the Kashmiris in the negotiations.

People to people contact for the common people doesn't exist properly. The procedure to visit the other side of the LoC is too heavy, complicated and time consuming. This should be simplified and made expedient so that the common people can meet their relatives across the LoC without going through a heavy administrative procedure. For social reasons (marriage, funeral, birth, etc.) a 'special permit' should be issued on an appropriate speedy procedure. The frequency of the busses should be increased, why not every day instead of every two weeks like it is now. These measures, if implemented, will certainly give more confidence to the Kashmiris and build bridges between the two sides.

h. MEETING WITH MR. ASLAM PERVEZ KHAN, CHAIRMAN J&K JOINT FRONT, IN JAMMU

Militancy is decreasing and this became very visible since last year. A few elements remain but the overall situation improved drastically. This is due to steps taken by the Pakistani Government to curb militancy

Under this State Government, development is there but on the other hand human rights violations are on the rise. Moreover, the people of J&K State are not demanding the financial packages from Delhi. They demand a durable and time bound resolution of the dispute as per their wishes. It is the duty of the Government of India and Pakistan to find out what these wishes are. There should be a joint mechanism to find out a process in which the people's wish can be identified.

We are passing through a very confusing stage. Every party and every person is projecting own roadmaps in order to resolve the Kashmir-issue. Regarding the most discussed formula like self-rule, joint management, soft borders, etc. people till date have failed to understand what it is all about, what is the basic concept.

In my opinion, in last 20 years the people who launched agitation never raised the slogan of self-rule. Then, how can it be assumed that self-rule can resolve the Kashmir-issue? Moreover, there is no consensus on the

issue of self-rule. There are some forty to fifty political parties, all with different views, no consensus at all. The problem remains there. In order to find a solution people should be given the possibility to express their wishes. The wish of the people is supreme

i. MEETING WITH ASHWANI K. CHRUNGGOO, PRESIDENT PANUN KASHMIR MOVEMENT, IN JAMMU

What seemed to the Kashmir Pandits a positive turn, when Ghulam Nabi Azad became Chief Minister, this has not come to any kind of reality. All assurances and promises are on paper only. Sanitary situation, health care and human rights situation in the camps are gruesome. There is no progress so far as far as the construction of 2-rooms housing is concerned. Thousands of young people have been employed in the State administration but Kashmir Pandit youth has not been given employment. Unemployment is a major issue within our community and the Government of India and the State Government are unconcerned on this major problem. This further compels our youth to leave the State and to settle elsewhere in India or abroad. Our minority population in J&K will automatically come down. To conclude: in my opinion Kashmir Pandits feel satisfied in the sense that what they said over the last twenty years has been vindicated and is being recognised as the challenge of the day, by name Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism.

Over the last two years violence has not come down neither we see some perceptible change in the existence of terror structure. There are simultaneous reports confirming the terrorist structure is coming closer to the international border and the LoC. Whether it is a compulsion of the organisers of terrorist structure in Pakistan or POK or it is a strategic move that is not clear. What Pakistan has been saying publicly regarding terrorism isn't translated into action. Terror groups are using Pakistan's and POK's territory, there is no change in that situation.

The overall Kashmir scenario speaks of a dialogue process at various levels. Though they are calling it a peace process we don't recognise this as such but there is definitely a dialogue process going on. The involvement of APHC in the dialogue process is the outcome of their own compulsions but they didn't change their basic ideological contours. No change in their thinking regarding accession to India, regarding the ethnic/religious cleansing in the Valley. It is only a tactical arrangement in order to make them suitable for changes taking place on the national and international level.

Our contention is that the Government of India has shown very little interests beyond this dialogue process and over the last two years there is no major gain that could change the overall situation. One thing has come to the fore: that is the recognition of a thinking that J&K State doesn't belong to a particular community or a particular political group. There are various indigenous population and religious/ethnic groups who have their rightful claim on the territory of J&K State and as such the factual position of the Kashmir Pandits in exile has also been recognised. In this new situation Kashmir Pandits feel that the Government of India should formally create a separate working group which will discuss and debate the issues concerning minorities of Kashmir taking into account the issues like permanent resettlement of exiled minorities in Kashmir.

We, as an organisation, have an agenda for 2007 to observe this year as an agitational year: we shall be organising events on the regional, national and international level to bring our issues to further limelight.

j. MEETING WITH DR. AJAY CHRUNGGOO, CHAIRMAN PANUN KASHMIR, IN JAMMU

When Ghulam Nabi Azad took over from Mufti Sayeed we thought there would be a tremendous change: anti-terrorism, anti-corruption, development measure, etc. were expected. By passing time he appeared to become more and more indecisive. He has not been able to do anything substantive with regard to the Kashmir Pandits. He gradually seems to be toying the line which is close to the Muslim communal approach in the State.

If any of the solutions which the regional political parties of the Valley or APHC or even Pakistan are proposing are accepted it will undermine the unity and integrity of India. While the whole democratic world is trying to improve the democratic set-up in the Muslim countries, India has provided democratic dispensation for the second large Muslim population of the world. Any solution to the Kashmir-issue has to bear in mind it should not undermine this successful democratic experiment in this fast developing country.

The ideological basis of the separatist movement in the Valley has to be taken due note off. The failure of the Indian Government in J&K State is that they devised over the years a policy framework which sought to circumvent the issue of Muslim communalism. In this State the Government of India has never tried to contest Muslim communalism. As long as Kashmir politics are communalised it will never be at peace with India. Unless and until we expose the ideology underlying separatism in the Valley we will not be able to create space for modern and forward looking politics.

Reversal of genocide of Kashmir Pandits should become an integral part to any peace process which the Government of India evolves for the State. As a first step they should start a debate on creating a Union Territory for the resettlement of the Kashmir Pandits in the Valley. If India is of the opinion that secularism means compromising gradually with Muslim communalism, then India's secularism will die its death.

The latest, Pakistan has started categorically taking a stand where it is advocating solutions in tune with what NC has been saying. This gives Pakistan leverage in the local situation and at the same time radical jihadi groups are kept alive as pressure groups. The first expression of militancy in the Valley was the expulsion of the Kashmir Pandits from the Valley. Militancy is still there and there is no possibility for our community to return to our ancestral areas.

k. MEETING WITH MR. AHMED ALI FAYYAZ, SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT AND 'DAILY EXCELSIOR' CHIEF OF BUREAU IN SRINAGAR, IN JAMMU

In connection with the peace process, certain sections of the Government of India and as a consequence also of the Government of J&K State do maintain, do sustain, a certain level of violence and political uncertainty because of: individual vested interests, institutional vested interests and national vested interests.

As individual vested interests there are certain individuals among the police, the politicians, the security forces, the media, the administration, etc. who are beneficiary of the continuation of violence. Why should these individuals allow peace to come? The sufferers, the victims of all this are those who belong to the silent, overwhelming majority. Less than 5% of the people in the Valley are in favour of the use of violence. On the other hand this does not exclude that, regarding a solution, this is an indication in favour of India as it could be that some 50% of the Kashmiris in the Valley want azadi (read: independence) from India (this confirms the estimation made by our Association some years back: see annex).

As institutional vested interests it is clear that as long as the gun and grenades are there, money from Delhi, in huge amounts, continues to flow to institutions like police, intelligence agencies, security forces, political parties, etc. This situation brings manifold benefits for the members of these institutions. This is based on political uncertainties and the continuation of violence on a more or less acceptable level. When there will be a solution, all this will stop.

On the national level, from the point of view of India, Pakistan should remain engaged in Kashmir, should remain trapped with the Kashmir problem as this gives them the mark of identification that all violence is coming from Pakistan. As a result, Pakistan is isolated diplomatically and on the defence. In addition, this hampers the economic growth and a democratic development doesn't take roots in that country. India wants to keep Pakistan in a situation where it cannot come out. All this is by design, a diabolical game plan. Unless there is a radical change in the policy of New Delhi, where peace and development and Kashmir's physical and psychological integration with the rest of the country are paramount there can't be progress. New Delhi must also stop this culture of cultivating and encouraging paid agents in Srinagar and Jammu. Delhi must actually encourage legitimate and democratic political forces, intellectuals, institutions and leaders to grow and dominate the maximum of space.

l. MEETING WITH PROF. ZAHUR-UD-DIN, ACADEMIC ADVISOR TO THE VICE CHANCELLOR OF THE UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU, PRESIDENT FORUM OF REGIONAL VOICES OF J&K AND FORMER DIRECTOR CENTRE FOR PROFESSIONAL STUDIES IN URDU, UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU, IN JAMMU

There is a total collapse of the State Government and the people are disgruntled with them. The promises they made at the time of elections have not been fulfilled, the economic situation of the people is worsening and a total collapse of law and order and the social system is there due to increasing corruption. All the progress that can be seen is due to the projects initiated and funded by the Government of India. The State Government and the bureaucrats are eating the fabric of the entire society. If there would be elections now PDP and Congress will be thrown out. Notwithstanding the serious tensions within the coalition Government it is likely they will try to stay in power until next elections, due in 2008, knowing very well that they will not get another chance.

The healthiest development is that Mirwaiz Umar Farooq not only met Musharraf and politicians in Pakistan but also politicians and people in Pakistan Administered Kashmir. People of both sides are being consulted although not directly but through APHC. The ideas floated by various corners from time to time are now being discussed with the people who eventually have to take the decisions. All this can lead to a transitional solution of the Kashmir-issue. The final solution can be expected only when the people of India and Pakistan and both sides of Kashmir are ready to change the existent situation. Everyone knows this is a very complex issue and it is not easy at all to resolve it unilaterally by any party.

There is a reduction in militancy because of the dialogue that has started with APHC. If nothing tangible comes out, the situation will worsen because in that case militants will pick up their activities again. So, it is of the highest importance that the peace process succeeds and that all of us help the parties involved to resolve the issue, be it for a transitional solution.

m. MEETING WITH MR. ZAFAR IQBAL KHAN, ALIAS 'MANHAZ', CHAIRMAN J&K PAHARI WELFARE SOCIETY, JOURNALIST, COLUMNIST AND POLITICAL ANALYST, MEMBER OF THE WORKING GROUP ON STATE-CENTRE RELATIONS, DEMOCRACY AND RULE OF LAW, IN JAMMU

The Government of J&K State is running like it was. Ghulam Nabi Azad is trying to deliver but it is an uphill task. He is trying his best but it is a coalition Government Congress and PDP. Despite this coalition these parties have to follow to a certain extent their own agenda for political survival. This leads to practical difficulties in running the Government. That is the basic problem and even sometimes senior leaders of both parties criticise each other openly. That creates a strange situation and the whole coalition arrangement appears to be a butt of ridicule, a laughing point. As far as development is concerned the Government is doing its bit in respect of development, but there is a long way to travel.

There has been a lot of movement in relation to the peace process the past last two years of which one would have not thought off three years back, like for example the cross LoC movement of civilians on various crossing points. But when it comes to the discussing of the main issue there is a lot of confusion and the dust seems yet to be settled. However one can't deny the fact that something is cooking behind the scene and some exercise is going on between India and Pakistan.

On the other hand, it seems to be very, very clear that the Kashmiri leadership, mainstream and separatists on both sides of the LoC, stands reduced to the role of just a facilitator and they are at the mercy of Delhi and Islamabad. The general perception in peoples' mind is that the leaders are the hostage of the situation and are acting at the behest of the two mighty powers. Even today the leadership on both sides of the LoC is a total divided house within. No consensus whatsoever appears emerging on the Kashmir-issue as far as the indigenous leadership is concerned. There is a visible, perceptible decline in violence. Decline in militant activities, not only due to the winter conditions. There is an overall change in militant activities.

The different Working Groups are meeting on a regular basis. They are studying all aspects of the situation and they are expected to come forward in the near future with some proposals on their respective subjects

n. MEETING WITH PROF. DR. HARI OM, FORMER DEAN FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU, FORMER MEMBER INDIAN COUNCIL OF HISTORICAL RESEARCH, NEW DELHI, POLITICAL COLUMNIST AND J&K STATE BJP VICE PRESIDENT AND SPOKESMAN, IN JAMMU

Militancy in J&K State is under total control, notwithstanding some stray incidents here and there, such as are taking place everywhere. In fact, the situation in other parts of India is worse affected. But, the media, trouble-shooters and politicians have more interest in focusing on J&K State because for them this has become a money minting industry. Jammu, Ladakh and most parts of the Valley are peaceful. Incidents take place in down-town Srinagar and a few adjoining areas.

We were expecting that Ghulam Nabi Azad, who worked in Delhi for many years, would give a new orientation, a new culture to the administration, provide a State-centric policy as opposed to the Valley-centric policy and a corrupt free administration. But he has miserably failed. Corruption is deep rooted, there is virtually no administration. The coalition he is heading is nothing more than a ragtag coalition, no coordination at all. The cabinet is virtually divided in two main groups: one fundamentally Valley-centric working for delusion of Indian sovereignty, the other trying to fight out such elements in the Government.

People had expected that during the time of this Congress lead Government, the regional tensions and regional disparities would become a story of the past. It has not happened. At the contrary, the regional angularities have further sharpened. In fact 2006 has turned out to be the worst year for the people of Jammu region. The policy is patently pro-Valley and rabidly anti-Jammu. That is the reason why even Congress legislators hailing from Jammu are denouncing their own Government on the floor of the Assembly and outside. It is a government only in name, it is just propaganda. The Chief Minister has no control over his council ministers, bureaucracy and civil and police administration. He is a total flop.

Whatever Musharraf is now proposing is what India has from time to time put in his mouth:

- it was Mufti Mohammed Sayeed who was the first to float the idea of shared sovereignty;
- it was Ghulam Nabi Azad who was the first to float the idea of joint management in the areas like water; power projects, agriculture, sericulture, forestry, tourism and environment and
- it was the Indian Prime Minister himself who for the first time talked of irrelevant, soft borders and soft LoC. This should become 'just a line on the map' he said.

This is the peace process we are witnessing now. But India is a very strong nation and that is the reason why the Prime Minister says quite often that he could not go against the national opinion which is obviously opposing this type of peace process.

o. MEETING WITH MR. RAM SAHAI, CHAIRMAN JAMMU CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, IN JAMMU

In spite of the best efforts and hard work being put in by Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad the impact on political as well as other fronts is not that visible. Every party, including APHC, is trying its best to project their formula for a solution. All those things combined, point at winning the public support for winning the elections. Their attention is diverted to those aspects attracting votes in stead of ensuring good governance.

The Chief Minister is having very good and intimate contacts at the Centre and he can bring a lot of funds for the betterment of the State with the result that the economy of the State is likely to boost. Tourism funds are coming in and the railway construction goes on. The effort of the Government is to connect the Valley with the rest of the country at the very earliest. Ghulam Nabi Azad is trying his best to take effective steps to boost trade and industry as this will create a lot of employment. He is also trying his best to open the existing road links between the two sides for trade. In addition he supports our demand for opening other roads for trade: Jammu-Sialkot and Mirpur-Nowshera. Pakistan is not responding positively on this issue.

The Chief Minister is focusing in particular on the participation of APHC in the next elections (2008). Five working groups were formed and they convene on a regular basis. They will come out soon with their recommendations with the aim of restoring normalcy. Our point of view, from trade and industry side, is that trade between the two parts of Kashmir must start at the very earliest and we are of the firm opinion that once trade starts, the business community of both sides will build a strong bridge among them. Once trade starts it can never be stopped, so trade should be given first priority as it will give a boost to the peace process.

After Ghulam Nabi Azad took over an escalation of militancy has taken place. Tourists from the Indian States Gujarat, Maharashtra and West-Bengal were specially targeted with the result that tourism immediately came to a halt. Now the situation is better and incidents are much less. Many tourists are coming for recreation to the winter resorts.

p. MEETING WITH MR. MOHAMMAD SHARIEF SARTAJ, GENERAL SECRETARY J&K FREEDOM MOVEMENT, IN JAMMU

Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad is working against corruption and promoting the peace process. The bureaucrats, police and other security agencies and the administration are against his attempts to eradicate corruption as they are enjoying a good life and exploiting the troubled situation. This is the first Chief Minister who is very honest and hard working. He can do a lot regarding the peace process because he has very good relations with and much support from the Centre. These are positive signs for the peace process, but as stated before there are people in the establishment trying to hamper this process. As long as they don't change their attitude, not much progress can be expected. The separatist leaders from Jammu region are not involved in the peace process and this must change. India and Pakistan as well are neglecting the people of Jammu region.

India, Pakistan and APHC-Mirwaiz were trying to act against a band called for by APHC-Geelani as a protest against the meaningless peace process. Notwithstanding this, there was a complete band which proves that Geelani has the support of the Kashmiris. The people of J&K need peace and a peace process, but the actual ongoing process can't give them a solution. India hasn't changed its stand and Pakistan only gave weak and vague proposals. Pakistan was supporting us politically, but now they let us down. Notwithstanding all this, Kashmiris will continue their freedom struggle and we subscribe the ideas and the aims of APHC-Geelani.

The ongoing struggle is a freedom struggle. There are no foreign militants, they are ours. They belong to the Kashmiri community who fled to the other side of the border after partition. Their children are now fighting this freedom struggle. We are standing by our own as Pakistan withdrew all support, political and logistic support as well. We want a peaceful freedom struggle. In the Koran is written 'when you kill one human being, you kill all humanity'. So, we have to fight injustice with peaceful means.

q. MEETING WITH MR. NAWANG RIGZIN JORA, MINISTER FOR POWER DEVELOPMENT, IN JAMMU

Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad took over from Mufti Sayeed in November 2005. Before that he was a very powerful politician in Delhi. Expectations of the people were too high. They thought he could address every issue (unemployment, infrastructure, health, education, road connectivity, power, etc.) within the shortest time. Obviously in one year one can't turn things around. He doesn't have a magic wand. I understand that there could be a certain amount of disappointment here and there. As Minister of Power I can give an example: in J&K State, people got the cheapest rate in the entire country for power and even that most of them don't pay at all. Nevertheless, they want a full service. Electricity is being subsidised to the extent of Rs 13 billion per year (some \$ 290 million). This is not sustainable and if this continues, one day the power system will collapse. We plan to incrementally increase power tariff, there is no way out other than this. Of course, people are not happy with this.

The Chief Minister did a couple of things which no other Chief Minister would have done before:

- he convinced the Government of India to handover the Dulhast power-project (390 MW) and the Pakadul power-project (1.000 MW) along with the grant in aid to J&K Government. When these projects are realised the power woes of the State will be mitigated to a large extent;
- he reduced the size of the ministries to 25% of the total stand of the legislature;
- he is fighting corruption and introduced stringent laws;
- he created eight new districts, thirteen new thesils and three new sub-divisions and
- he passed the 'Vesting of Ownership of Land Act' facilitating the regularisation of encroachment of public land at a very small premium/compensation. This will result in empowering the rural landless families.

This is what the Chief Minister was able to realise. Similarly he is trying to address issues concerning health and medical education, road connectivity, employment, etc. in a similar fashion. But people expect instant, visible results in one year and that is impossible.

Regarding the Indo-Pakistan relations, the latest developments seem to be going in the right direction. Both countries have given up their rigid stand. A delegation of APHC under Mirwaiz Umar Farooq has just returned (29 January 2007) from a consultation visit to POK and Pakistan. He interacted there with the leadership, including Musharraf. During this visit Mirwaiz stated that the gun has no role to play anymore. This was later endorsed by President Musharraf. All this are signs that the process goes in the right direction.

Militancy is still there but luckily it is on the decline and the security forces are able to contain their activities. As a result of the ongoing peace process we expect militancy will further decrease.

r. MEETING WITH MR. ASGAR ALI KARBALAI, CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR LADAKH AUTONOMOUS HILL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL KARGIL AND CABINET MINISTER J&K STATE, IN JAMMU

Militancy is declining day by day. There are still isolated actions but the situation is under control. People are fed up with violence. It is up to the leadership now that compromises are been found in order to come to a conclusion. The leadership should decide on the common aspects and bring violence to a halt.

Kargil has nothing to do with the insurgency. Our enemies are illiteracy, under-development, poor health care, poor economic situation. We have to fight these enemies in all its aspects for the betterment and the uplifting of the people of Kargil. Since years we request the opening of the Kargil-Skardu road. From the Valley (Srinagar-Muzaffarabad) and from Jammu region (Poonch-Rawalakot) there is already a road-link. We should also been given the possibility to meet our relatives on the other side of the LoC. Not only this, cross LoC trade should start the earliest on all these roads

The Government is not going to the expectations of the public. The problem is the lack of cohesion within the coalition. Also bureaucrats are putting hurdles. The Chief Minister is trying his best to move forward and to improve the situation. There are very good relations between Kargil and the State Government and the Centre. They understand our problems and are supporting us. Now, in wintertime an aircraft from the Indian Air Force is flying twice a week between Srinagar and Kargil. We asked for extension of the airport in Kargil so that bigger civil aircrafts can be operated. We also requested a direct flight Jammu-Kargil as Jammu is the capital of the State in wintertime.

Regarding the peace process we are optimistic. We support the ongoing process and we hope talks will continue on all levels including the intra Kashmir dialogue. We are confident something will come out soon.

s. MEETING WITH MR. M.M. KHAJOORIA, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF POLICE (RETD), COLUMNIST AND SECURITY ANALYST, IN JAMMU

The situation created by the terrorists and persistent Pakistan propaganda for the last seventeen years have generated a sense of alienation amongst a section of people in the Valley. This needs to be seriously addressed. However, there has been a sea change in the ground situation after Pakistan's designs got exposed one by one. People in the Valley have demonstrably distanced themselves from terrorism. Recruits for the so called jihad are not forth coming any more. It was even difficult for militants to get shelter. People are now convinced that Pakistan exploited them for its own interest, unmindful of rising graveyards all over the Valley. The urge for peace is very strong. This creates a favourable environment for reconciliation. The rejection of the option 'azadi' (independence) on which a significant section of people in the Valley was persuaded to support militancy finally exposed the duplicity and nefarious designs of Pakistan. More and more people are voluntarily coming forward with information about movement of militants. In Poonch women have taken up arms against terrorists and their men folks have returned from foreign lands quitting lucrative jobs to join the war against terror. These are indicators of real hope for peace and return to normalcy in J&K.

A well planned reconstruction programme is an obvious necessity given the large scale damage done to economic, developmental and social welfare structures by the terrorists. The process demands acceleration totally free from corruption. The benefit of massive financial aid by the Central Government must flow to the people of J&K in entirety. Only then they will be inclined to join the Indian nation's historical march toward new height of progress and prosperity as equal partners.

So far the Government has done not much to write home about. Of course, claims of projects and schemes backed by massive financial aid from the Centre are there. An appraisal will be possible only after the projects actually take off and the benefits begin to flow to the people. Given the not too happy reputation of the administration for integrity, people have apprehension about the actual utilisation of these funds. The State Government should speedily address these apprehensions.

Some of the central projects like, extension of railways to Katra and the Valley and increased connectivity by roads are good signs. These should effectively contribute to the improvement of quality of life and open up

avenues for upwards commercial and economic mobility. Being a land locked and largely dependent on import of consumer goods, tourism and export of fruits and handicrafts, the State desperately needs road connectivity, pollution control and above all peace.

In my estimation the most important development during the last couple of years has been the exposure of Pakistan's civil society and media to the real situation in both countries which exposed the falsehood on which people of Pakistan were fed for decades. This realisation has triggered an unprecedented boost to the people's urge for peace and friendship with India. One can therefore hope that even Pakistan rulers without popular mandate will have to end before strong and persistent peace waves.

As far as J&K is concerned, peace is a fundamental and urgent imperative for people living on both sides of the divide. Musharraf's floating ideas and the decent sounding noises that accompany these should be treated with enlightened scepticism. His manipulation of APHC and its internal politics deserve special attention. India must play along remembering that there has been no change in Pakistan's official position on J&K. Musharraf's reluctance to open up more roads like Kargil-Skardu, Jammu-Mirpur and Jammu-Sialkot for enhanced people to people contact speaks volumes. Perhaps Pakistan apprehends that more people to people contact and exposure to a working democracy will create problems not only in POK but also in Pakistan itself. People are bound to compare not only the levels of economic progress especially in respect of education and health care but also the extent of freedom enjoyed by the people and their real participation in governance integral to the system operating in J&K State as part of the Indian Republic with obvious consequences.

t. MEETING WITH MR ASHOK SHARMA, ADVOCATE, CONGRESS MEMBER LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL J&K STATE, FORMER CONGRESS MLA, PRESIDENT OF FOUNDATION FOR PEACE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE AND CHAIRMAN FRIENDS' CLUB INDIA, IN JAMMU

There is cease-fire along the LoC since November 2003: there is no artillery cover anymore for militants coming to this side. Once militancy is no more, also the presence of security forces will be normalised: both are going together. Security forces are there because of militancy. The former just want to return to their barracks and only hoping militancy will stop. The people of India and Pakistan are interested in peace and once people and their Government are sincerely interested in peace it is just a question of taking action.

Militancy was sponsored by Pakistan, they were sending killers to this side. Foreign militants have been sent here to kill innocent civil population. India never attacked Pakistan. We are not using violence, we don't have an aggressive stand. We want peace, we are peace loving people. Those who are sent from the other side to execute violent actions inside India (like the attack on the Indian parliament in Delhi) receive a fair trial here. That makes the difference.

The Government is doing an excellent job on multi dimensional levels. Three of the five working groups have finalised their procedures and submitted their reports with conclusions and recommendations. The remaining two working groups are still meeting and will submit their reports in the near future. Regarding the working group on Centre-State relations, there will be no main problems as all parties, except of BJP, are in favour of maintaining Art 370 (giving a special status to J&K State).

The peace process and development are bringing the misguided youth to the national mainstream. Beside some exceptions, there is no involvement anymore of local militants. Musharraf changed his stand and is very clear now. This is thanks to the initiatives of the Central and the State Government. APHC leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq had good interaction in Pakistan and POK during his latest visit. Those who use the gun will not be allowed to participate in the dialogue. This is a change in their voice and we hope also in their heart. There was a time we were acting and talking like enemies, now we are heading for friendship. We must be prepared to accept this change. This is the blueprint to be converted into action by dismantling all support to terrorist activities.

u. MEETING WITH MR. ASHWANI BHAT, GENERAL SECRETARY AND AUTAR KRISHEN BHAT ORGANISING SECRETARY NON-CAMP MIGRANT ORGANISATION UDHAMPUR, IN UDHAMPUR

There is no proper policy and solution from the Centre and the State Government for the return of the Kashmir Pandits who were forced to leave their ancestral places in 1990 due to the religious cleansing policy of the militants. We are suffering very badly due to our living conditions in exile. This results in heart and kidney failure, diabetes (90% affected), depression, etc. Suicide is increasing mainly among the youth because there is no employment or prospects for the future. No package for government jobs has been provided by the Centre or the State for over-age persons or our youth. Officially they are promising all kinds of things but in reality nothing happens and we continue to suffer. The Kashmir Pandits are living in very poor conditions. An unemployed family only receives Rs 3,000,-/month (some \$ 75,-) as relief assistance from the Government which is not at all sufficient for day to day livelihood.

The Kashmir Pandits are eager to return to their houses in the Valley if congenial atmosphere will be created by the Centre and State Government as well as by the local people of the Valley. Property of Kashmir Pandits which has been encroached by miscreants should be got freed and the distress sale should be

treated as nil and void. Till date, the State Government has not paid any compensation for damaged property, orchards, agriculture, etc. No proper medical care is given by the State Government: only promises on paper, no practical shape. The Kashmir Pandits, which are the original inhabitants of the Valley, are completely neglected by the State Government.

The Kashmir Pandits are neglected in the peace process. We are not supporting the idea of Panun Kashmir (separate homeland for the Kashmir Pandits in the Valley). We want to return to our ancestral places. Our democratic rights have been taken away. The Kashmir Pandits have been deleted from electoral roles in the Valley and only 20% have been put on electoral roles elsewhere. We don't believe that the peace process will bring any solution to our problems.

v. MEETING WITH MR. BHARAT BHUSHAN SHARMA, ADVOCATE, FORMER NC MLA DISTRICT UDHAMPUR, IN UDHAMPUR

The present coalition government is not up to the expected mark. There is infighting between the coalition partners. They charge each other about their grievances. PDP and Congress are the main partners. PDP has a separate ideology: PDP is promoting the idea of self-rule and this is not acceptable to Congress. PDP has no political base in Jammu region and only 16 seats in the Valley. So, they don't have mass support and therefore they can't claim self-rule.

We don't have any solid government at present. There is political instability and politicians are just killing time. The only solution is to go for fresh elections because the present government has lost the confidence of the general masses. The fundamental base and mandate is with our party, NC. We are based everywhere in the three regions and will be able to give a strong, efficient and corruption free government in J&K State. Only the leadership of Farooq Abdullah, Omar Abdullah, our senior General Secretary Sheikh Nasir Ahmed and all the political workers of NC can give the best government to the people of J&K State.

The peace process is there but until yet it didn't bring peace. Violence is still there. We see only one solution: give J&K State autonomy like it was propagated by NC leaders. The draft of the autonomy proposals was presented in the J&K State assembly during the leadership of Farooq Abdullah. It was passed with an overwhelming majority and submitted to the Centre for consultation. In our eyes, this is the basic document leading to a solution but unfortunately, at the Centre no action has been taken so far.

w. MEETING WITH MR. CHAUDHARY MOHAMMAD SHAFI, ADVOCATE, PRESIDENT J&K NC DISTRICT UDHAMPUR, MEMBER OF CENTRAL WORKING COMMITTEE OF NC AND EX-MEMBER STATE ADVISORY BOARD FOR GUJJARS AND BAKERWALS, IN UDHAMPUR

Militancy can only be eradicated by winning the opinion of the people in our favour. Nowadays, every person in the State, Muslims in particular, is considered as extremists, as militants or as supporters of militancy. Fake encounters are being done since the beginning of militancy. People feel that the Centre is not having fate upon us. If we people are made to believe that we are as good citizens as the citizens of the rest of India and if the citizens of the State are not seen with the glasses of militancy, only then people shall side with the Centre. There are certain organisations who show much patriotic fervour to the nation wherefrom the majority of the people of the State get irritated. From their irritation, opportunist sections of the people and the militants get shelter and as a result survival of militancy is possible.

As far as this government is concerned it is constituted of different political parties and some individuals who were neglected, rejected and disgruntled elements coming from the various main parties. They don't have any program or destination at all. The J&K State Government is not performing well because Ghulam Nabi Azad is not the man of the field, no contact with the grass-root level. He is the man in Delhi. He is promising so much but nothing has been realised yet.

The policy of the government regarding the Kashmir-issue can't be reliable or one which can command the mandate of the people of the State. Only NC has a representation in the three regions and among all the religions of the State. It is a secular party. We believe in autonomy: J&K State is part of India with certain liberties within the constitution of India. That is the only practicable solution: we have a very solid program. All party workers stand by a single leader, there is no dispute on the leadership.

x. MEETING WITH J.L. SHARMA, ADDITIONAL DEPUTY COMMISSIONER DISTRICT UDHAMPUR, IN UDHAMPUR

Militancy, as it was there in the nineties, no more exists now. People in general who understood and felt the want of militancy now are of the view that they enjoy freedom in India on a higher scale as compared in neighbouring countries. Most of the people who were fearing the direct or indirect actions of the militants have now understood that no solution is coming from them as India is a vast and comprehensive democratic state. A solution can be found on the table itself. That is why most of the public is coming forward and giving secret reports to the administration about the presence of militants, including foreign militants. District Udhampur is 95% militant free. The public, in general, is not willing to give shelter to militants though, in the

remote areas, militants do pressurize the population living there to give them shelter and money. The situation is improving and it is hoped that the State will get rid of militancy within three to four years.

The civilian administration is responsible to win the hearts of the people. The Centre and State Government are taking developmental and other welfare steps besides giving education to the general masses in order to give them the chance to reap the benefit of development. Due to backwardness and illiteracy some wrong religious ideas create some problems in certain pockets, but also here the situation is improving day by day. In sum total we are confident that things will be normalised and peace will prevail.

y. MEETING WITH PROF. MRS. REKHA CHOWDHARY, HEAD DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, UNIVERSITY OF JAMMU, IN JAMMU

It is normal that after five years of governance people are critical on the Government. That resentment is a normal thing, nothing to worry about. First there was Mufti Sayeed, then came Ghulam Nabi Azad from Delhi. Expectations were very high. From Ghulam Nabi Azad people had the impression he could resolve everything, but there are no miracles. The Government can't deliver everything as there are too many demands and too less resources. This is not particular to this State. The situation here is as good and as bad as everywhere in India but in J&K State all this is highlighted.

Ghulam Nabi Azad wants transparency regarding human rights violations. For the first time the national media are reporting on these issues. Custodial killings and fake encounters became mainstream stories of unfairness. Earlier national media avoided reporting on all this because reporting about Kashmir was seen from nationalistic lenses, it was of national interest, a sensitive issue. Reporting against security forces could amount to lowering their moral against the terrorist. In the name of the Kashmir-issue so many vested interests came into being. By default Kashmir had been handed over to the security forces with some kind of impunity. If you give power to anybody in disproportion to their duty they will use it for their own interest and this includes the local police as well, they are not an exception. What happened now is not seen as Indian security forces against Kashmiris because the indigenous Kashmir police is as much involved. Now it became a human story, it has a case of injustice and unfairness from the national mainstream point of view. There is a different feeling of what is wrong in Jammu or in the Valley but what happened now gave a different type of response: custodial killings and fake encounters are not done. Human rights violations can't be tolerated and this has nothing to do with national interests. Something has deeply gone wrong and it will take time to normalise the situation. Security forces, including J&K Police, are not a holly cow, they are important but must be transparent and accountable. We have to deal with the human rights violations that are committed, hiding doesn't serve any purpose. Only through this democracy will be strengthened.

The peace process is fine, there is already a lot of movement, it is the most positive process right now. Whatever India could have achieved is there. Musharraf brought the discourse in India's favour to a certain extent: Pakistan doesn't claim Kashmir anymore, doesn't accept independence as a solution, doesn't speak anymore about self-determination or UN-resolutions. This is not contested in Kashmir except by the hardliners. The only option for the separatists is to negotiate with India, to resolve the status of Kashmir with the Government of India. The mainstream parties also are bringing forward proposals. Regarding self-rule PDP is not asking bigger things like designation of a local Governor elected by the State legislature. PDP, NC and Sajad Lone want to renegotiate the status of J&K State within India but what will be the range is still open. Congress is in a difficult position. This party has a national dimension and in direct competition with BJP. J&K represents only six seats in the Lok Sabha. Congress can't come out openly with concessions. The moment Congress will take a position, BJP is there with its comments and will make it an electoral issue.

z. MEETING WITH MINISTER TAJ MOHI-UD-DIN, MINISTER FOR CONSUMER AFFAIRS, PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION AND ANIMAL HUSBANDRY (CONGRESS PARTY), IN JAMMU

The Government is doing its best to be transparent and to end corruption. It is also a development centric Government. The Chief Minister is from Jammu region and not Valley centric at all. Some corners try to exploit the sentiments of the people because they have vested interests but I can assure you that the Government is eager to give all an equal and just share. A 'Finance Commission' has been set up with the aim to control the allocation of funds so that every district gets its due share. Ending corruption is a time consuming business. The 'Vigilant Commission' that was installed to tackle corruption is really vigilant but it is a gradual process. The general atmosphere is changing for the best but it can't be done overnight.

We like the way Musharraf is speaking now. It is very mature and quite a change. Also APHC and Mirwaiz Umar Farooq are saying that there is no military solution, that the use of the gun only brings misery and that the peace process should be given a chance. I don't know what is behind all this or what happened. Everyone is speaking sense now. The State Government and the Government of India welcome this change.

Personally I am inclined towards the positive declarations. Why should I doubt the sincerity of Musharraf: he proposes a peaceful solution and I have no right to doubt his intentions. He proposes demilitarisation, there is nothing wrong with this. But first of all militancy must stop, then the military can return to their barracks. In fact we are already heading in that direction: military is replaced by J&K police and by para-military forces.

Militancy is on the decline and contained. Moderate separatist leaders and Musharraf confirmed that violence will not bring a solution but extremist and fundamentalist elements are still there and as long as they don't stop to use arms, innocent victims will be there.

aa. MEETING WITH INTELLECTUALS, POLITICIANS, JOURNALISTS, LAYWERS, ETC., IN REASI.

The actual State Government is a total failure. We never had a more corrupt system than under the present Government. Most dangerous is the coalition between Congress and PDP. The present Government is not only corrupt but is also cowardly supporting militancy. The Government doesn't create jobs for educated unemployed youth. For surrendered militants they pay Rs 2.000,-/month plus Rs 150.000,- on a bank account. A militant who has killed ten innocent people and then surrenders receives this money instead of the punishment he deserves.

The peace process has been going on by one name or the other for last 16 years without any result. The Pakistani leadership has the compulsion to raise the Kashmir-issue whosoever is in power, because they consider raising the Kashmir-issue their source of survival.

J&K Muslims have, out of their free will, decided accession of the State with India and J&K State is an inseparable part of the Indian Union. The Muslim majority is in power and within India we are free to observe our faith, to go to our mosques and to propagate our religion without any fear or control by the authorities. Pakistan has made the life of Indian Muslims miserable by spreading militancy and false propaganda. We want to live in peace as we have been living before militancy came. We are Indians and we are loyal to our country. It is Pakistan that wants to disrupt communal harmony. NC is thankful to the Hindu majority of Jammu region who maintained communal harmony in face of the provocation by the militants who are 99% Muslims. The Hindu population maintained calm and communal harmony was not disrupted. We are happy in our places and if Pakistan says that it wants to liberate the Muslims of Kashmir, the best thing for Pakistan would be first to liberate their own Muslims in their own areas of Kashmir. We acceded legally to India and we requested India to give us military protection, whereas the Pakistani army illegally occupied a part of J&K.

Because of militancy nearly 500.000 Kashmir Pandits have been thrown out of the Valley and are now languishing in camps. Militants want to clear large areas of J&K from pro-Indian population in order to create strategic space for themselves and Pakistani operatives. People are very much dissatisfied with militants. They don't want them, they want peace but the State Government doesn't have the clear intention of finishing militancy because they want to remain in power.

bb. MEETING WITH MR. SURJEET SINGH SALATIA, EX MINISTER FOR POWER (1996-2002), EX MLA AND SENIOR LEADER NC, IN JAMMU

Militancy is contained now. Human rights violations are there. Custodial killings and fake encounters are there: they must be checked and the culprits must be punished. But we must not forget the human right violations committed by the militants: so many workers of our party have been sacrificed, lost their life through the hands of the militants because of NC's stand in favour of India, always confirming J&K State to be an integral part of India. Terrorism, or call it militancy, started from Pakistan. The main culprit is Pakistan, they decide over ending or continuation of terrorist activities. Until and unless Pakistan decides to stop violence, terrorism/militancy will continue. Only when peace and law and order are restored our State can progress and prosper.

The present Government is a totally failure because the common men, the families depending on agriculture, the unemployed youth, the labourers are still waiting for a rehabilitation program. The power sector in J&K State has a potential of 20.000 MW hydro-electrical power but very unfortunately, the Government has not succeeded in bringing this potential into practise. We import 1.200 MW from outside. A major part of the budget is earmarked for purchase of power.

The Central Government is funding now Rs 5.000,- crore (approximately \$ 1,1 billion, one crore being 10.000.000) whereas in 2002 this was only Rs 2.000,- crore. This is because the Chief Minister belongs to the Congress party. Notwithstanding this huge financial assistance, nothing changes on the grass-root level. Increasing power cuts, no infrastructure or power supply in the villages, scarcity of drinking water, etc.

The peace process is a very good initiative: both countries have taken good steps. Guns along the international border and the LoC are silenced since more than three years now. The farmers can cultivate their land right up to the dividing line without fear to be hit by artillery from the other side.

Some corners are proposing self-rule or joint management. We don't accept these proposals. For NC, J&K is an integral part of India, nobody can touch this principal stand. Years back, under Farooq Abdullah, the Legislative Assembly voted with a 2/3 majority in favour of autonomy. We want autonomy as this comprises the three regions, Jammu region, the Valley and Ladakh, who can develop their own future. The declarations and proposals of APHC leader Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and General Musharraf can lead to nowhere: we want to remain under the Indian constitution. Autonomy is the only workable solution.

cc. MEETING WITH PROF. SAIN DASS GUPTA, BJP MUNICIPAL COUNCILLOR OF KATHUA CITY AND CHAIRMAN BJP KATHUA DISTRICT, IN KATHUA

Our party is of the opinion that terrorism must be dealt with an iron hand and firm determination. In a democracy there is no place for terrorism. The previous Indian Government under Vajpayee and the present Government asked the terrorists to shun violence and to join the mainstream movement. Former Prime Minister Vajpayee and the present Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh, told General Musharraf to finish cross border terrorism: a peace process and terrorism can't go together simultaneously.

The Chief Minister is from Jammu region and we were expecting that he therefore should reduce, or even remove the discrimination the people of this province met right from the beginning in 1947 till date. There is more employment, more development, more political representation in the Valley. The number of the population in Jammu region and the Valley is almost the same and Jammu region is much larger than the Valley. Notwithstanding these facts, the Valley has 46 seats in the assembly, Jammu region only 37. This is a clear-cut democratic injustice and abuse of power by the Valley. We are demanding that a delimitation commission should be appointed to remove this discrepancy regarding the assembly seats.

The Chief Minister promised so many things: eradication of corruption, ending terrorism, reducing poverty, giving balanced development for all regions. The Government failed on all fronts. We urge the Chief Minister to give equal slices of development and funds to the three regions: Jammu region, the Valley, and Ladakh.

We are not against the peace process but any effort of taking J&K far from India will not be tolerated. J&K is an integral part of India. We oppose the autonomy proposed by NC, we oppose the self-rule as proposed by Mehbooba Mufti and Mufti Sayeed. We strictly oppose the proposal of so called 'joint management'. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq returned from Pakistan but he has no final draft. There are so many declarations. It is not clear what is exactly meant as many of them are contradictory.

dd. INTERVIEW WITH MR. SYED ALI SHAH GEELANI, CHAIRMAN APHC-G AND CHAIRMAN TEHREEK-E-HURRIYAT, BY TELEPHONE

I believe that Pakistan's commitment to Kashmir is now lacking. An issue, which involves the future of ten million people and peace in South Asia, can't be pushed under the carpet or treated as a border dispute. The present situation has left only two choices with Pakistan: either to accept Indian control over J&K or continue its support to a just struggle. Al-Umar chief Mushtaq Zargar, operating from Azad Kashmir, has raised fears of inter-group clashes in Srinagar. From my side, I will not allow any militant outfit to resort to inter-group killings or clashes, which has cost us heavily in the past too. Our enemy would like us to fight within ourselves. We will not allow this to happen.

I am not against the peace process. India and Pakistan have fought four wars. The basic cause of turbulence and animosity between them is the Kashmir-issue. Until this issue is settled, keeping in view the historical perspective and the sacrifices of the Kashmiris, there is no possibility of a lasting peace. India's readiness and inclination to hold a dialogue in the present format is just an excuse to divert attention from the basic issue. If India is really sincere it should accept the disputed nature of the State. Even as it invites us to talks, it describes the State as its integral part and rules out a redrawing of current boundaries soaked in blood.

Our so-called moderate leaders are talking to the Governments of India and Pakistan since 2003. Can they tell the people what they have achieved? India will just tire them out and finally make them adjust to the status quo. The constitution of APHC clearly stipulates that there can be no solution within the framework of the Indian constitution. Current negotiations don't adhere to these requisites.

Kashmir is still on the UN agenda. Both, India and Pakistan have signed the UN resolutions and even committed to implement them. It is time to remain committed and steadfast on our stand and let the world believe that the stand is based on the principle of justice: give Kashmiris their right of self-determination.

ee. INTERVIEW WITH MR. AZAM INQUILABI, PATRON OF MAHAZ-I-AZADI (= FRIENDS OF FREEDOM) AND MEMBER OF APHC-GEELANI, BY TELEPHONE

In the backdrop of the eruption of violence all over the world, especially since September 2001, the root causes have to be addressed. The disparity between the haves and the have-nots, between the privileged and the non-privileged must be done away with. The explosive situation in Palestine, in Kashmir, in Kosovo, in Tchetchenia and in so many other places has to be addressed and solved. The global economic and political situation must be adjusted. There must be reconciliation, a process of peace leading to global peace. The global leaders must realise they have to solve the root causes of the problems and the global issues.

I am exalted that India and Pakistan are coming closer. They are engaged in serious business. All this is in preparation of the next visit of the Indian Prime Minister to Pakistan. The meeting between Dr. Manmohan Singh and Musharraf certainly will lead to a breakthrough.

To a certain extent Kashmiris are disillusioned with their leaders. They feel they are psychologically abused after 17 years of violence. On the other hand the people know their leaders will not let them down. They are working for an honourable settlement. People are balancing between hope and despair. It is on the leaders to install permanent hope, they must convey the message that there will be a peaceful solution. A solution lies in demilitarisation on both sides of the LoC, in the reunification of the separated parts of J&K. There must be installed a general, democratically elected assembly. When this is done, they can sit together and debate, discuss and decide about their future.

The present J&K Government is an extension of the Congress party in Delhi. They feel the heat of the pressure of the Kashmiris who don't accept anymore the brutal behaviour of the security forces. Human rights violations must stop. Immediate relief to the victims is required. Criminals must be brought to book and powers of the security forces be crippled, bunkers must be removed, draconian laws must be withdrawn.

ff. INTERVIEW WITH MIRWAIZ UMAR FAROOQ, CHAIRMAN EXECUTIVE COUNCIL APHC-MIRWAIZ, CHAIRMAN AWAMI ACTION COMMITTEE AND CHIEF PRIEST OF THE JAMIA MASHID, BY TELEPHONE

Militancy is no longer an option for us Kashmiris. The situation would have been different had we taken the right steps at the right time. On the other hand, the people with the guns also have a stake in Kashmir. The aim of my interaction with militant groups on the other side of the LoC was to convince them about giving some chance to the peace process initiated by us. We have only met representatives of Kashmiri militant groups who are part of the United Jihad Council and other Kashmiri militant commanders who have been camping in Azad Kashmir. We gave a call for an end to the armed struggle and pleaded for a path of dialogue and reconciliation. One has to understand that results can't come overnight. Such meetings should take place more often. We have to convince them of our strategy.

People are frustrated because there is no progress in the peace process although the formula is very simple: a soft LoC allowing Kashmiris on both sides to move freely, exceptional autonomy or self-governance within each region of Kashmir, phased demilitarisation of all regions and finally a joint supervisory mechanism with representatives from India, Pakistan and all parts of Kashmir to oversee the plan' implementation. It is clear to most parties that it isn't possible anymore to go along with Syeed Ali Shah Geelani. He has taken a very categorical position which isn't feasible. People want the situation to move forward positively.

We have also interacted with Kashmir Pandits and Hindus in Jammu region. We feel that they understand and support our proposals. There is a general realisation on all sides of the need to push things forward. The one step, however, that can change everything on the ground is demilitarisation. We want to constitute two working groups that will meet regularly but we need the support in this of Delhi and Islamabad. We also hope for the mutual visits of the Prime Ministers. The next two to three months are crucial.

gg. INTERVIEW WITH SUKHDEV SHARMA, PDP DISTRICT YOUTH PRESIDENT, IN UDHAMPUR

Militancy is only bringing terror to the people. Militants don't want a solution because now they are enjoying the situation. In the upper reaches of our district there is still militancy. They are hiding in the forests and from there terrorising the people living in the far-off villages. A solution must be sought through dialogue and through a peace process. Not through the bullet.

The actual government is much better than the previous one. Mufti Sayeed was better than the previous NC government and even better than the actual Chief Minister, Ghulam Nabi Azad. He was a very good administrator. Ghulam Nabi Azad is indeed from J&K State but he mainly worked in the Centre and as a result he is aware on high level politics only. J&K State is full of problems and these problems have to be addressed at the grass-root level such as unemployment, exploitation, corruption, education, medical facilities. Under Ghulam Nabi Azad all this doesn't reach the grass-root level. The improvement we see now is all due to Mufti Sayeed, it all started under him. Now Ghulam Nabi Azad is trying to cash the benefits. His governance is a failure and I don't see positive aspects. Mufti Sayeed took care of the poor people, his successor doesn't.

The peace process is much better than earlier. The process started under Mufti and created a much better situation for the Kashmiris. There is a slight progress. APHC is making the political system polluted: people don't like APHC because they are blackmailing them. APHC surely doesn't represent the Kashmiris. Only democratically elected leaders can claim to represent them. We are in favour of a united J&K within India.

hh. INTERVIEW WITH SURINDER KHAJOURIA, ADVOCATE, PRESIDENT BAR ASSOCIATION UDHAMPUR, IN UDHAMPUR

The J&K State Government came with a lot of promises: eradicating poverty, illiteracy and corruption. They are satisfactory but they can't meet with the aspirations of the common people because no party has absolute majority. The coalition partners are putting hurdles for each other and making foolish, irresponsible and anti-patriotic statements. Due to all this, the common man feels insecure and this hampers the normal functioning of the Government. Bureaucrats take advantage of this situation.

In the peace process two regions are sidelined and ignored: Jammu region and Ladakh. The whole process is Valley centred. It is projected as if they can have a solution according to their wishes, then the problem would be solved. Jammu and Ladakh will not accept this and they must be involved in the peace process. Three of the four proposals of Musharraf can be acceptable in one way or the other after discussion and consultation (demilitarisation, five regions and self-rule) but the fourth proposal being joint management is not acceptable as it will help Pakistan to ensure its entry in this region through this back-door. This we can't accept as democrats. Musharraf is befooling India. He is a military dictator having nexus with the religious bigots and mullahs. How can you combine martial law with democracy?

ii. INTERVIEW WITH ZAFAR CHOUDHARY, EDITOR OF THE DAILY NEWSPAPER 'KASHMIR IMAGES' JAMMU EDITION, EDITOR IN CHIEF OF MONTHLY MAGAZINE 'EPILOGUE.IN', IN JAMMU

Since 2002 it is the fourth year that incidents of violence are on constant decline. In 2006 there were 29% less incidents and killings as compared to 2005. A very strong point for this is the elections of 2002. They are generally accepted to be the most free and fair elections ever in J&K State. This gave people back their democratic space and as a result the elements of separatist violation lost the public support significantly, if not completely. Now is the time that this democratic process should travel down to the grass-roots and people should be empowered through the local institutions of self governance. This will be a huge setback to the elements of separatist violence.

Initially, after taking over as Chief Minister in 2002, Mufti Sayeed brought about a remarkable change in the overall scenario as compared to his predecessor Farooq Abdullah. Reducing the presence of the security forces on the streets gave a sort of psychological confidence. He didn't use the harsh tone against Pakistan and the militants like Farooq Abdullah as this was perceived to be a provocation and they used to strike back. Mufti Sayeed also tried to convince the militants to join the mainstream by setting up a surrender scheme. It was also under Mufti Sayeed that the bus services started and that the peace process was set in place. This brought about a lot of change in the situation and an emotional touch was added.

When, in November 2005, Ghulam Nabi Azad took over as Chief Minister it was in the backdrop of the devastating earthquake of 8 October 2005. At that time the entire policy was focusing on relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction. In this he did a remarkable, exceptional good job. The day he took over he declared to streamline the administration and to eradicate corruption from public life. Corruption and indiscipline would not be tolerated at any cost. He is not speaking much, not giving a political discourse, no slogans. He is behaving more as an administrator than as a politician. Work culture in the administration is improving considerably. Eradication of corruption didn't bring the desired results but it brought fear among those who were indulging in it with the result corruption has been considerably reduced. Development activity has picked up. There is more and more employment in construction activity and that really makes a difference.

Regarding the peace process I have the impression there is some sort of understanding between India and Pakistan. They are close to something which I believe they may reveal in next few months. There are a lot of indications in this direction. In January 2006, President Musharraf spoke about self-rule and demilitarisation. These proposals were immediately picked up by PDP, the ruling coalition partner. For a year now they have been campaigning about the self-rule proposal. In September 2006, the Indian Prime Minister for the first time reacted by saying 'all proposals need to be discussed and debated'. He didn't reject the self-rule proposal per se. Ever since this came up the separatists have not accepted it but not rejected it either. There is also a significant change in the stand and policy of the moderate APHC faction. Almost all separatists, except Geelani, are advocating dialogue, debating all options, discussing. Geelani is the only one still claiming the implication of the UN-resolutions and a plebiscite. As Musharraf declared that these claims are outdated, he stands isolated.

The dialogue is really picking up fast but now there is a risk that Mirwaiz Umar Farooq will be killed like Abdul Gani Lone in May 2001 who floated the same ideas. Some signs are there that indigenous militant groups will allow the peace process to move forward.

This concludes this long list of meetings and interviews.

3. CONCLUSIONS

Following conclusions can be drawn, based on the experiences of this study tour to India and J&K State:

- a. According to a survey of a neutral think tank, J&K State belongs, within India, to the states with a high degree of corruption. A change of mentality/mindset is required to be brought in J&K State.
- b. Chief Minister Ghulam Nabi Azad is appreciated very much, being sincere, hard working, honest, having good contacts with Delhi and bringing a lot of funds for the developmental projects in the State.
- c. There is a lot of critic on the performance of the Government: no unity among the coalition partners, too slow progress regarding development and employment, too much promises but not sufficient results, etc. According to political analysts this is nothing to worry about: in a normal functioning democracy the opposition will always criticize those who are in power, whatever they realise.
- d. J&K State is the second richest state of India. Huge amounts are pumped into the State by the Centre. It would be worth watching if heavy investments for developmental projects in the State result in an overall progress of the State.
- e. Human rights violations are there. Thanks to Ghulam Nabi Azad transparency has been installed: those who committed custodial killings, fake encounters were brought to book. They were committed by special operations groups of J&K Police, by indigenous people. On the other hand, human rights violations committed by militants continue with impunity.
- f. Priority must be given to stop the sufferings of the Kashmiris. This can only be realised by stopping violence as the use of violence and terrorism are the biggest hurdles towards peace. The Kashmiris are totally fed up with the gun from whatever side and want to return to pre-militancy situation. They want to have a future and jobs for themselves and their children. The use of violence is considered to be un-Islamic. The overwhelming desire of the Kashmiris is for restoration of normal civic, social and economic activity and development.
- g. The general feeling is that militancy is on the decline. There is no local support anymore. Militancy is perceived to be contained but vested interests are there to keep the pot boiling at an acceptable level. The Kashmiris are against the interference of Pakistan and the foreign terrorists because they are destroying their culture. The Kashmiris realise that Pakistan decides over peace and violence: as long as Pakistan supports terrorism in J&K there can't be peace and granting more autonomy will not change this reality. Moderates requested the armed groups to stop violence to give peace a chance. Salahuddin, the supreme commander of the militants, operating from Azad Kashmir rejected this and will continue the armed struggle.
- h. There is a general appreciation of the cease-fire along the LoC since November 2003 as this brings relief to the population living in that area. This was confirmed repeatedly.
- i. The split within APHC between the moderate faction led by Mirwaiz Umar Farooq and the hard-line faction led by Geelani is deep rooted. The common Kashmiri confirms APHC is not their sole representative. The Valley is too ego-centric and a divided house. All regions must be consulted. Ladakh and Jammu region feel neglected by the Centre because they are not invited for talks.
- j. The earthquake of 8 October 2005 was a calamity of nature and brought a lot of suffering in the affected areas. Rescue and relief was fast and well organised. In Jammu region this is not a point of discussion anymore.
- k. The Kashmiris appreciate the steps taken by India and Pakistan to enhance intra-Kashmiri contacts especially the decision to open crossing points on the LoC. These are important steps towards boosting the peace process, though they realise differences over crucial issues continue to characterise the relations between India and Pakistan. Mirwaiz Umar Farooq is in close contact with Musharraf. The latest proposals of President Musharraf regarding joint management, self-rule and demilitarisation are too vague and adding to the confusion. There is scepticism regarding the sincerity of Musharraf: he is only bringing slogans but his policy doesn't change. He doesn't take action against the terrorist. First there must be de-militant-isation. Only de-militant-isation can be followed by de-militar-isation. It is felt Musharraf is befooling India.
- l. Regarding a solution nobody knows anymore where to go. There are too many proposals, there are contradictions. The declarations and proposals of Musharraf are not at all binding as they don't have a democratic backing. In addition, Musharraf is not consistent in his declarations: depending on the audience he gives diametric opposed declarations. The process is passing through a confusing stage. In J&K State, the mainstream parties are divided regarding the way to go: NC wants autonomy, PDP wants self-rule, demilitarisation and revocation of Armed Forces Special Powers Act, Congress wants violence to stop and the peace process to continue.

- m. J&K is divided in different parts and under the rule of three countries:
(1) China: Aksai Chin and the territory of 5.180 km² ceded by Pakistan to China;
(2) India: Jammu region, the Kashmir-Valley and Ladakh;
(3) Pakistan: Azad Kashmir and the Northern Areas (Gilgit-Baltistan).
- n. The population of the various regions is totally different (culture, tradition, language, religion, etc.) from each other. Kashmiris want the Kashmir Pandits to return to the Valley, but this is only possible if their safety can be guaranteed. This remains a huge problem and in between so many Pandit families are living in camps in inhuman conditions outside the Valley without any prospects of a solution for their problem. The fate of the Kashmir Pandits is more than ever uncertain.
- o. The relations between India and Pakistan are improving, there is no deadlock but the process is very slow. A dialogue is necessary on three levels: bilateral, national and internal. The peace process has to continue on these three levels;
- p. The cry for the right of self-determination by some parties in the Valley is supported by Pakistan, with this limitation that accession to Pakistan is the only option. The Azad J&K, Interim Constitution Act, 1974, Par 7. (2) reads: "No person or political party in Azad J&K shall be permitted to propagate against, or take part in activities prejudicial or detrimental to, the ideology of the State's accession to Pakistan". This same cry for the right of self-determination is heard in the other regions of J&K, also in the areas under Pakistani administration, but without limitations: all options should be open such as accession to India, accession to Pakistan, Azadi (= freedom), total independence, partition, etc.;
- q. As stated in previous reports, Pakistan has no stand in J&K. Pakistan invaded J&K and is at the origin of the de facto partitioning of the State. As early as 13 August 1948 the United Nations Commission for India and Pakistan requested Pakistan to withdraw its troops from the State as a pre-condition for organising the plebiscite. This request was repeated by the same Commission in its resolution of 5 January 1949: "A plebiscite will be held when it shall be found by the Commission that the cease-fire and truce arrangements set forth in Part I and II (= the withdrawal by Pakistan of its troops from the State) of the Commission's resolution of 13 August 1948 have been carried out and arrangements for the plebiscite have been completed". Until this date Pakistan has not withdrawn its forces.

	Population	Pro- Independ		Pro- India		Pro- Pakistan		Pro- Trifurcation	
		%	number	%	number	%	number	%	number
Jammu region	3.814.995	20%	762.999	75%	2.861.246	5%	190.750	*	*
Valley	4.376.979	50%	2.188.489	30%	1.313.094	20%	875.396	*	*
Ladakh	181.182	10%	18.118	85%	154.005	5%	9.059	*	*
Sub-total	8.373.156	03.6%	2.969.606	05.2%	4.328.345	01.3%	1.075.205	*	*
Azad Kashmir	2.829.440	45%	1.273.248	5%	141.472	50%	1.414.720	*	*
North Areas	1.019.374	45%	458.718	5%	50.969	50%	509.687	*	*
Sub-total	3.848.814	45%	1.731.966	5%	192.441	50%	1.924.407	*	*
Aksai Chin	100.000	10%	10.000	85%	85.000	5%	5.000	*	*
Grand total	12.321.970	38,5%	4.711.572	37,5%	4.605.786	24%	3.004.612	*	*

* Trifurcation: if this option is given as a choice one can presume that:

- 1. A number of Pro-India and Pro-Pakistan voters will opt for trifurcation
- 2. The number of Pro-Independence voters will not be much less