

Healing wounded hearts

BY AIR MARSHAL (RETD) AYAZ AHMED KHAN

The Secretary level talks on June 27-28, the experts talks on nuclear CBM's on June 19-20 in New Delhi, Mr Natwar Singh's visit to Islamabad on July 21-22, and Mrs Sonia Gandhi's "yes" to President Musharraf's invitation to visit Islamabad reflect Congress government's resolve to solve problems bedeviling normal relations with Pakistan. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's positive references about Pakistan reflect desire for normalization of relations. But about Kashmir Mr Natwar Singh's hard talk on BBC TV, and curt remarks are sending mixed signals, implying that the Congress government, will not give priority to the Kashmir problem, and may have plans to put the Kashmir problem on the back burner. Political analysts and media pundits argue that Congress government will try to shelve the Kashmir issue, and will raise minor issues, in an attempt to put the Kashmir problem into cold storage.

Mr Natwar Singh's statement that Kashmir need not be the focus of Indo-Pak dialogue, and Pakistan's insistence for an early solution of Kashmir dispute could become a hurdle proves the point. On Saturday June 05, 2004, Natwar Singh said, "When I meet Pakistani Foreign Minister Khurshid Kasuri in August, I will ask them, when they plan to stop their terrorism program". Clearly Mr Natwar Singh has refused to accept repeated assurances from President Pervez Musharraf, Prime Minister Jamali and Foreign Minister Churchill Kaiser that Pakistan will never allow export of terrorism from its soil. Pakistan is trying to control internal terrorism, and, is engaged in full scale anti-terrorist military operations in South Waziristan.

There is no infiltration across the LOC. Natwar Singh's remarks therefore are totally unjustified. The same day Natwar Singh made another provocative comment by stating, "There can be no compromise on terrorism. Most terrorism in India comes from across the border, all though Pakistan's policy of bleeding India has not worked".

Such insinuating statements at a time when efforts to mend fences are being pursued, are uncalled for. The man who is in control of Indian foreign relations must show greater maturity and stop



making off the cuff remarks. Foreign Office spokesman Masood Khan has suggested that "hard talk be avoided at this crucial stage" Such statements cast doubts about the sincerity of the

It will disappear within minutes when the time comes. The LOC and the wire fence will meet a worst fate than the Berlin wall.

The governments in New Delhi, Congress, BJP or Coalitions have followed a policy of occupation by military force to silence and subdue dissent and crush Kashmiri's aspirations for self determination and democracy. The policy of military occupation has been implemented with violence and ruthlessness and has failed..

The Kashmiri people rose in revolt against Indian occupation in October 1989 when the Indian Army and the BSF gunned down hundreds of worshippers and funeral processions. From 1990 to 1993 about one hundred thousand Kashmiri youth, including teachers and students were forced to flee into Azad Kashmir and Pakistan. They narrated stories of horror and terror that greatly angered the masses in Azad Kashmir, NWFP and Punjab. Under Governor Jagmohan the Nazi -Gestapo type atrocities took a heavy toll of life, property and honour of Kashmiri men, women and children.

The crescendo of military violence turned into armed struggle against ruthless Indian military occupation, and gross violation of human rights. There has been no let up in Indian state terrorism against Kashmiri people since fifteen years. The unabated killing and maiming of five to six thousand Kashmiri youth yearly, has caused 85000 deaths and all the grave yards in Kashmir Valley, and Jammu are overflowing with the graves of youthful Kashmiri martyrs.

This inhuman criminality of the Indian military must not go unaccounted and unpunished. Indian atrocities, search and siege operations, and custodial killings after brutal interrogations in the Papa I and Papa II and other torture cells, must be investigated into. Amnesty International, the International Red Cross, and Human Rights Commission of the United Nations, the US Congress, Euro Parliament and the British Parliament's Human Right Committees have been issuing yearly

reports about Indian atrocities and massive violations of human rights in Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. These must be used for investigations of Indian crimes in Jammu and Kashmir.

The world scenario changed radically after 9/11. The perpetrators of 9/11 being Arab Muslims, there was a back lash against freedom struggles being waged by Muslims in Palestine.

Congress government to pursue dialogue with Pakistan with a sense of purpose.

Congress governments overtures for settlement of disputes and restoration of normal friendly relations with Pakistan have been welcomed by the government and by Pakistani media. Pakistani leadership, especially Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has decided wisely to ignore Mr Natwar Singh's statements, and has welcomed proposed Secretary and expert level talks. Mr Masood Khan, spokesman of the Foreign Office stated that, "This is a very good development and it gives certainty and definite direction to the calendar of meetings agreed to by the Foreign Secretaries earlier this year. Pakistan has accepted the proposed dates, and is looking towards meaningful dialogue with India aimed at resolving all issues, including the Kashmir problem".

A day earlier Mr. Natwar Singh had remarked that peace dialogue with Pakistan will continue and that India had supported Pakistan's entry into the Commonwealth." Later he said that India is willing to consider the gas pipe line through Pakistan, subject to iron clad security of the pipeline. The outcome of the Secretary level talks will provide evidence about Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's government's seriousness to settle the Kashmir problem and other issues. Kashmir problem might have been resolved years back, if both the sides had adopted a pro-active peace policy. Thousands of lives have been lost and much destruction has occurred because of Indian policy to settle the Kashmir problem by military power. Indian policy of occupation by military force has failed, and the congress government needs to open a new chapter and formulate a new Kashmir policy of peaceful settlement of the Kashmir problem. There is much at stake, and both the governments realize that the meetings should produce results. It is time that Indian rulers and politicians understand that the core problem between India and Pakistan is the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir. Solution of the 57 year old dispute is vital for sustained peace in South Asia. The people of Kashmir are a party to the dispute and the APHC, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front and the Muslim Conference must be allowed to participate in Indo-Pakistan dialogue on Kashmir.

The government of Pakistan, the people of Pakistan, and the Kashmir masses and leaders cannot agree with adhoc settlement along the Line of Control. The LOC is like the Berlin wall, which has kept families apart for too long. The Berlin wall was a wall of steel and concrete, and looked impregnable. But it was brought down within hours by peoples fury. The LOC is a nebulous, amorphous and imaginary line with army trenches bunkers, and barbed wire.

jammu and Kashmir, and Chechnya. The BJP government in India and Ariel Sharon's government in Israel took advantage of the new situation and embarked on punitive military actions and world wide propaganda to discredit the movements for self determination, legitimate aspirations, and restoration of human rights as terrorism.. Kashmiri's struggle for self determination was discredited as Pakistan sponsored terrorism.

Unable to confront the flaming fury of President George Bush junior - "You are with us or against us", President Pervez Musharraf had no choice but to assure Washington that Pakistan will fight terrorism in all its manifestations. Meanwhile after the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament, India deployed its entire military against Pakistan's borders, with ultimatums of imminent invasion. India demanded end to infiltration across the LOC and to material support to the Kashmiri Mujahidin. Readiness of Pakistan's armed forces and resolute leadership of General Pervez Musharraf averted a near catastrophe. Infiltration of volunteers across the LOC has completely stopped, but the Kashmiri's struggle for freedom continues unabated. Unable to crush Kashmir's aspirations for freedom, India has intensified military brutalities, and the daily death toll has nearly doubled.

The Musharraf-Jamali government has adopted a policy of moderation, accommodation and flexibility. The government is prepared to take bold steps, and hopes for reciprocity from India. But cynics argue that what has been lost on the field of battle cannot be won on the negotiating table. Both the countries need to forget the bitterness of the past, and start a new chapter of give and take and reconciliation.

The Kashmiri people have paid a very heavy price and asking them to forget and forgive the killers who have wantonly gunned down their near and dear ones, will not be easy. The Kashmiri's have deep scars on their hearts and minds, and these cannot heal under Indian occupation and unabated slaughters and tyranny. Tyrants never realise the horrors of their terror. Those who ordered decimation of nearly one hundred thousand Kashmiri's, and Indian military personnel, both officers and men who perpetrated massacres and gang rapes must be held to account for their crimes in Kashmir.

If Milosovich and Serbian politicians and generals could be arrested and arraigned before the International tribunal at the Hague for crimes against Bosnians; why no investigations have been ordered to determine the crimes of Indian rulers, Indian Governors, and Indian Army's Corps, Div and Brigade Commanders who have been on the rampage in Jammu and Kashmir since fifteen years.