

**Indian Kashmir talks offer sows confusion, anger.**By **Chaitanya Kalbag**

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NEW DELHI, July 28 (Reuters) - India's Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral has caused anger and confusion in both his country and neighbouring Pakistan with an apparent about-face on talks with Moslem militants in Kashmir.

Gujral stunned friends and foes alike on Saturday by announcing during a trip to the troubled Himalayan region that he was willing to hold unconditional talks with the militants.

He reversed direction on Sunday to clarify that he would not negotiate with the guerrillas unless they laid down arms.

Gujral got into an angry shouting match in Parliament on Monday with Atal Bihari Vajpayee, leader of the rightwing Hindu Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the main opposition group.

"I strongly protest against the allegations that I say one thing in the morning and another in the evening," Gujral told the lower house, the Lok Sabha.

Gujral said his offer for talks was aimed at young men he said were misled by separatist propaganda.

"During the speech I had said I was prepared to talk to all those young men who have been misled," he said.

"No new policy statement has been made," Gujral insisted.

Pakistan denies arming the Kashmiri militants and says it provides only moral and diplomatic support. Analysts in Islamabad were quick to attack what one termed Gujral's "somersault".

"This somersault is nothing new because the Indian leaders have never translated their words into any serious action," Agha Murtaza Pooya, a former head of the Islamabad-based Institute of Strategic Studies, told Reuters.

"It is leading nowhere. The Indians are just trying to make a sweet symphony...while continuing to intensify their barbarities in occupied Kashmir," Pooya said.

Ghani Jafar, a research analyst at Islamabad's Regional Institute of Strategic Studies, said India felt compelled to find a political settlement in Kashmir because of international expectations but in reality wanted time to crush the militants.

"There is considerable international expectation for India to find a political settlement for which negotiations with people in Kashmir are an essential part," Jafar said. "On the other hand, they wish to crush the struggle and buy time without engaging in meaningful dialogue with Kashmiris and Pakistan."

The BJP's Vajpayee said Gujral's statement had been broadcast by India's state television, causing doubts about the government's Kashmir policy.

"The manner in which the statement has been published and appeared on the television says a lot," Vajpayee said.

Gujral said there had been several skirmishes involving militants and Indian security forces along the Pakistan border for the past three or four months. He said his offer for talks was not aimed at militants trained across the border.

India has steadfastly refused to negotiate with the militants, who have been waging guerrilla warfare since 1990 for Kashmir's independence or merger with neighbouring Pakistan.

Ashis Nandy, a senior fellow at New Delhi's Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, said Gujral's Kashmir turnaround was first a thrust in the direction he felt India's handling of the situation in the volatile region ought





to take, but his subsequent "climbdown" was more a parry in terms of his own fractious coalition's constituents.

"In Indian politics, many times to placate some lobby you come out with a second formulation after conveying your message to the targets of the first formulation," Nandy said.

Gujral heads the wobbly 15-party United Front coalition which embraces both communists and free-marketeters and much of his time is spent in tackling what Nandy called "consensual politics".

Kashmir's leading separatist alliance said on Monday it wanted to be included in talks with India and Pakistan to resolve the Kashmir dispute.

"The Hurriyat always believes in peaceful talks provided these are held among all the parties to the dispute with the help of neutral mediators," the All Parties Hurriyat (Freedom) Conference said in a statement.

Police say about 20,000 people have been killed during the rebellion in Jammu and Kashmir, mainly Hindu India's only Moslem majority province. Human rights groups and the state's chief minister Farooq Abdullah put the death toll at over 50,000.

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