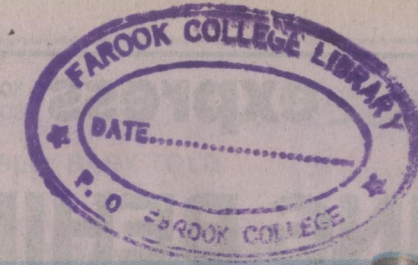


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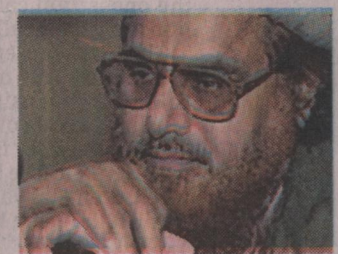
Mind & Body
Meditate to restore inner peace

Travel | Parambikkulam: When the rainclouds gather

THANGAL: A VOID NONE CAN FILL



Nail Saeed, India tells Pakistan



Express News Service
New Delhi, August 1

REJECTING Pakistan's contention that Hafiz Saeed's involvement in planning the Mumbai attacks had not been established, India on Saturday said that enough evidence had been provided to Islamabad against the chief of Jamaat-ud-Dawa, a front for the terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba.

A fresh document containing information sought by Pakistan on the Mumbai attack investigations was also handed over on Saturday to Islamabad. Union Home Minister P Chidambaram said the seven-page document (and annexure) was in response to certain information sought by Pakistan. Three documents on the Mumbai investigations have already been submitted by India.

Chidambaram claimed that much of the fresh information sought was provided



Policemen help an injured CRPF jawan after a firing by suspected militants, at Residency Road in Srinagar on Saturday. One CRPF person was killed and another was injured in the attack. Report, P9

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Please refer 1 Witness 2 Page - 2 of Section - 3

Briefs >>>
CBI may question Buta Singh p9
New Delhi: The CBI on Saturday said



1936 - 2009

Express News Service

HE was the most benign face of India's secular politics. Perhaps Panakkad Syed Mohemmadali Shihab Thangal, 73, who became history on Saturday night, was the only Muslim political leader in India's post-Independence history who was acknowledged across the country as the cornerstone of secular politics.

Though from the early seventies Thangal played the role of an anchor in keeping the United Democratic Front together, the country bowed in front of him post-Babri demolition when his mature stand ensured that the fallout didn't rock a highly sensitive state like Kerala.

Thangal always kept away from the portals of power. But he was the first and last word in the era of coalition politics whose words were diktat for even mainstream parties like the Congress. Though Thangal inherited his legacy, he used his social stature to uplift the Muslim population, especially the residents of Malabar region.

If the district of Malappuram is today considered as an educationally advanced zone, the credit goes to the vision of Thangal as a socio-political leader. He, through his party colleagues, ensured that the fruits of power reached even the most remote corner and enabled the obscure Muslim population to connect with the mainstream.

But even when the whole nation respected him as a sane element in Muslim politics who didn't compromise with the pressure of minority politics, for the local population he was nothing less than a spiritual source of inspiration.

Thangal suggested solutions to domestic issues with the same ease as he handled state and national politics. For the orphaned mothers, he was the son; for the fragmented families he was the unifying spirit and for society he was a magnet that kept all socio-political elements together. In fact, the vacuum will be felt more by the population of Kerala's northern districts for whom the soft-spoken man of Kudappanakkal tharavadu was a living prophet. Of course, the political space that he leaves behind too will remain empty as none can fill that void. For Thangal's personality is beyond imitation.

>See also P2

Govt not to bail out private airlines

Press Trust of India
New Delhi, August 1

THE government on Saturday virtually ruled out any bail out for bleeding private airlines and warned them of appropriate action if flight schedules were disrupted, while the carriers said they would reconsider their protest decision if their difficulties were addressed.

The government reiterated its advice to private airlines against

suspending operations on August 18, Civil Aviation Minister Praful Patel said in a statement.

Maintaining that state taxes on Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF) had been an issue even before several present carriers came into existence, he said that the government could not be expected to extend financial help to loss-making private carriers.

Patel, who appealed to private carriers to negotiate, also said the Directorate General of Civil Aviation

(DGCA) could take appropriate action under its regulatory powers to protect passengers' interests.

The DGCA also sent a notice to the private airlines telling them that their decision to suspend flights for a day would inconvenience the travelling public and referred to provisions in the law that required them to take some steps in that event.

The regulatory body asked them to confirm within 48 hours whether

they would abide by the rules that require the carriers to inform the DGCA about the cancellation of flights and the immediate refund of tickets to passengers.

In the wake of the government's tough postures the Federation of Indian Airlines (FIA), the umbrella body of Indian carriers, said they would only be happy to enter discussions with the government and reconsider their unanimous decision to suspend operations on August 18, if their difficulties

were addressed.

The FIA in a statement said their decision to suspend flights had been grossly misunderstood, adding that it was neither a threat, nor blackmail, nor a desire to pressurise.

It said the protest was not intended to cause deliberate inconvenience to passengers but was only for fair treatment.

"It is emphatically denied that member airlines are seeking any charity or bailout from the Gov-

ernment of India," it said.

Citing the high incidence of taxation on ATF and airport charges, the FIA said, in the difficult operating environment the airlines were asking for the creation of a level playing field by reducing these costs.

The airlines body said it only wished to emphasise that they would be unable to continue operations and like every other industry their industry should be viable and sustainable.

SIT LAPSE: TERRORISTS BECOME WITNESSES

Express News Service
Kannur, August 1

THE Special Investigation Team (SIT) of the police investigating the terrorist case linked with the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) has made a serious lapse by listing three hard core terrorists - actively associated with the LeT and its terror network - as mere witnesses in the case filed in this connection in the Thalassery Additional Sessions Court.

According to the Thalassery-based People's Council for Civil Rights (PCCR) headed by T Asafal, the charge sheet filed by the SIT headed by DySP V K Akber in the Additional Sessions Court, carried this flaw which is likely to make the entire case a farce.

Interestingly, the investigating team had recorded the statements of the three hard core LeT terrorists, Fias Ahmed, Sajjad Ahmed Roshi and Shabeer Ahmed under Section 161 of the Criminal Procedure Code during the course of the investigation. They figure as witnesses number 147, 148 and 149

in the case, going by the charge sheet filed by the investigation team in the court.

The gist of the terrorist case was that 23 Kerala youths, in association with the militant organisation LeT, worked together in a Kashmir forest and participated in a training camp, conspired to wage war against India and recruited youths to Kashmir for militant training.

Four of them, Yasin, Fayas, Shakeer and Fayis, died in encounters with the Army in October last year. The SIT headed by Akber had charged 23 people under various provision of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act 1967 and under Section 120(B), 121, 121A, 124A, 465, 471 of the IPC. The police recorded

the statements of Fias Ahmed, Sajjad Ahmed Roshi and Shabeer Ahmed, which revealed that they had worked under the LeT and had actively participated in the training camp of the LeT in the Kashmir forest imparting training to seven Pakistanis, five Keralites and three Kashmiris.

>See also P6

The SIT had recorded the statements of the three hard core LeT terrorists

Mystery of the missing Keralites

K M Sree | ENS
Kozhikode, August 1

KERALA leads in many social evils like suicides, alcoholism and dowry deaths. Another worrying trend may be added to this list: the growing 'man missing' cases.

According to the report of Criminal Intelligence Gazette of Kerala Police, the number of persons reported missing this year is 173, which includes 51 men and 122 women. Where have these persons gone? Many might have left home because of family problems and some

might have landed in various rackets or worse, in the hands of anti-nationals. There seems to be no convincing answer.

What is more alarming is the place from where they are missing. Police sources say that nearly 75 pc were reported missing from their own homes. Where they have vanished is yet to be answered. While a few of the missing cases were reported when the persons were on their way to temple, work and hospital, the exact location from where they were missing could not be identified in some cases.

Missing persons belong to all age groups, though there are small variations in the number. The report says that 28 out of the total absconding are teenagers. While 51 of the missing, including 36 women and 15 men, were in the 20-29 age group, those in the 30-39 age group include 12 women and 15 men.

Middle-aged persons also constitute a major portion. Of the 173 cases reported from 2009 March to June, 48 belong to the 40-plus group. Nearly 50 pc are aged over 55. While it is alleged that many in the be-

low-30 group willingly left their homes, the cases of the elderly throws a question mark on the attitude of the present generation towards their parents.

The maximum cases are from Thiruvananthapuram (24). The numbers in the other districts are: Kollam 20; Pathanamthitta 19; Kottayam 12; Idukki 14; Kasargod 8; Kannur 14; Kozhikode 11; Palakkad 2; Thrissur 22 and Ernakulam 19. Fewer cases are reported from Wayanad (1), Malappuram (3) and Alappuzha (1), as per the report in the Criminal Intelligence Gazette.

Buta Singh may be questioned in the Rs. 1 crore bribery case in which his son Sarobjit has been arrested. "If necessary we will. No decision has been taken on it yet. We will go by the law," CBI Director Ashwani Kumar told reporters here on being asked whether the investigating agency will question Buta Singh, chairman of the national commission for scheduled castes. PTI

River breach

Patna: Around one lakh people were affected as the swollen Bagmati breached its embankment near Tajpur in Bihar's Sitamarhi district on Saturday prompting Chief Minister Nitish Kumar to order a high-level probe into the breach and deployment of national disaster response force personnel. PTI

Communal clashes

Lahore: Three persons were killed and several others injured on Saturday when police opened fire to quell clashes between Muslims and the minority Christian community in Pakistan's Punjab province following the alleged desecration of Quran. PTI

Interception test

Washington: US has successfully carried out a missile interception test with its state of the art Aegis ballistic missile defence system over the Pacific sea near Hawaii island, amidst a standoff with North Korea over Pyongyang's clandestine nuclear and missile programme. PTI

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POLL OF THE DAY

Will Pak now act on evidence against Lashkar chief Hafiz Saeed?

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YESTERDAY'S RESULT: Are private airlines justified in suspending flights?

YES 86% NO 14%

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LEAVING BEHIND AN UNFULFILLED DREAM



Express News Service
Kozhikode, August 1

PANAKKAD Syed Mohammadali Shihab Thangal is leaving behind an unfulfilled dream. Even when he was not keeping well, Thangal was active in discussions to bring all the warring Muslim factions under one umbrella.

Though a leader of just one faction of the Sunnis, Thangal commanded respect from all sections of the community. He was the Quazi of more than a hundred mahals in North Kerala. It was the presence of Thangal that gave credibility to P K Kunhalikutty's move to unify the Sunnis. There were many moves from the IUML to get closer to the Kanthapuram faction, who considered close to the CPM and "dead against" the IUML.

Many of IUML's attempts to woo Kanthapuram did not succeed because of opposition from the E K faction. IUML national president E Ahmed even had to face the wrath of the E K Sunnis for attending a programme organised by Kanthapuram at his Makazu Ssaquafathi Ssunniyya early this year. But all the opposition came to a halt when Thangal himself gave a call for Muslim unity.

Thangal's presence also guaranteed that the community was not carried away by the vitriols of short-sighted elements among the Muslims. Kerala owes much to Thangal for preventing the state from going the North Indian way. His stoic face betrayed no twitch of unease when even stalwarts like Ebrahim Suleiman Sait left the party, branding the IUML as power-



IUML leaders P K Kunhalikutty and P V Abdul Wahab MP paying tributes to Mohammadali Shihab Thangal at his ancestral home in Panakkad on Saturday

hungry. He was not ready to change the party's course when the extremist elements posed an open challenge because he was quite convinced of his position on issues. Thangal did not lose his poise even when the IUML citadels in Malappuram crumbled in the last Assembly

elections. He vowed to bring his party back to its glory -- and he did in the Lok Sabha polls. It would be difficult for the IUML to find a worthy successor because there aren't many in the party who would be acceptable the way he was to even those who did not agree with IUML.

The Affable Peacekeeper of Panakkad

IT is now both easier and harder to view Muslims as persons -- Roland Miller (Muslim Friends).

Easier, because you live closer to the Muslim than even before. Harder, because it is more difficult than before to overcome the politically reinforced stereotype of your Muslim neighbour as the other. The importance of Syed Muhammad Ali Shihab Thangal for Kerala is here. He may not be your ideal public figure, spiritual leader, but you trust him.

Shihab Thangal, the public figure who has just completed an eventful quarter century in quiet stewardship of the Indian Union Muslim League, arguably the one remaining mainstream parliamentary political party

the truly Islamic sense of a peacekeeper to his people, as the Muslim phrase of everyday greeting 'Assalamu Alaikum' thoughtfully evokes. "Peace be unto you."

In a democracy you really don't fancy anyone holding any office for that length of time and especially if that office has come his or her way by way of some birthright. But in the case of Shihab Thangal who was reluctant to take over the parties reins from his father PMSA Pookoya Thangal and has worn his political mantle so lightly, you tend to forgive. For you know that the price you pay for peace in such trying times is never too high.

This is not the place or the time to discuss if his own party would have

had in the past more charismatic supremos. Shihab Thangal's own father-in-law Syed Abdul Rahman Bafaqi Thangal was one. But the party never had anyone with Shihab Thangal's natural Sufi grace and charm and a cool head over the shoulders wit that has given Kerala a quarter century of relative communal calm. Whether the Muslim League is still communal or not, is only a matter of detail.

Shihab Thangal has a doctorate in religion from Cairo's Al Azhar University. But his success with his religion rests less on scholarship than on the spiritual aura that goes with Thangal title. The Thangals, like Sayyeds in the North, trace their lineage to the Prophet's family. Religion and family no doubt play a part in the Thangal mystique as his detractors

that that Shihab Thangal in his full-sleeved shirt and mupdu and black furcap has succeeded where more traditional religions in their awesome head wraps and full flowing robes has failed.

Even if the Thangal mystique were to explain his spell over the Mappilas, the mystery of his undisputed appeal as a friend of non-Muslims would remain unanswered. As in the case of the late C H Muhammad Koya, the non-Muslim is able to sense a personal sincerity in his ways even when they are not ready to trust his party. Thus, like the unassuming comma in a sentence, Shihab Thangal both connects and separates Kerala's Muslim milieu and the world; as delicately as he blends in himself the best of Islamic, Indian and Malayali identities.

BODY TO BE LAID TO REST TODAY

Kozhikode, August 1

INDIAN Union Muslim League (IUML) state president and unchallenged leader of the Muslim community in Kerala, Panakkad Syed Mohammadali Shihab Thangal died here on Saturday night. He was 73.

Thangal, who was suffering from various ailments, was admitted to a private hospital in Malappuram at 3 a.m. after he developed uneasiness and collapsed at his residence. He breathed his last at 8.45 p.m. due to cardiac arrest. He is survived by sons Syed Basheer Ali Shihab Thangal and Syed Munawarali Shihab Thangal and three daughters. His wife Shareefa Fathima Beevi died two years ago. The late Panakkad Syed Umarali Shihab Thangal, Syed Hyderali Shihab Thangal and Syed Sadiq Ali Shihab Thangal are his brothers. He belongs to the Syed family, which has its roots in Yemen.

The body of the leader was taken to his ancestral house, Kodappanakkal. The last rites will be held on Sunday at 3 p.m. Born in 1936, Thangal did his studies at the famous Al Azar University in Cairo in Egypt. After post-graduation in Arabic literature, he returned to Kerala in 1965. He took the reins of the party in 1975 from his father Syed PSMA Pookoya Thangal. He continued in the post of state president of his party.

The last rites will be held at 3 p.m.

CONDOLENCES

Thangal was a leader who stood for secularism

—Manmohan Singh Prime Minister

The role played by Thangal in preserving social harmony in the State is laudable

—V S Achuthanandan Chief Minister

The state has lost a spokesperson of secular values

—Ramesh Chennithala KPC president

He always upheld the secular spirit and won the love of people cutting across party affiliations

R S Gawai Governor

Thangal's contributions in preventing the spread of Islamic terrorism in Kerala will be remembered for long

—P K Krishnadas BJP state president