(Statement Issued By R.P. Saraf during Jammu agitation)

The Problem Facing Jammu-Kashmir Today, Its Immediate And Long-Term Solution

I. The Problem

For the last two months, the socio-religious situation in Jammu-Kashmir has been getting worse day by day. Firstly, it overtook Kashmir Valley. Now it is Jammu where it is nearing its explosive point which can generate and lead to highly dangerous results not only for the people of Jammu-Kashmir but also India and Pakistan—thus affecting entire South Asia and finally even influencing the exisiting precarious world balance of forces. The issue which has generated such a turbulent situation is that sometime ago the government of Jammu-Kashmir issued an order on the request made by Shri Amarnath Shrine Board (SASB) to grant 800 kanals of forest land to the SASB for the making of temporary arrangements for the pilgrims on their way to Amarnath Shrine.

The above decision was firstly opposed by the people of Kashmir led by the convener of the Joint Action Committee, Abdul Quyam, advocate, the Hurriyat Conference and other pro-independent forces. There was such a big pressure of the protesting Kashmiri people that the government was forced to reverse its decision to the effect that such arrangements for the pilgrims will hereafter be made by the government, instead of SASB. Thus, ended the agitation in Kashmir in a joyful mood. The moment the government took the decision to rescind its land allotment order to SASB, there was a sudden flare up of strong protests in the entire Jammu region. Immediately, a protest movement against the government started all over Jammu led by BJP and its allied forces in the entire Jammu region and this is continuing for the last 35 days.

During this period, there have been many skirmishes between the government forces and the protestors, resulting in a total loss of 7 precious human lives and a large number of injured.

Such a highly inflammable state of affairs demands from all reasonable and rational elements in Jammu-Kashmir to come forward and sort out a relevant and just solution to the problem that has generated such a grave situation.

II. Immediate Solution

Taking into account the seriousness of the problem now engulfing Jammu-Kashmir, we earnestly appeal to the present Governor of Jammu-Kashmir to take the following steps:

(a) To immediately convene a joint meeting of the Joint Action Committee, Kashmir headed by Abdul Quyam, advocate, and Jammu Sangharsh Samiti (SAJSS) led by Leela Karan, advocate and make an earnest appeal to this meeting.

(i) To sort out a compromising solution on the question of the allotment of 800 kanals of forest land to the SASB.

(ii) To make an amendment in the SASB Act that all members of the SASB will be state subjects. Also including one member from the Malik family who discovered the shrine.

(iii) Everyone from the government to a common citizen to shun violence and adopt democratic ways and means, while saying and doing anything.

(b) If the Governor does not succeed in achieving the above said three objectives, he should submit his final report to the Prime Minister of India who is requested to achieve the above said objectives by all democratic means even getting moral support from Pakistan and all SAARC Members.

III. Long-Term Solution

A realistic, viable and rational proposal to make Jammu-Kashmir an independent federal state by establishing six independent state or regional units on the Indian side and two on the Pakistani side

which can satisfy the urges and aspirations of the three parties concerned, i.e. India, Pakistan and Jammu-Kashmir People.

Under this federal state, the respective national aspirations of India and Pakistan should be balanced by jointly entrusting to them Jammu-Kashmir's three most important subjects, i.e., defence, foreign affairs and currency, in the constitutional form of an Indo-Pak condominium.

The regional aspirations and interests of Jammu-Kashmir people will be served by establishing Jammu-Kashmir as an independent federal state which will deal with all matters except defence, foreign affairs and currency that are to be handled by the Indo-Pak condominium.

The federal state will have its own federal assembly, elected by its six state or regional assemblies and deal with environmental problems, humanitarian issues and constitutional-legal matters. Its self-ruled states or regional zones will be: (i) Ladakh, (ii) Kargil, (iii) Kashmir Valley, (iv) Jammu region, (v) Poonch-Rajouri and (vi) Chenab Valley.

The regional aspirations and interests of J&K People on the Pakistani side will be met by making Pakistan administered area as an independent federal state having its own federal assemblies and deal with environmental problems, humanitarian issues and constitutional-legal matters. Its self-ruled states or regional zones will be: (a) Poonch, Bhimber, Mirpur, i.e., Pathwari speaking area and (b) Baltistan and Gilgit, i.e. Northern Areas.

Lastly, both India and Pakistan are committed to unite the two existing divided parts of Jammu-Kashmir under the joint Indo-Pak condominium within 10 years.

* The ethnic Kashmiri Pandit community be settled in Kashmir valley and the entire settlement plan be put before the Pandit community for its approval.

* The sixty-one year old demand of the 1947 West Pakistani refugees will be met by recognising them as permanent residents of Jammu region.

* Long pending demands of border refugees unsettled (due to Indo-Pak wars and continued skirmishes between Indo-Pak forces on the border) be settled by awarding due compensation to them.