

11/12

One murdered, mosque bombed in Tirunelveli

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHENNAI, Dec. 10. — A man was murdered and a mosque bombed at Tirunelveli in Tamil Nadu early this morning.

Tension ran high in the area after the incident and several buses were damaged. Four battalions of Tamil Nadu Special Police and one battalion of Rapid Action Force have been deployed, Mr S Kumarasamy, additional DGP, said.

Police said it is not clear whether communal rivalry or personal enmity was behind the incident. The incident occurred at the Majid Maria Al-fil mosque at Krishna Nagar in Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli.

Eight people from the nearby Puliyangudi area had come to the mosque for a *tabliq* (a ritual when people from one mosque go to another to

offer namaz and other rituals during Ramzan). After the *tabliq*, the eight men were sitting and chatting near the mosque when a group of men arrived. They hurled bombs and attacked the group. One Abdur Rashid died on the spot.

After the incident, mob damaged a few buses in the Tenkasi-Palyangudi area, demanding action against culprits.

In Chennai too, police are maintaining a strict vigil to avert untoward incidents.

Rajasthan clashes: Ten people, including two women and three policemen, were injured in the Ramganj area here today in clashes between members of two communities. They threw stones at each other following a tiff over a cricket match and an eve teasing incident, police said. Police lobbed tear gas shells to disperse the warring groups, PTI adds from Jaipur.

THE STATESMAN

11 DEC 2006

Plan formula hobbles new states

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Bhan pays for raising uncomfortable issues

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW, Nov. 4. — The replacement of the UP Governor, Mr Suraj Bhan, by Mr Vishnu Kant Shastri has apparently been done to prepare the state for President's rule or the period when Mr Rajnath Singh will remain as a caretaker chief minister if the BJP-led coalition fails to survive in a post-Uttaranchal phase.

Mr Bhan has been transferred to Himachal Pradesh to replace Mr Shastri. The Presidential notification about the assignments came today.

Mr Suraj Bhan, who had embarrassed the government in the recent past on many accounts, may cause problems for the BJP. The party, therefore, wanted a Governor who could understand its problems, a BJP leader said.

During his stint as the UP Governor, Mr Bhan had expressed unhappiness over functioning of the government and raised questions over the welfare projects undertaken for the Dalits under the special component plans. He spoke against the college fee hike by the government. As the chancellor of universities, he recently spoke about bungs in the scholarship scheme for Dalit students.

But his replacement by Mr Shastri — a Brahmin — may send wrong signals to the

people of the state and may prove detrimental to the BJP's political interests, party insiders said.

While this transfer was on the expected lines after Mr Rajnath Singh reportedly demanded a free hand to clear up the mess in UP, the party leaders said a Dalit should have been replaced by a Dalit or a person from the OBCs but not by a Brahmin.

Now all the three top posts for the BJP, the party's state unit president, the chief minister and the Governor are being held by people belonging to upper castes. This is likely to become a major political issue in the state, a BJP leader said. The party has not yet been able to build a Dalit leadership in the state.

Mr Suraj Bhan had become unpopular with the party's upper caste leaders due to his assertiveness on issues related to Dalits.

After today's Presidential notification, Mr Bhan said he didn't have any prior knowledge about the transfers. He, however, tried to put on a brave face by saying "I am happy. It is only a transfer and I haven't been removed... It's good I am going to my home town of Shimla."

"Dalit problem is not confined to UP only. Unfortunately, I made a mistake by criticising my own government", he said.

AD-15

More of the same?

THE BJP has been nervous in Uttar Pradesh ever since the former Chief Minister, Mr. Kalyan Singh, forced the leadership to expel him from the organisation. All efforts to make up the losses suffered have so far failed.

With Assembly elections looming, the saffron forces have got involved in a "trial and error" exercise to improve matters. First, the BJP brought in Mr. Ram Prakash Gupta to replace Mr. Kalyan Singh as Chief Minister. Mr. Gupta did not prove up to expectations. As it felt that time was fast running out, the BJP high command made several attempts to drop him but failed because of inner party conflicts over a successor. Though these quarrels have not ended, the BJP decided to take another chance by inducting Mr. Rajnath Singh in his place. Party circles claim that this is the last change before the Assembly elections due early next year; the hope is that the new Government will do something to raise the BJP's popularity in the country's most populous State.

Contrary to expectations that he would be

A prisoner of his past and of the BJP's political compulsions, Mr. Rajnath Singh is left with little space to manoeuvre.
J. P. SHUKLA reports.

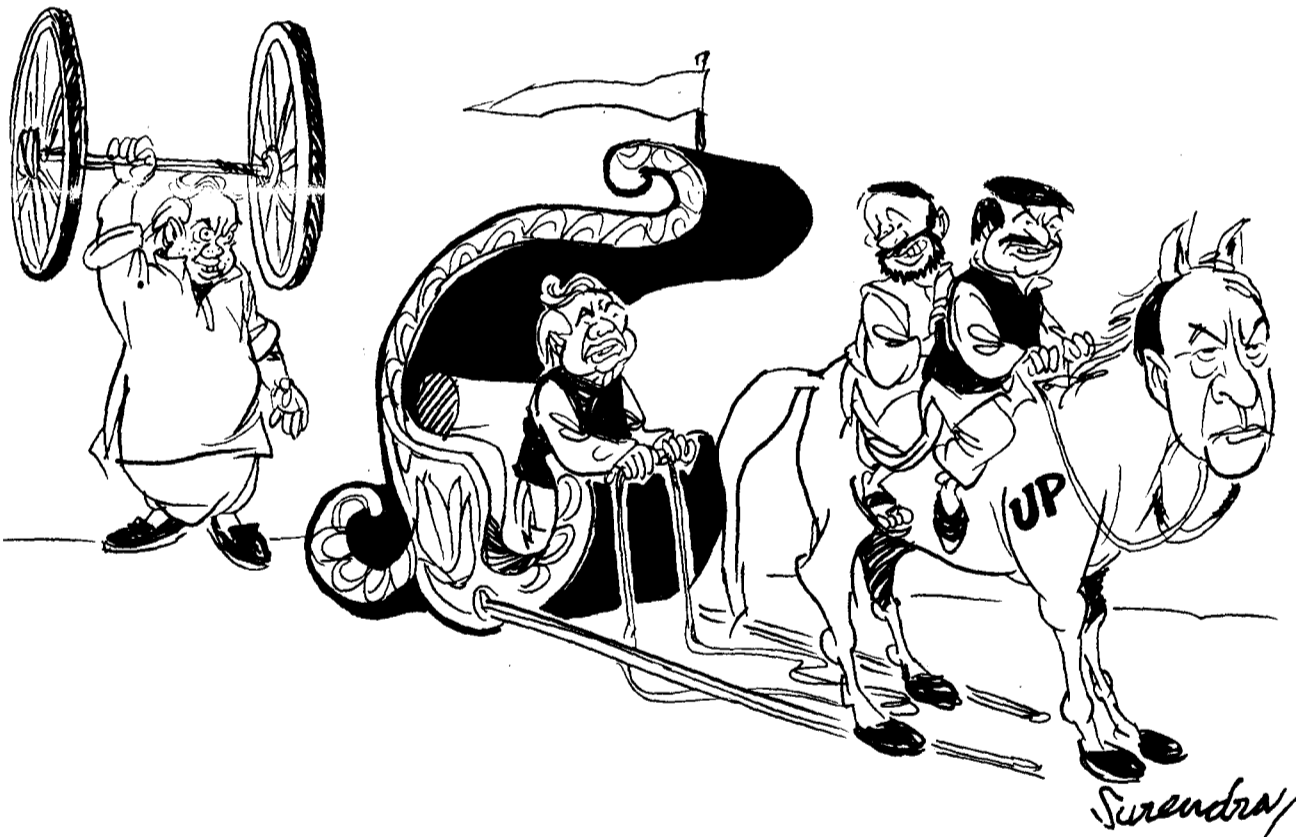
let-up on this score. And that appears to be Mr. Rajnath Singh's biggest problem. The BJP-led Government in Uttar Pradesh has been functioning as a 'many-limbed creature' pulling in different directions. And, the Chief Minister can do little for fear of the Government falling.

Ministers belonging to the Loktantrik Congress Party and the breakaway groups of the BSP are a law unto themselves. Even in cases where Ministers were found wanting in the discharge of their duty, the Chief Ministers could do little.

could suffer a split if its leader, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, tried to touch the Government.

The exact purport of the Chief Minister's warning was difficult to understand but there was talk that Thakur MLAs of all parties might join hands to save his Government. In the past, he was considered the main architect of the defections from the Congress and the BSP to save the Kalyan Singh Government. His critics have given him the sobriquet "master manipulator".

But a "Thakur consolidation" in favour of Mr. Rajnath Singh has generated new problems for the BJP. The "party with a difference" which gained popularity on the professed ideology of Hindutva consolidation has fallen victim to casteism of the worst kind. The Backward Classes in the party have become restless. Mr. Kalyan Singh was a unique blend of Hindutva and caste politics. Since his departure, the Backward Classes have felt sidelined. At least two important Ministers, Mr. Om Prakash Singh and Mr. Ashok Yadav, have already raised uncomfortable questions about the functioning of the BJP.



doing some thing spectacular, political compulsions have forced Mr. Rajnath Singh to tread the beaten path. His first test was over the choice of his team of Ministers — he did not dare to tamper with the list handed to him by his predecessor. All the defectors who had split the BSP and the Congress to prop up the Kalyan Singh Government in 1997 remain in office.

The allotment of portfolios was another test. He initially indicated that he would exercise his discretion but as things unravelled, Mr. Rajnath Singh again surrendered to political compulsions. He waited for four long days but ultimately made no changes in the Gupta Ministry.

The BJP's allies in the State Government have thrived on "blackmailing" successive Chief Ministers and there is unlikely to be a

And this situation is likely to worsen after November 9 when Uttaranchal comes into being. In the truncated Uttar Pradesh Assembly, the BJP-led Government would have a majority of only three. Some in the Opposition have already demanded that Mr. Rajnath Singh prove his majority on the floor of the House.

The Chief Minister hopes to rule over the State on the strength of the divisions among the Opposition parties. However, the BSP has now announced that it will vote against the Government on any no-confidence motion. If the Opposition parties unite in such a situation, it may not be possible for the Government to survive. Mr. Rajnath Singh has announced that his Government will continue in office at all costs. He has also threatened the Samajwadi Party that its ranks

The rhetoric of Mr. Rajnath Singh demanding of officers an improvement in the law and order situation within a fortnight has been ridiculed by Opposition leaders. He himself is accused of bringing into his party a number of controversial characters known for their criminal background.

"His Ministry has at least 22 members having criminal links. Let him first remove them from the Ministry and then talk of an improvement in the law and order situation," has been the Opposition's comment.

A prisoner of his past and the BJP's political compulsions, Mr. Rajnath Singh has been left with little space to manoeuvre. To demand that he should ensure the BJP's success in the next Assembly elections is a tall order.

Uttaranchal born, Nityanand CM

PRASHANT RAHI
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DEHRA DUN, Nov. 8. Uttaranchal was finally carved out of Uttar Pradesh as the 27th state soon after midnight tonight with Mr Surjit Singh Barnala taking oath as Governor amid bursting of crackers and beating of drums.

The Acting Chief Justice of Uttaranchal, Mr AA Desai, administered the oath of office and secrecy to the Akali Dal leader at 2 a.m. at the Parade Ground here.

Five minutes later, Mr Nityanand Swamy, former chairman of the UP Vidhan Parishad, was sworn in as chief minister by Mr Barnala.

Mr Swamy was elected leader of the BJP Legislature Party this evening at a closed-door meeting after his nomination yesterday by the party high command. BJP Legislature Party representatives then handed over a letter to Mr Barnala informing him about Mr Swamy's election.

After his election, Mr Swamy (72) announced he would have no deputy. He told reporters that all villages would be provided drinking water within 6 to 8 months. He said cases registered during the Uttarakhand movement would be withdrawn.

The BJP Uttaranchal Committee president, Mr Bhagat Singh Koshiyari, proposed the name of Mr Swamy. Mr Mohan Singh "Gaonvasi", legislator from Pauri, seconded the proposal. Mr Swamy was elected unanimously by 23 BJP legislators.

The new state would comprise 15,669 revenue villages and 77 towns spread over Pithoragarh, Champawat, Bageshwar, Almora, Nainital and Udham Singh Nagar districts of Kumaon division; Uttarkashi, Chamoli, Rudrapur, Pauri Garhwal, Tehri Garhwal and Dehra Dun districts of the Garhwal division; and Hardwar district of Saharanpur division. The state will be home to 90 lakh people.

THE STATESMAN

6 9 NOV 2001

KARUNANIDHI WARNS AGAINST SECESSIONIST FORCES

T.N. revives STF operations

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, NOV. 20. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, today announced the commencement of Special Task Force (STF) operations to nab the forest brigand, Veerappan, even as he came down heavily on any form of secessionist or extremist forces which tried to renew itself on the 'Tamils plank'.

Any action by the Government against Veerappan would be taken in coordination with Karnataka and "we will also take the Centre's advice and assistance in the operations," Mr. Karunanidhi told newsmen at the Secretariat here after a high-level meeting.

Asked whether Army assistance would be sought, Mr. Karunanidhi said, "if necessary, we would discuss (with the Centre) that possibility."

Pointing out that the number of STF camps in the Sathyamangalam forest area would be increased, police contingents reinforced and more weapons provided to them, Mr. Karunanidhi said four more senior police officials had been chosen to assist the STF operations headed by the IGP, Mr. Balachandran. The officers are Messrs Tamizhselvan (DIG), Periyaiyah (SP), Ashok Kumar Das (SP) and Sailendra Babu (SP).

The officials who participated in today's meeting included the Chief Secretary, Mr. A.P. Muthuswami, the Home Secretary, Mrs. Shantha Sheela Nair, the DGP, Dr. R. Rajagopalan, the Additional DGP (Special Operations), Mr. A.X. Alexander, the Chennai Police Commissioner, Mr. P. Kalimuthu, and the IG (Intelligence), Mr. K. Ramanujam.

Disagreeing with reports that the STF drive could harm innocent villagers in the vicinity of the operational areas, Mr. Karunanidhi said the present regime had been very sensitive to this aspect. The STF personnel would ensure that no harm was done to innocent people, he said.

Brushing aside the Tamil Nationalist Movement leader (TNM), Mr. P. Nedumaran's opposition to the operations until after the STF personnel who perpetrated atrocities on the tribals were punished, Mr. Karunanidhi said various leaders had been expressing their views on this and it was not possible to reply to everyone of them.

Nonetheless, Mr. Karunanidhi, to a related query on the Sadhashivam Commission probing the STF's excesses, made a distinction between the STF operations *per se* and payment of compensation to the affected people as directed by the panel. "These are two different issues," he reasoned.

On 'Tamil Nationalist' claims in the statement

sent by Veerappan and released to the press here by Mr. Nedumaran after the release of the Kannada actor, Mr. Rajkumar's, he said, 'that may be their view'. "But the Government will take a serious note if such speech and acts exceeded limits."

Rejecting the demand for a 'white paper' on the abduction episode, Mr. Karunanidhi also dispelled impressions of LTTE of having been "involved" in the release of Rajkumar.

Declining to comment on the MDMK leader, Mr. Vaiko's recent demand for lifting of the ban on the LTTE, Mr. Karunanidhi said as far as the DMK was concerned, the LTTE had lost its sympathy long back, after the killing of the EPRLF leader, Padmanabha, and the assassination of the former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, in May 1991. But expressing concern for the plight of the suffering Tamils in Sri Lanka was totally different, he added.

On any further step to release TADA detenus from Karnataka and Tamil Nadu jails, Mr. Karunanidhi said the State Government had accepted the Supreme Court's ruling.

STF chiefs meet

Even as the STF commenced operations today, the Karnataka STF chief, Dr. Harshavardhan Raju, came to Bennari and held talks with his Tamil Nadu counterpart, Mr. V. Balachandran, to work out strategies for nabbing the brigand.

Seek Centre's help, says Karnataka Opposition

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, NOV. 20. The Karnataka Opposition tonight demanded that the State Government seek Central assistance to nab Veerappan without further delay. At an all-party meeting convened by the Chief Minister, Mr. S.M. Krishna, they suggested that the Government launch either a commando operation or a guerrilla-type operation.

Stating that the Government had already wasted five days after the release of Mr. Rajkumar, the Opposition leaders also demanded an inquiry into the lapses on the part of the Special Task Force before and after the abduction.

According to sources, the Chief Minister assured the Opposition that he would talk to Mr. M. Karunanidhi, who had already announced the commencement of STF operation, before taking a decision on the issue.

THE HINDU

21 NOV 2000

Nedumaran, two others join Gopal mission

By Suresh Nambath and Radha Venkatesan

CHENNAI, OCT. 10. In a surprise initiative that raises concerns of national security, the Tamil Nadu and Karnataka Governments today deputed Tamil nationalist and pro-LTTE leader, Mr. P. Nedumaran, to secure the release of the Kannada film star, Mr. Rajkumar, and two others from the captivity of the brigand Veerappan.

Apart from Mr. Nedumaran, two others sympathetic to the Tamil nationalist cause, Prof. P. Kalyani and Mr. K. Sukumaran, have set out for the forests along with the first emissary, Mr. R. R. Gopal, to resume talks with the brigand.

The three were authorised to undertake the mission after Veerappan, under the influence of the naxalite TNLA and the pro-LTTE TNRT, indicated dissatisfaction with Mr. Gopal.

Mr. Nedumaran, a strong pro-LTTE proponent of Tamil nationalism, was apparently favoured by the TNRT many of whose members, trained by the LTTE, have taken part in the Tigers' military offensive in Sri Lanka. At a recent conference in Madurai, Mr. Nedumaran exhorted Tamils in India to "register yourselves as Tamil nationals," and not as Indian citizens, in the ongoing census enumeration. Interestingly, one of the participants at the meeting was Veerappan's wife, Muthulakshmi.

Veerappan, in his recent taped message, praised Mr. Nedumaran's contribution to the fight for

to problems through an armed struggle in his message to Mr. Nedumaran. The kidnapping, he told Mr. Nedumaran, was only part of the overall struggle.

Announcing his acceptance of the emissary role, Mr. Nedumaran said the crisis was the result of the continued governmental neglect of just demands. He was undertaking the mission in the hope of obtaining the support of all sections of the people in the two States.

Although the Tamil Nadu Government tried to give the impression that Mr. Gopal continued to be the chief emissary, it appears that at the moment only Mr. Nedumaran enjoys the brigand's goodwill. Mr. Nedumaran, reports say, was persuaded by the Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, to take along Mr. Gopal who knows the forest terrain better. Mr. Gopal, who did not hide his unhappiness at the turn of events, was still keen on being associated with the mission.

Mr. Nedumaran's close links with a Bangalore-based Tamil chauvinistic group led by "Bangalore" Guna, whose acolytes fill the ranks of the TNLA and the TNRT also proved crucial in Veerappan dumping Mr. Gopal and plumping for Tamil nationalists.

While the Tamil Nadu Government dragged its feet over sending additional emissaries, Mr. Nedumaran and his associates are said to have threatened to go to the forests to secure the release of Mr. Rajkumar and others, without any official sanction.

Of the two other emissaries, Prof. Kalyani formerly had naxalite leanings. Mr. Sukumaran, likewise, has Tamil nationalist antecedents. Currently with the PUCI, he was one of those who received the first audio cassette from Veerappan immediately after the kidnapping.

Opposition attacks Govt.

Expectedly, today's development drew sharp reactions from leaders of Opposition parties.

The Tamil Maanila Congress warned that sending a "blatantly pro-LTTE leader" as emissary would lead to renewed activities of the LTTE in the State. Senior

leaders, Mr. S. R. Balasubramaniam and Mr. S. Balakrishnan, said the party would take up the issue with the Union Home Ministry.

The Janata Party president, Dr. Subramanian Swamy, termed Mr. Nedumaran's nomination a "threat to India's national security" saying the latter was an "LTTE stooge and traitor". By asking Tamils to register themselves as Tamil nationals in the census, Mr. Nedumaran was guilty of sedition. By appointing Mr. Nedumaran as emissary, the two Governments had legitimised his Tamil nationalism and pro-LTTE activities, Dr. Swamy said.



P. Nedumaran ... Tamil nationalist leader.

the liberation of Eelam.

The change of emissaries signals a significant shift in the Government's handling of the crisis. Mr. Gopal was chosen for his access to Veerappan. Now, by nominating Mr. Nedumaran, the two Governments have recognised the TNLA and the TNRT as the key to the resolution of the crisis.

By conferring the status of "official emissary" on Mr. Nedumaran,

Emissaries reach Thalawady; SC proceedings won't hit talks; Page 13

the two Governments appear to have given space for negotiations on questions of Tamil nationalism. Veerappan, who confined himself to specific demands in his earlier talks with Mr. Gopal, spoke of finding solutions

SC seeks minutes of CMs' meet Karnataka, TN rapped for giving in to Veerappan

PTI & UNI

NEW DELHI, Oct. 11. — Coming down on Karnataka and Tamil Nadu governments for surrendering to Veerappan's demands, the Supreme Court today asked the governments to place by Tuesday in sealed cover details of meetings between chief ministers before they agreed to release 51 associates of the bandit.

A three-judge Bench comprising Mr Justice SP Bharucha, Mr Justice DP Mohapatra and Mr Justice YK Sabharwal also asked the solicitor general, Mr Harish Salve, who appeared for Karnataka, to place in sealed cover if the state governments had an alternate plan to secure Dr Rajkumar's release.

Referring to the haste in which the two states agreed to Veerappan's demand and the moving of application by the public prosecutor for dropping of Tada charges, it said "it is perfectly clear that everybody has acted in fear of Veerappan".

While adjourning hearing of the petition filed by father of a slain policeman challenging the release of the accused till Tuesday along with PILs filed by advocates Mr BL Wadhwa and Mr Adarsh Ganesh, the court also wanted to know what was the real basis for the Karnataka government to fear a linguistic unrest in the two states.

The court had on 1 September indefinitely stayed the release of the 51 Veerappan associates while hearing the petition filed by Mr Abdul Karim, father of Shakeel Ahmed who was killed by Veerappan on 14 August 1992. Appearing for the petitioner, advocate Mr Chava Badrinath Babu produced a report of a former officer of the special task force, which had warned that Veerappan might kidnap Dr Rajkumar. Referring to the warning the Bench said: "This is shocking and absolutely unbelievable."

Tamil Nadu had in its affidavit claimed that it had shared information with Karnataka a year ago about such a possibility but blamed Karnataka of not informing it about the visit of Dr Rajkumar to Gajanur farm house from where he was kidnapped.

New emissaries: The Tamil National Movement leader, Mr P Nedumaran, who had set out for the forest with two emissaries, Prof. B Kalyani and "Pudhuvai" Sugumaran, joined Mr RR Gopal near the Sathyamangalam forest last night. The team was awaiting signals from Veerappan for entering the forest.

'No Central help sought': Karnataka and Tamil Nadu haven't sought any help from the Centre so far to secure Dr Rajkumar's release.

A home ministry official said: "Law-and-order is a state subject. However, in view of the gravity of the situation, both the governments should at least take the home ministry into confidence in initiating any measures to get him free."

Karnataka changes stance: Karnataka today said it had "very limited role to play" on the Rajkumar issue, but was making all out efforts to secure the early safe release of the actor. Mr SM Krishna said the abduction took place in Tamil Nadu and the hostages were still in that state's territory.

THE STATESMAN

12 OCT 2000

'How did you decide to release Veerappan men?' Rao, Buta SC seeks details of options explored

Rao, Buta plead for leniency

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, October 11

THE SUPREME Court again pulled up the governments of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu today for accepting forest brigand Veerappan's demand for the release of 51 of his jailed associates. The court asked the two governments to furnish details of other options they had explored to secure the release of filmstar Rajkumar from Veerappan's custody.

"They (the governments) should place material before us", the bench of Justice S.P. Bharucha, Justice D.P. Mohapatra and Justice Y.K. Sabharwal said.

The Karnataka government, represented by solicitor general Harish Salve assured the court that details of the meetings of the two Chief Ministers (before deciding to release the prisoners) would be submitted to the judges in a sealed envelope on Tuesday.

The court directed the two governments to substantiate their claims with the help of primary reports that the decision they eventually took - to secure the Kannada matinee idol's freedom in return for Veerappan's imprisoned gang-members - was in public interest.

The court was keen to know whether there was credible information justifying the governments' fear that tensions between Tamils and Kannadigas would escalate if Rajkumar was harmed and what efforts were made to catch Veerappan before the decision to

succumb to the brigand's pressure was taken.

Mr Salve assured the court that he would also indicate the circumstances behind the law enforcement agencies' failure to trap the fugitive for the past 16 years.

Referring to the Governments'

Rajkumar release imminent?

RAJKUMAR'S RELEASE looks imminent as the presence of three new negotiators in Nakkeeran's Gopal's team may be the face-saving formula for Veerappan to release Dr. Rajkumar. Since Veerappan himself had specifically asked for P. Nedumaran, leader of the Tamil Nationalist Movement, the prospects of Rajkumar's release have brightened and top officials handling the crisis are expecting a breakthrough by the weekend.

Detailed report on Page 8

decision to accept the bandit's demands and their subsequent attempt to withdraw TADA charges against his associates, Justice Bharucha observed: "It is perfectly clear that everybody acted in fear of Veerappan".

The court further observed that the acceptance of Veerappan's demands would encourage similar attempts by others in future. Referring to the latest issue of The Economist that carried a report on

the kidnap drama, Justice Bharucha said: "It is unfortunate that an international magazine speaks this way as to how the two states handled the problem".

Counsel B.L. Wadhwa, who moved a petition opposing the prisoners' release, contended that the states governments spent over 20 crore every year on the Special Task Force that has been set up to catch Veerappan.

The court will resume hearing on Tuesday in the case filed by Abdul Karim, father of a sub-inspector killed by the Veerappan gang in 1992.

HTC adds from Bangalore: After an emergency cabinet meeting chaired by CM S M Krishna to discuss the fall-out from today's hearing, Home Minister Mallikarjun Kharge said, "We will provide whatever information the Supreme Court has asked us to".

The Home Minister said the Supreme Court observations would not affect negotiations with Veerappan. Talks to secure the release of Rajkumar would continue as planned. "We have always held the view that negotiations and the hearing in the Supreme Court are two separate issues", he said.

Mr Kharge pointed out that negotiations were the best way out of the crisis. "The negotiators will try to convince Veerappan to release Rajkumar on humanitarian grounds. They will also inform him of the case in the Supreme Court which can take a decision only after hearing both sides on the issue. This will take time", he said.

FORMER PRIME Minister Narasimha Rao and his erstwhile Cabinet colleague Buta Singh, who have been convicted in the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) case, today pleaded before Special Judge Ajit Bharihoke for leniency. The judge, who was to sentence the duo on Wednesday, said he would do so tomorrow as the arguments by both sides were "very lengthy".

R.K. Anand, counsel for Rao, asked that his client be given the minimum sentence (which, in this case, is six months). Rajinder Singh, Buta Singh's counsel, asked that the court release his client on probation, with just an admonition.

Both counsels based their pleas on the "age, medical history and meritorious service (in Rao's case, '65 years in the service of the country') of their clients.

CBI prosecutor R.M. Tiwari told the court it had to decide the quantum of sentence "keeping in mind the gravity of offences" that could attract up to seven years in jail.

Tiwari said the convicts were, unfortunately, high dignitaries "who deceived the whole country by committing the crime". He sought for them a punishment "that could have a deterrent effect" on future wrong-doers.

Both the defence counsels then said Rao has been described as "the best Prime Minister of India" for the achievements the country made during his tenure.

Counsel Singh said even if it is assumed that the four JMM MPs were indeed paid money, "it then is a case of extortion" by them and those in government had "no way out but to give in and save the country from another election".

HTC, New Delhi

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 OCT 2000

KARNATAKA TO FURNISH RECORDS ON OCTOBER 17

What have you done to nab Veerappan, asks S.C.

By T. Padmanabha Rao

NEW DELHI, OCT. 11. The Supreme Court today asked the Karnataka counsel to furnish in a sealed cover, "primary material" including police status reports stating the "genuine" efforts made so far to nab the brigand Veerappan, and also why he was not apprehended and the "reality" of the Government's "perceptions" including any alternative strategy it might consider.

A Bench comprising Mr. Justice S. P. Bhattacharya, Mr. Justice D. P. Mohapatra and Mr. Justice Y. K. Sabharwal was hearing appeals and related writ petitions in the "Veerappan associates-release case".

The Bench, during the hearing, asked whether the public prosecutor was told by the

Karnataka Government about the "real reason" — the brigand's demand (for withdrawal of TADA charges against certain Veerappan associates-accused) in connection with the filing of a petition (by the PP) for withdrawal of the TADA charges under Section 321 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Cr.P.C.) before the Mysore Designated Court and whether the same was mentioned in the application. The Bench also asked if the judge was told about this reason and observed that it appeared to be "pulling the wool over court's eyes".

Mr. Harish N. Salve, Solicitor-General appearing for Karnataka, submitted that he would furnish the primary records including the police status reports and assessments before the next hearing on October 17.

The appeal from Mr. Abdul Karim, a retired

police officer (father of sub-inspector Shakeel Ahmad, who was killed in 1992 along with a Superintendent of Police allegedly by Veerappan) was against the August 19 order of the 'Designated Court', according to the special PP for withdrawing TADA charges against 51 Veerappan associates.

The Mysore Sessions judge's August 28 order directing the release on bail of the 51 accused is also under challenge.

Two connected public interest litigation petitions, one from Dr. B. L. Wadhwa, advocate, and the other from Mr. Adarsh Ganesh, were also before the court.

Mr. Adarsh Ganesh argued that the Tamil Nadu Government decision to release certain 'NSA detenus' was taken on "extraneous considerations", not supported by any valid legal grounds, nor was it taken in the wider public interest.

Dr. Wadhwa contended that the entire episode and the inability of the two State Governments to nab Veerappan, despite the setting up of a joint task force at an expenditure of a few crores, for the past few years indicated not only the "softness" of "state" machinery but also "much more".

If the demands made by Veerappan to set free the Kannada actor, Mr. Rajkumar, and certain others were acceded now, what would be the (state's) response if somebody else was kidnapped "day after tomorrow" as the brigand was at large and remained a "threat", the Bench asked.

The Bench said it was for Mr. Salve to satisfy the court with relevant credible material on the aspects of overriding public interest and administration of justice when the PP moved the application for "withdrawal of the TADA charges". The Bench also queried whether it was the instance when everybody including the State and PP etc. acted in fear of Veerappan.

Convincing Nedumaran: Page 13

'Centre involved in emissary choice'

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, OCT. 11. The Karnataka Chief Minister, Mr. S. M. Krishna, today said the Centre was also involved in the selection of the Tamil nationalist leader, Mr. P. Nedumaran, as one of the emissaries to negotiate the release of the Kannada actor, Mr. Rajkumar, and two others being held hostage by the brigand Veerappan. Speaking to reporters on the occasion of his ministry completing one year in office, Mr. Krishna said Karnataka was depending heavily on Tamil Nadu to secure the hostages' release. He thereby implied that Mr. Nedumaran was selected by Tamil Nadu and by referring to the Centre he meant it had a hand in the selection.

Not official emissary

Our Chennai Special Correspondent reports:

The crisis-management team here, in an attempt to justify Mr. Nedumaran going as an emissary despite his pro-LTTE activism, said

he was not an official negotiator and did not carry any letter from the Government designating him as an emissary.

Since Veerappan wanted the three Tamil nationalists — Mr. Nedumaran, Mr. Sukumaran and Prof. Kalyani — to be involved in the talks, they had joined the mission, officials said. However, they conceded that Mr. Nedumaran would be the chief negotiator as "he will be able to do some cold reasoning and ideologically appeal to the TNLA and the TNRT", in sharp contrast to Mr. Gopal's emotional appeals.

As for Veerappan, sources said, he chose Mr. Nedumaran, principally because he "actively mobilised public support" for the accused in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case. "If the Government goes back on its assurance on releasing the five Tamil extremists in Tamil Nadu and the 121 TADA detenus in Karnataka, Veerappan expects Mr. Nedumaran to take it up at public fora."

THE HINDU

12 OCT 2000

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12, 2000

20-12 **NEDUMARAN AS NEGOTIATOR** 17/10

HAVING MEEKLY YIELDED to every demand that was possible to satisfy, the Governments of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have now capitulated before Veerappan and his new-found extremist friends in selecting a negotiating team. By entrusting the release of the filmstar, Mr. Rajkumar, to Mr. P. Nedumaran, an unabashed admirer of the LTTE, and two others with marked Tamil nationalist sympathies, the two Governments have gone from being weak and over-accommodative to dangerous and irresponsible. The argument that the TNLA and the TNRT, the left-extremist groups backing Veerappan, preferred to deal with the likes of Mr. Nedumaran does not at all justify the decision. The negotiators are not there in their private capacities but as official emissaries of the two States. Selecting someone such as Mr. Nedumaran, whose Tamil nationalistic philosophy is laced with the sinister overtones of secessionism and extremism, in such a capacity sends out dangerous signals. Apart from the possible risk of providing undesirable space for negotiations on Tamil chauvinist issues, the choice of such negotiators lends the tacit stamp of approval to the causes they espouse. The Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have failed to recognise this or wilfully ignored this aspect — and this is inexcusable. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, in particular, who administers a State where a certain brand of noxious Tamil nationalism occupies a limited but distinct political space, ought to have realised the damaging implications of giving it some play. All in all, the point is that men who espouse views such as Mr. Nedumaran's must be politically shunned and cannot be coopted by the Government to do its bidding.

This issue goes well beyond whether the recently-constituted negotiating team succeeds in

securing the release of Mr. Rajkumar and the other two hostages. The safe release of these men, who have been in captivity for over two months now, is imperative and it is understandable that the two State Governments are concerned about this. For some time now, the Governments have been suggesting that the release of the hostages is imminent. It is now clear that the TNLA and the TNRT are key players and will play a vital role if the crisis is to be resolved. It is extremely likely that in the event the hostages are set free, these extremist groups would prefer that the hostages be handed over to those who espouse similar causes. If this is achieved, the end to the Rajkumar crisis, which has kept two State Governments on tenterhooks and raised the spectre of unrest and communal violence, could be cunningly dressed up as a victory for Tamil nationalism. Mr. Nedumaran may be the Governments' emissary but he has had no qualms about revealing which side of the abduction divide he is on. While accepting his role as official negotiator, the Tamil Desiya Iyakam leader has attributed the whole crisis to the continued Government neglect of Veerappan's "just" demands. If there were any residual doubts about whose emissary Mr. Nedumaran is (the Governments' or the brigand's), then this statement should more or less settle them. Neither Mr. Karunanidhi nor Mr. S. M. Krishna has cared to explain why, after repeatedly stating there was no plan to change the journalist, Mr. R. R. Gopal, as emissary, they have plumped for a new negotiating team. What was the compulsion for the change? At whose initiative was Mr. Nedumaran and the others appointed? What do the Governments hope to achieve by making the change? These questions demand answers. If these are unlikely to be truthfully answered, it is simply because the answers would be much too embarrassing to divulge.

THE HINDU

12 OCT 2000

MISSION WILL SUCCEED THIS TIME, HOPES EMISSARY

Nedumaran sent only to help Gopal: Karunanidhi

40-1
14/10

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, OCT. 13. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, today justified the Government's decision to send the Tamil Nationalist Movement (TNM) leader, Mr. P. Nedumaran, and some human rights activists to the forest, along with the official emissary, Mr. R.R. Gopal, to negotiate with the brigand Veerappan the release of the Kannada actor, Mr. Rajkumar, and the two other hostages.

Brushing aside strong objections by Opposition parties' to the choice of the LTTE-friendly Mr. Nedumaran on the ground that it would help to establish links between pro-LTTE groups and Tamil extremist elements in the Veerappan camp, Mr. Karunanidhi saw the criticism as being somewhat out of place.

Responding to a volley of questions at a press conference in the Secretariat here, Mr. Karunanidhi said the movement led by Mr. Nedumaran was not banned in the State. Asked about Mr. Nedumaran's open support to the LTTE's cause which could impart a new dimension to the hostage crisis, the Chief Minister said several po-

9-67 Karnataka
litical parties in Tamil Nadu backed the LTTE.

In a pointed reference to a "strong LTTE supporter" (Mr. Veeramani heading the Dravida Kazhagam) being part of the AIADMK-led Opposition front now, Mr. Karunanidhi asked, "why is the serious concern expressed here (in relation to Nedumaran), not expressed there?"

Denying a report in *The Hindu*, attributed to the Karnataka Chief Minister that Mr. Nedumaran was Tamil Nadu's choice, Mr. Karunanidhi said Mr. S.M. Krishna had informed him over the telephone this morning that the latter had been misquoted.

Mr. Nedumaran had not gone as the "Government's emissary", he said to another query. His trip was not at cross-purposes, but was only to help Mr. Gopal, Mr. Karunanidhi said, adding Mr. Nedumaran joined as mediator only with the 'consent' of the *Nakkeeran* Editor.

Mr. Gopal's "acceptance" of Mr. Nedumaran in his fifth forest mission "also makes them emissaries". Veerappan himself through a cassette had requested that Mr. Nedumaran, Prof. Kalyani and Mr. Sukhumaran be sent

this time, he said, adding it was in accordance with that wish the decision to send the TNM leader was taken.

Disagreeing with a suggestion that Veerappan's insistence on Mr. Nedumaran's presence reflected the brigand's loss of faith in the official emissary, Mr. Karunanidhi underscored that Mr. Gopal's concurrence was pivotal to this episode. Nonetheless, he declined to divulge the source through which the brigand's cassette was received.

To another question, Mr. Karunanidhi was sceptical of the Opposition's demand including that of the TNCC(I) that an all-party meeting be convened, just as the Karnataka Chief Minister had done, to discuss the "official strategy" to resolve the hostage crisis. "There (in Karnataka) all the parties are of one view on this," he said. Claiming that he did not think that the Supreme Court calling for "primary material" from both the State Governments in the TADA detenues cases was an interference with the Executive, Mr. Karunanidhi said, "we respect the courts".

Expressing the hope that Mr. Rajkumar and the other hostages

would be released by Veerappan this time, Mr. Karunanidhi said that Mr. Gopal and others have "got the signal" from Veerappan early today and were proceeding to his hideout.

Team on way to hideout

Meanwhile, Mr. Gopal, who contacted the *Nakkeeran* associate editor, Mr. A. Kamaraj, at 8 p.m., expressed the hope that their mission would be "100 per cent successful this time", a press release from the magazine said.

Advani offers assistance

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 13. While favouring a national policy on incidents like hijacking and abduction, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, today said that the Centre was ready to help Karnataka and Tamil Nadu in resolving the issue of Kannada matinee idol Rajkumar's abduction by Veerappan.

Talking to newsmen here today, Mr. Advani said it was for the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu Governments to handle the situation arising out of Dr. Rajkumar's abduction. "We are there to help when a request is made to us," he said, adding that a few years ago the Centre had deployed BSF to tackle the sandalwood smuggler Veerappan. Without elaborating, he said the Centre had got nothing to do with Mr. P. Nedumaran, a Tamil nationalist leader, joining the team of negotiators.

The Home Minister said he had asked his Ministry to evolve a broad framework on policies and responses prevalent worldwide in tackling incidents like hijacking. He said the decision to evolve a policy on hijacking was taken after the Kandahar incident which had led India to swap three dreaded Pakistan militants for safe release of passengers held hostage aboard an IA plane.

Jayalalitha's criticism: Page 1:

Minutes not recorded: Karnataka

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, OCT. 13. The Karnataka Government will submit on October 16 (Monday) the "primary material" asked for by a Supreme Court Bench hearing writ appeals and petitions in the Veerappan associates release case.

A high-power committee, dealing with the Rajkumar abduction crisis (which entered the 76th day today), discussed the preliminaries of the issues framed by the court — whether the decision to withdraw TADA cases against the 51 Veerappan associates was taken in the wider public interest, the basis for the apprehension that any harm to Mr. Rajkumar will lead to widespread clashes in the State and whether any genuine effort was made all these years to nab Veerappan

and the material to support it.

The meeting was chaired by the Karnataka Chief Minister, Mr. S.M. Krishna. Later, the State Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. D.B. Chandre Gowda, told presspersons that the documents would be furnished to the court in a sealed cover. However, some of the classified documents would not be presented in the court. Mr. Gowda said today's meeting discussed which of the documents should be supplied.

To a question, he said the minutes of the meetings between the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka on the abduction crisis had not been recorded. That was his information. The Supreme Court has called for the minutes of these meetings.

THE HINDU

10 OCT 2000

HOSTAGES, EMISSARIES LEFT IN A CONVOY

Rajkumar, two others freed by Veerappan?

By Our Staff Reporter

ERODE, OCT. 15. Amid intense expectations that the veteran Kannada actor, Mr. Rajkumar, and two others held in captivity by forest brigand Veerappan for the last 77 days could be freed anytime now, police sources at Sathyamangalam claimed that the three hostages "have been released tonight".

The sources said that Mr. Rajkumar and two of his relatives, Mr. Govindaraju and Mr. Nagesh, on being released by Veerappan from the Thalamalai forest, were believed to have boarded a car near the ghat road there around 8.30 p.m.

The Governments' emissary, Mr. R.R. Gopal and the others who had joined him in his fifth forest mission this time, including the Tamils Nationalist Movement (TNM) leader, Mr. P. Nedumaran and the two human rights activists, were also stated to be in the convoy of six cars noticed near the Thalamalai ghat road. The cars drove away towards the Chennai Main road, it was said. Rather intriguingly, a top police official in Erode later said, "I have no information."

No confirmation

Our Chennai Special Correspondent writes:

However, the police claim could not be confirmed in Chennai till 1 a.m. on Monday by either the *Nakkeeran* Associate Editor, Mr. A. Kamaraj, or by the office of the Tamils Nationalist Movement leader, Mr. Nedumaran.

The police claim came as a climactical topper to one of the most daring abductions executed by the poacher-cum-sandalwood smuggler-turned 'Tamil militant', on July 30 last, when Mr. Rajkumar and three others were kidnapped by him and his associates from the actor's farmhouse at Gajanur.

Anticipation of the hostages' imminent release

has been building up since last night. There was more optimism early today when the TNM general secretary, Mr. K. Parandaman, in a statement issued in Chennai said that they had received a message from Mr. Nedumaran. It said talks with Veerappan were going on smoothly, adding, "some good news is expected by tonight".

Adding to Mr. Nedumaran's hope that they would return with Mr. Rajkumar this time, Mr. Kamaraj said that he too expected a definitive word from the forest by tonight.

Mr. Gopal had been chosen as the official emissary of both the Tamil Nadu and Karnataka Governments to negotiate with the brigand the hostages' release, based on the journalist's 1997 track record in helping to free nine Karnataka forest department officials. But, the first four missions Mr. Gopal undertook this time were much more complex.

In a strange twist to the abduction drama, one of the hostages, an assistant film director, Mr. Nagappa Maradagi, "escaped" from Veerappan's clutches on September 28.

This had come as a major setback to Mr. Gopal's efforts, amidst the Supreme Court already indefinitely staying the release of the 51 TADA detenus from Karnataka and five Tamil ultras from Tamil Nadu, two of the key demands made by Veerappan for releasing the hostages.

Subsequently, in Mr. Gopal's latest mission, the emissaries' team had been expanded, ostensibly on Veerappan's request, to include the pro-LTTE leader, Mr. Nedumaran and the human rights activists, Prof. Kalyani and Mr. Sukumaran.

This had already raised concerns about the banned Sri Lankan Tamil militant outfit LTTE, "remote-controlling" the kidnap drama through the TNLA and TNRT, two outfits which have linked up with Veerappan in the forest.

Karnataka optimistic

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, OCT. 15. The Karnataka Government has not received any concrete information about the release of Mr. Rajkumar till 1 a.m. on Monday following the efforts of the team of emissaries who have been negotiating with the brigand Veerappan.

However, there was an air of expectation throughout the day based on a message reportedly sent by the Tamil Nationalist Movement leader, Mr. P. Nedum-

aran, to the Tamil Nadu Government.

The Karnataka Chief Minister, Mr. S. M. Krishna, said the Government had not heard anything about the progress, if any, made by the four emissaries — Mr. R.R. Gopal, Mr. Nedumaran, Prof. Kalyani and Mr. Sukumaran.

On the selection of Mr. Nedumaran as one of the emissaries despite his pro-LTTE leanings, Mr. Krishna said the question had already been answered. He

was also not aware if members of Mr. Rajkumar's family had left for Chennai.

The choice of Mr. Nedumaran and the two other emissaries, said to be connected with human rights organisations, has hardly come in for comment in political circles here as the main focus has all along been on securing the hostages' release. By and large, the Opposition is with the Government in its efforts to secure the release.

THE HINDU

16 OCT 2000

DRAMATIC TURN TO 78-DAY ORDEAL; WAIT FOR THESPIAN CONTINUES

Veerappan frees Rajkumar's son-in-law

By Our Tamil Nadu Bureau

CHENNAI, OCT. 16. In yet another dramatic turn to the Veerappan-triggered 78-day-old hostage crisis, the brigand tonight released the Kannada thespian Mr. Rajkumar's son-in-law, Mr. S.A. Govindaraju, even as the situation with regard to the actor himself and the other hostage, Mr. Nagesh, remains unknown.

The Additional Director General of Police (Special Operations),

Mr. Govindaraju was one of the four who had been kidnapped on July 30 from the actor's Doddaganur farmhouse in Erode district. The others were Mr. Nagesh, another relative of Mr. Rajkumar, and Mr. Nagappa Maradagi, a film assistant director, who escaped on September 28 from the clutches of the brigand.

This sudden development, amid conflicting reports on the release of the hostages, apparently points to a hitch in the negotiations process, undertaken by the team of emissaries led by the

Nakkeeran Editor, Mr. R.R. Gopal, and including the Tamil Nationalist Movement (TNM) leader, Mr. P. Nedumaran.

Even as the emissaries' team is returning to Chennai tomorrow, the jerky turn to the mediation was unexpected as only a few hours earlier, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, had said that the remaining three hostages were likely to return either later today or tomorrow.

In a positive indication here this evening, Mr. Karunanidhi, re-

plying to reporters' queries on reports on the release of Mr. Rajkumar and the other hostages, said, "There is expectation that they will return either today or tomorrow."

"I have nothing more to add," he said, while parrying another question on whether Mr. Rajkumar will arrive in Chennai or proceed to Bangalore. Mr. Karunanidhi's remarks assumed significance as they came amidst continuing doubts about reports of the release of the hostages last night.

However, police sources in Sathyamangalam continued to maintain today that the release of the hostages took place last night, though their whereabouts were unknown to them.

Nedumaran's message

Meanwhile, Mr. P. Nedumaran, who joined Mr. Gopal this time on his fifth forest mission, is understood to have sent a message to the Chief Minister today.

Earlier in the day, the *Nakkeeran* termed the reports on the release of the three hostages last

night as "rumours". The magazine in a statement here said that negotiations to secure the release of the hostages were continuing with Veerappan.

Interestingly, the inherent difficulty in any official confirmation from the police side on the actual release of the hostages came to light when officials at the STF's Bannari camp and in Erode said that they were not doing any vehicle checks. They have been told to "keep the roads surveillance-free" to avert any "hindrance" to the Government emissary.

"We are not watching who is going in and who is coming out of the forests," police sources said, adding, unless there was a specific instruction from the Government to look for any particular person, they were confined to their camps.

Nonetheless, these sources did not rule out the possibility of Mr. Rajkumar and others having been taken to a nearby hospital for a medical check-up, as they had been held captive by the brigand for over two months. In fact, following the reports on Mr. Rajkumar's release, some police personnel are believed to have made enquiries in major hospitals in places such as Erode and Coimbatore, to check for the freed hostages' possible arrival there.

Advani offers help: Page 14

Ill-health reason for release?

By Our Staff Reporter

BANGALORE, OCT. 16. While the reason behind Veerappan releasing only Mr. Govindaraju is not known, speculation is rife that it might have been his ill-health.

Earlier, there were rumours that the health of Mr. Govindaraju, a diabetic, had deteriorated, and that he would be the first to be released.

Mr. Govindaraju, a film producer, is the younger brother of Ms. Parvathamma and married her daughter, Ms. Lakshmi. In his mid-forties, Mr. Govindaraju looks after Vajreshwari Combines, the film production house owned by the family.

Mr. Rajkumar's family refused to speak about the release. A source close to the

family said there was variation in Ms. Parvathamma's blood pressure, and the family doctor, Dr. Ramana Rao, examined her late in the night.

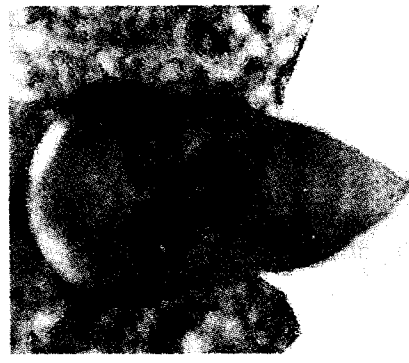
"Ms. Parvathamma's health has been a cause of concern, and an air of uneasiness prevailed at Mr. Rajkumar's Sadashivanagar residence," sources said, adding that her condition was stable. Mr. Rajkumar's elder brother, Mr. Varadiappa, and his family members arrived at the Sadashivanagar residence at around 11.15 p.m.

The Chief Minister, Mr. S.M. Krishna, held a high-level meeting with the Home Minister, Mr. Mallikarjun Kharge, the Home Secretary, Mr. M.B. Prakash, the DGP, Mr. C. Dinakar, and the City Police

Commissioner, Mr. T. Madiyal. The meeting, which began at Mr. Krishna's home 'Anugraha' at 11 p.m., went on till midnight.

It is said that the Chief Minister convened the meet as there was some definite information about Mr. Rajkumar's release.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Kharge had said the State Government was anticipating "good news any moment", since it had received a message to this effect from the Tamil Nadu Government. However, he could not specify the exact hour and moment when the "good news" was likely. According to his information, talks by the four-member team with Veerappan in the forest were smooth and successful.



Govindaraju

Mr. A.X. Alexander, said late tonight that Mr. Govindaraju was freed at the periphery of the Sathyamangalam forest around 7 p.m. The released hostage is proceeding to Bangalore, according to him.

CHI MINDO

STATES SHOULD EXPLAIN WHY BRIGAND REMAINS FREE

Veerappan's extremist links distressing, says SC

By T. Padmanabha Rao

NEW DELHI, OCT. 17. The Supreme Court today expressed serious concern and "extreme distress" over the association of the brigand Veerappan with certain secessionist elements, mentioned in an affidavit filed by the Tamil Nadu Government in connection with the "Veerappan associates release case".

A Supreme Court Bench said, "there is no doubt at all that anyone would feel extremely distressed". The Bench also observed that the "onus lies heavily" on the Governments of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka to satisfy the court with "primary material" why Veerappan, who had committed so many atrocities, killings and kidnappings, had not been apprehended and also what would happen if the "other people" — Veerappan associates (whose release he demanded) — were allowed to join him in the forest.

The two Governments should satisfy the court that the material on record was considered bona fide by them while seeking withdrawal of 'TADA' charges against the Veerappan associates.

The Bench, comprising Mr. Justice S. P. Bharucha, Mr. Justice D. P. Mohapatra and Mr. Justice Y. K. Sabharwal, was hearing appeals and related writ petitions in the "Veerappan-associates release case".

Mr. Harish N. Salve, Solicitor-General appearing for Karnataka, said "we share the court's distress" adding that the relevant material had been placed before the court (in a sealed cover).

The Bench directed the designated court in Chennai, through the Madras High Court Registrar-General, to forward forthwith the papers and proceedings relating to the "withdrawal" of "TADA charges" against Venkatesan alias Radio Venkatesan, whose release was also sought by the brigand.

Earlier, Dr. B. L. Wadhwa, advocate who filed the public interest writ petition, referred to the serious criminal atrocities indulged by Veerappan for the last 16 years. He contended that the applications made by the public prosecutors of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu before the designated courts concerned for "withdrawal" of "TADA charges" against certain ac-

Dawaram affidavit: Page 13
Misplaced optimism: Page 15

cused (Veerappan associates) did not disclose any relevant material. The PPs concerned did not apply their minds independently to any relevant material to satisfy themselves of "good grounds" in the interest of "administration of justice" and wider public justice and interest, counsel argued.

The Bench said some of the issues were whether the PP was bound by the government's decision, whether he (PP) had applied his mind to the relevant material independently (in furtherance of administration of justice under the Code of Criminal Procedure) and whether the concerned courts were satisfied on the basis relevant material to accord

"consent" for withdrawal of "TADA charges" in furtherance of administration of justice.

Earlier, Mr. Wadhwa filed an affidavit from Mr. Walter Dawaram, a retired Tamil Nadu Director-General of Police, which said that he (Mr. Dawaram), functioned as commander of the joint task force of both the States and led operations against Veerappan's gang.

Mr. Wadhwa then argued that the factor of impregnability of the forest area in nabbing Veerappan, as mentioned in Tamil Nadu's affidavit, was negated by Mr. Dawaram's affidavit. He pointed out that a "lethal combination" of a criminal and certain secessionist forces such as the TNLA and the TNRT, was emerging.

During the hearing, the Bench asked whether there "is such apprehension of widespread violence and loss of life in Karnataka if something should happen to Mr. Rajkumar (Kannada actor kidnapped along with three others)" and that "this has to be seen in the light of relevant material before the court and that material also had to be looked at as to what happened in the last 8 to 10 years."

"The effect" of the release of the concerned accused — Veerappan-associates — on the witnesses who had deposed so far before the court, on those yet to depose, on the morale of the police force and the joint task force and on society had also to be looked at, the Bench said. It had also to be seen whether giving in to the brigand's demands now would mean that someone might be kidnapped again, the Bench said.

THE HINDU

18 OCT 2000

Can detenus' release free hostages, asks SC

By T. Padmanabha Rao

NEW DELHI, OCT. 18. The Supreme Court today asked the Karnataka counsel how the State Government was sure that, on withdrawal of "TADA charges" against the 51 Veerappan associates as demanded by the forest brigand, the actor, Mr. Rajkumar, would be set free, when his (Veerappan's) other "political demands were ignored".

The court also asked who took the decision and whether all the 'pros' and 'cons' and repercussion of such a decision were con-

19/10
sidered and how the Government zeroed on the release of the 51 'TADA' accused (Veerappan associates).

Mr. Harish N. Salve, Solicitor-General appearing for Karnataka, said he would make his submissions in this regard after consulting the Chief Minister.

Mr. Salve contended that the release of the "TADA detenus" was the real demand while the 'political demands' — resolution of the Cauvery water dispute, unveiling of statue of Tamil savant Thiruvalluvar in Bangalore and Tamil language issue in Karnata-

ka — were only meant to irritate people and stir their emotions.

Were there other groups behind Veerappan in making such political demands, the Bench asked.

The counsel submitted that the 51 TADA accused belonged to his (Veerappan's) community and it appeared that they had no terrorist links.

The Bench, comprising Mr. Justice S. P. Bharucha, Mr. Justice D. P. Mohapatra and Mr. Justice Y. K. Sabharwal, was hearing appeals and related writ petitions in the "Veerappan- associates accused release case".

Mr. Salve argued that decisions taken by the executive on policy matters particularly involving larger issues of security in a crisis, which needed quick decisions on balancing various public interest aspects, were not amenable to judicial review.

Observing that the court was not going into the "judicial review" of the Government's decision, the Bench inquired if considerations on relevant material in deciding to "withdraw TADA cases" (under Section 321 of the Cr.P.C.) were taken into account.

Efforts to nab Veerappan not given up: Page 13



The Kannada thespian, Mr. Rajkumar (third from left) with the emissaries team before they left the forest. To his right are Mr. Nedumaran, and Mr. Gopal and to his left are Prof. Kalyani, Mr. Sukumaran and the forest brigand Veerappan. — Photo courtesy: Nakkeeran

THE HINDU

19 OCT 2000

'KIDNAP DRAMA A PLOY TO HELP VEERAPPAN?'

T.N. failure to provide security unpardonable: S.C.

By T. Padmanabha Rao

NEW DELHI, OCT. 19. The Supreme Court today asked the Tamil Nadu Government what prevented its posting two policemen to provide security at Mr. Rajkumar's residence in Gajanur in Erode district when the State authorities were informed by the Karnataka police over a year ago, of the threat of the actor being kidnapped by the forest brigand Veerappan. This was "unpardonable", a Bench observed.

Providing security to such an important person had nothing to do with his wanting security or not, the Bench said.

The Bench also asked what guarantee was there of Mr. Rajkumar being set free on the release of 51 TADA detenus (by Karnataka) and 5 detenus (by Tamil Nadu). The brigand had demanded the release of the TADA detenus. The Bench observed that all concerned (both in Karnataka and Tamil Nadu) had been acting out of 'pure fear' and reacting with 'panic' from the beginning.

The Bench comprising Mr. Justice S.P. Bhattacharya, Mr. Justice D.P. Mohapatra and Mr. Justice Y.K. Sabharwal, was hearing an appeal and related writ petitions in the 'Veerappan-associates accused release case'.

Adverting to the impugned order passed by the Mysore Designated Court giving 'consent' to the public prosecutor for withdrawal of TADA charges against 51 Veerappan associates, the Bench just observed that "it is terrible".

"Please consider consequences of adverse decision" (on Section 321 of the CrPC — withdrawal of TADA charges) at the moment and "please consider your option," the Bench observed.

As far as the executive was concerned in this regard, "the material is not before us," the Bench said and observed that "if something happens to Rajkumar the entire blame will be on the two States (for the last 10 years)".

The Bench also observed that when the two Governments "had failed to nab Veerappan,

why should not one think that the whole kidnap drama was a ploy to help Veerappan".

If a government said "it cannot control mob violence, then it should pack up and go," the Bench said. Mr. V.R. Reddy, senior counsel appearing for Tamil Nadu, submitted that there was no prior information of Mr. Rajkumar's arrival and stay at his farmhouse in Gajanur on July 28. It was not his planned visit. As the police were busy in connection with tea plantation workers' agitation in a nearby area, the thought (security of Rajkumar) did not occur to them.

Counsel said that, in view of three major operations conducted by the State police task force during February 1999 and June 2000 the strength of the Veerappan gang had been considerably reduced. He also said the secessionist elements were a "spent force".

Observing that it (the court) had the "benefit of seeing things without wool over its eyes" (in the matter of 'withdrawal' of TADA charges against the Veerappan-associates for securing the release of the hostages), the Bench said it "is all part of pre-arranged package". "We regard this very serious and all concerned were acting in a knee-jerk reaction," the Bench said. The Bench queried when both the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka met to consider the 'demands' of Veerappan and agreed or responded.

This was very relevant, because even before the emissary Mr. R.R. Gopal returned (after meeting Veerappan), some of the demands had been conceded by Karnataka, the Bench observed. The "idea" was "what time you had to consider the demands".

The Bench observed that "if there is an association of Veerappan with some people (secessionist elements) in that terrain coupled with their activities — smuggling, poaching, etc, who knows what plan would be hatched, what arms would be procured and what training would be imparted?" This was "something

really dangerous" and the three judges (on the Bench) were "concerned as the individual citizens of the country over this."

A lethal combination of Veerappan with secessionists did not appear to have received the attention of the authority concerned, the Bench observed. The approach was that "somehow we should get the release of Mr. Rajkumar." The Bench said it was not informed of the material before the public prosecutor concerned when he sought the withdrawal of the "TADA charges".

Earlier, Messers Harish N. Salve and K. Parasaran, senior counsel for Karnataka, concluded their submissions.

Storm dissipates

By Our Special Correspondent

HYDERABAD, OCT. 19. Andhra Pradesh came out of a cyclone threat on Thursday as the cyclonic storm that remained off the coast for four days keeping the coastal belt on the tent-hooks weakened into a low pressure area and waned even without crossing the coast.

The State Government, which had made war-like preparations to meet the challenge and the people living in coastal districts heaved a sigh of relief.

The system was dewarned following a clear statement made by weathermen this morning about the dissipation at a meeting held by the Chief Secretary, Mr. P.V. Rao, to review the situation. In his words: "the cyclone came with a bang and left in a whimper."

The heavy rain that lashed parts of coastal districts as a precursor, however, claimed two lives and damaged standing paddy crop in the "rice granary" spread over Krishna and the twin Godavari districts. The downpour damaged 36 houses in Uppada mandal of East Godavari.

THE HINDU

20 OCT 2000

'ALLIES BRIEFED ON CHANGE OF GUARD IN U.P.'

Rajnath in, Gupta out

By P. K. Roy

LUCKNOW, OCT. 24. The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. Ram Prakash Gupta, yet to complete one year in office, will step down tomorrow and the BJP legislature party will elect a new leader. The Union Surface Transport Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh, will be his successor according to the BJP State chief, Mr. Kalraj Mishra.

Confirming that he would bow out of office, Mr. Gupta told mediapersons here this evening that he had expressed a month ago to the central leadership his inclination to step down on health grounds. Because of bad health he could not shoulder the responsibility of leading the party to success in the Assembly poll. However, he was able to project a better image of the State and a lot of good work had been done. Asked why he had been claiming that he himself would lead the party to success in the Assembly



R.P. Gupta... cites health reasons.

poll, Mr. Gupta merely remarked that he was told by the party leadership not to drop any hint of a changeover.

Earlier, in the afternoon, when reporters sought his comment on the speculation of his imminent replacement, Mr. Gupta said such reports were merely media conjectures. He had not been told about any changeover by the central leadership. However, he said he would bow out as a loyal soldier of the party, if it asked him to step down.

Things moved swiftly thereafter and Mr. Mishra, who was called to New Delhi by the central leadership to be told about the changeover, revealed the agenda for the evening. The BJP legislature party was to meet this evening only to elect Mr. Rajnath Singh its new leader. Since the Assembly was in session and emotional speeches were being made bidding farewell to members from Uttaranchal, the meeting could not take place and had to be rescheduled for tomorrow. A number of central leaders were expected to arrive in Lucknow to oversee the changeover. The swearing-in of Mr. Singh is likely to take place after Deepavali, but by month-end.

Mr. Singh, an ace strategist, was tipped to succeed Mr. Gupta a few months ago. However, Mr. Mishra and two senior Cabinet Ministers — Mr. Om Prakash Singh and Mr. Lalji Tandon united to thwart the Centre's bid and make common cause with Mr. Gupta. However, reality dawned on the party that it would be hard put to it to remain in power after the creation of Uttaranchal on November 9, when it would be left with a majority of only two MLAs, including half a



The Union Surface Transport Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh (left), who has been designated Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh with the Lok Tantrik Congress president, Mr. Ram Naresh Aggarwal, in New Delhi on Tuesday.

dozen supporters of the former Chief Minister, Mr. Kalyan Singh, and also the fact that there would not be a pre-poll arrangement with the BSP. Mr. Singh with his political acumen appeared cut out for the new role.

PTI reports:

The decision, on change of guard came at a meeting the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, had in New Delhi with the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, and Mr. Mishra.

Mr. Mishra said the BJP's allies in the Government were taken into confidence before deciding on the choice of Mr. Singh. "I spoke to the leaders of the alliance groups personally and they have no objection in this regard. Moreover, it is the BJP's internal matter

and there is no interference in this regard by our allies," he added. Mr. Singh had a meeting with Mr. Vajpayee soon after the decision about the change of leadership was taken.

Mr. Mishra said the party high command considered the request of Mr. Gupta to step down. In fact, Mr. Gupta had been asking the central leadership to relieve him because he was not able to put up with the "pressure" owing to his poor health.

The choice of Mr. Singh was "unanimous". The State BJP president ruled out the possibility of early Assembly elections after Mr. Singh took over the reins.

Reward for trouble-shooter
Page 13

THE HINDU

25 OCT 2000

Crown of thorns for Rajnath

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN
IN NEW DELHI AND ANAND
SOONDAS IN LUCKNOW

Oct. 24: Staring at the prospect of a rout in next year's Assembly elections, the BJP high command today pulled the trigger on Uttar Pradesh chief minister Ram Prakash Gupta and replaced him with Union minister Rajnath Singh.

Rajnath, a Rajya Sabha member in charge of the surface transport ministry, is expected to be elected leader of the BJP legislature party in Lucknow tomorrow. He will be sworn in on Sunday.

The decision to offer the crown to Rajnath was taken at a meeting this morning between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and home minister L.K. Advani. Uttar Pradesh BJP president Kalraj Mishra was present.

Kalraj was earlier against Rajnath getting the job as he felt an upper caste chief minister could boomerang on the party.

Though the BJP top brass had been toying with the idea of easing out Gupta — who took over from Kalyan Singh barely a year ago — for several months, the drive received an impetus last week for three reasons.

First, sources said, the BJP's internal assessment was it would be wiped out in the Assembly polls if Gupta continued to be at the helm. The party had feedback that even the upper castes were tilting towards Mulayam Yadav's Samajwadi Party.

"Our calculation was the BJP would finish third or fourth," said a leader. "We do not claim a new leader will drastically alter our fortunes, but at least he can ensure that even if we lose, it will be a respectable defeat."

Second, the decision of the Loktantrik Congress Party, the



One done...

Rajnath (right) sent to UP in the first decision by Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee since his return from hospital



...Three to go

- Mamata's oil price rollback demand awaits Vajpayee's decision
- Chief minister nominees for Uttaranchal and Chhattisgarh on the PM's unfinished agenda
- Vajpayee may have to set the record straight after the RSS outburst on minorities

BJP's largest ally in the state, to contest the municipal elections on its own set off the alarm. The high command felt that Gupta had failed to handle his allies and grapple with the complexities of coalition politics.

Rajnath, on the other hand, is seen as a leader "more capable" of handling "difficult" partners like the LCP as it was he and Kalyan who had masterminded "Operation Shakti" in 1998, when they split the Bahujan Samaj Party and cobbled together a government with the help of the breakaway groups of the BSP, Congress and the Janata Dal.

The LCP's move to go solo was, therefore, seen as a precursor to its gradual divorce from the BJP. "We hope Rajnath will reverse this trend and make sure our allies stick with us," BJP sources said.

Finally, the sources added, Gupta, who had the support of Kalraj, upset him by threatening to order a probe into alleged irregularities in the public works department when the state party

chief was in charge of the ministry.

An enraged Kalraj, the sources claimed, complained to Vajpayee, who decided that Gupta must be "reined in".

For the high command, Kalraj's support was essential as he, together, with Lalji Tandon and Om Prakash Singh, had earlier vehemently opposed Rajnath's candidacy.

But Kalraj's backing is not enough. Om Prakash Singh and Ram Kumar Verma, both backward caste leaders, have criticised the move to appoint Rajnath.

Kalraj brushed aside reports of differences. "Rajnath is a natural choice and there is unanimity on this count," he said in Lucknow.

BJP sources said O.P. Singh may be placated with the deputy chief minister's post.

Though the central leaders were at pains to argue that Gupta himself wanted to step down, the axed chief minister made it clear he was being forced out.

"I am a disciplined soldier of the party and if the high command desires to replace me with a better leader, I will have no objection," he said in Lucknow during an informal chat with reporters. Gupta, however, acknowledged that he was accountable for the mess the state unit was in.

That Gupta was miffed with the decision became clear when he refused to answer phone calls from headquarters on the plea that he was busy in a farewell function for outgoing Uttaranchal MLAs.

His inaccessibility prompted BJP president Bangaru Laxman to rush Narendra Modi to Lucknow by the evening flight to take control of the situation and ensure tomorrow's legislature party meeting goes off without a hitch.

■ More reports on Page 6

THE TELEGRAPH

25 OCT 2000

Rajnath elected BJP legislature party leader

Efforts on to woo Opposition MLAs ● Administration tone-up tops agenda ● Infighting in party may continue

Vijay Sharma
Lucknow, October 25

26/10
THE BELATED decision of the BJP high command to replace Chief Minister Ram Prakash Gupta by Rajnath Singh is unlikely to check the ongoing infighting in the faction-ridden state unit of the party.

The BJP has already paid heavily for having an ineffective CM who was presented as a consensus candidate mainly to put a stop to the caste-based rat race for the post. It did not work and the party image took a beating. Soon after sacking of the former CM Kalyan Singh from the BJP, the party high command was in a fix over selection of an alternative who could efficiently run the government besides maintaining good relations with the allies.

The choice was limited to come from among the main contenders Om Prakash Singh, a Kurmi, Rajnath Singh, a Thakur, Kalraj Mishra, a Brahmin and Lalji Tandon, each vying for the coveted post with their own logic of having a vote bank and being good administrators.

The BJP top brass had contemplated a similar but abortive bid of a change of guard in June, but

had to retreat in view of serious complications about the possible consequences. Of the four, the three joined hands at that time to unitedly oppose Rajnath Singh for the post, and willy-nilly favoured Ram Prakash Gupta as the consensus choice. All the three leaders not only expressed full satisfaction over Mr Gupta's style of functioning but also convinced the party high command that having anyone else on the post was not advisable.

Om Prakash Singh had gone to the extent of threatening to resign if Rajnath Singh was brought in as chief minister.

The only difference between then and now is that this time the party high command has taken a firm stand and ignoring the voice of dissidents.

According to BJP insiders, Om Prakash Singh has protested this time also whereas Tandon had remained quiet, at least for time being since the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has given his consent on Rajnath Singh.

The BJP high command has acted out of serious concern at the sagging morale of workers, increasing infighting within the party and growing disillusionment of people.

Shekhhar Iyer
New Delhi, October 25

11/11
MR RAJNATH Singh's priority will be to ensure the survival of the Government and bring life into the administration, plagued by frequent transfers and political interference.

As a Rajput leader, he would certainly endear himself to the upper caste lobby unhappy with the pro-Mandal approach.

But the caste arithmetic and its manipulation in the BJP's favour are not immediate priorities nor main reasons for his selection as new Chief Minister, BJP officials say. Mr Singh became a "natural choice" because Prime Minister A. B. Vajpayee and Home Minister L. K. Advani believed that he had in him to activate the administration and show results in the next one year.

In fact, many BJP leaders agree that a Rajput leader is not the politically correct answer to the current situation in UP, which is seen to be in favour of the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party.

Besides, any talk of wooing upper castes can jeopardise the recent call of new BJP chief Bangaru Laxman to woo Dalits,



backwards and minorities for expanding the party's support base.

Perhaps, Mr Singh's leadership can throw a spanner into Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav's plan to unite Rajputs, along with Yadavs and Muslims under his banner before the next polls.

"The caste arithmetic can always be taken care before the elections. But what we do if we do not have any result to show as a proof of governance?" asks a senior BJP functionary, who used to be associated with the UP affairs until recently.

After all, Mr Singh replaced Mr Ram Prakash Gupta only after the BJP realised that 11 months of Mr Gupta's rein had failed to solve its problems.

Vijay Sharma
Lucknow, October 25

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Om Prakash Singh had gone to the extent of threatening to resign if Rajnath Singh was brought in as chief minister.

The only difference between then and now is that this time the party high command has taken a firm stand and ignoring the voice of dissidents.

However, Rajnath Singh's detractors are still active and, according to available indications, are not going to sit idle. According to BJP insiders, Om Prakash Singh has protested this time also whereas Tandon had remained quiet, at least for time being since the Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has given his consent on Rajnath Singh.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 OCT 2000

26/10
HD-1

SWEARING-IN ON SATURDAY AMID NEW OPTIMISM

Rajnath elected leader

By P. K. Roy

LUCKNOW, OCT. 25. The Union Surface Transport Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh, who was asked yesterday by the BJP central leadership to replace Mr. Ram Prakash Gupta as the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, would be sworn in on October 28. Mr. Singh, who had set his sights on the office for long but faced resistance from the State seniors, was unanimously elected the leader of the BJP legislature party this morning, after Mr. Gupta called on the Governor and submitted his resignation.

The atmosphere at the Janata Darshan hall at 5, Kalidas Marg, official residence of the Chief Minister, was one of new expectation from the young leader. Effusive references were made to Mr. Singh's leadership qualities. This at a time when the BJP in the State was on the downslide and the Opposition was preparing to strike, once Uttaranchal formation reduced the Government to a wafer-thin majority.

Mr. Gupta, who formally proposed the name of Mr. Rajnath Singh, made it clear he was finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the call of the office, owing to age and ill-health despite his achievements. The challenges ahead would be tougher for the BJP in the State and called for a younger and dynamic leadership, he said. He was confident that Mr. Rajnath Singh would fit the bill.

Then followed speeches by the other leaders, mostly Cabinet Ministers, including the State BJP chief and one-time contender, Mr. Kalraj Mishra, who expressed



The outgoing Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. Ram Prakash Gupta (second from left), flanked by the BJP central party observer, Mr. Narendra Modi (second from right), the State BJP chief, Mr. Kalraj Mishra (extreme left), and the Chief Minister-designate, Mr. Rajnath Singh, before the BJP legislature party meeting in Lucknow on Wednesday.

their unequivocal support to Mr. Singh. The challenges were stupendous and called for a leadership which Mr. Singh could provide.

The legislators did not allow the Education Minister, Dr. Nepal Singh, to continue with his effusive speech and raised hands in support of Mr. Gupta's proposal in favour of Mr. Rajnath Singh. The central observer, Mr. Narendra Modi, declared him unanimously elected leader of the BJP legislature Party.

Thanking the party seniors, particularly Mr. Gupta, Mr. Rajnath Singh termed the change-over a democratic process. Mr. Singh recalled his association with Mr. Gupta during the days of Emergency when both were lodged in jail. After reading his horoscope, Mr. Gupta had predicted a great political future for Mr. Singh. "Perhaps he knew I would succeed him."

Some 6 or 7 months ago, Mr. Gupta told him that a younger man like him (Mr. Singh) should

have been saddled with Chief Ministership. During the last one month, he reiterated this several times. He said Mr. Gupta was the most experienced Chief Minister of U.P. and indirectly referred to his role in the BJP victory in the Rajya Sabha and Legislative Council elections. Amid applause, Mr. Singh declared that the BJP, after the next Assembly election, would elect a leader for Chief Minister at the same venue.

Mr. Singh then drove to the Raj Bhavan accompanied by Mr. Gupta, Mr. Mishra, Mr. Narendra Modi, senior Cabinet ministers and leaders of the allies. Mr. Gupta, who was asked by the Governor, Mr. Suraj Bhan, to continue until a government took office, presented to him a copy of the legislature party's resolution electing Mr. Rajnath Singh the new leader. The leaders conveyed their support to Mr. Singh in writing. "Our support is for a stable government led by the BJP. And change of leadership is the BJP's internal matter."

They said there were media reports of the LCP leader and Energy Minister, Mr. Naresh Agarwal, conspiring with the Opposition to topple the BJP Government after the formation of Uttaranchal and becoming Chief Minister.

Speaking to reporters, Mr. Singh exuded confidence that numbers would be no problem for his government and it would complete its full term. There was no question of early Assembly elections. To a question he said the allies posed no danger to the Government.

Gupta taken by surprise: Page 13

THE HINDU

26 OCT 2002

The Hindustan Times

Change in Lucknow

IT ISN'T so much the long anticipated dismissal of Ram Prakash Gupta which is worthy of note in Uttar Pradesh as what the entire period from his appointment as Chief Minister to his unceremonious departure tells us about the BJP's functioning. If the virtually unknown Mr Gupta was suddenly pushed into the limelight after Kalyan Singh's resignation, it is not because the party had discovered hidden talents in this anonymous foot soldier of the Sangh parivar, but because it wanted to avoid a tussle between the three heavyweights of UP politics — Kalraj Mishra, Rajnath Singh and Lalji Tandon. It is possible that at that time the BJP was still thinking of holding on to the non-upper caste votes in spite of Kalyan Singh's exit. Besides, although Rajnath Singh was reportedly a favourite for the Chief Minister's post even then, his chances were apparently scuttled by Kalraj Mishra.

But ever since the latter's election as the party chief in August, it has been clear that the party was reconsidering its caste options. With Rajnath Singh's elevation, the BJP's decision to put all its hopes in the upper caste basket is evident. Perhaps what persuaded the party to make up its mind to tilt so explicitly in favour of the higher segments of society was its unexpected defeat at the hands of Kalyan Singh's fledgling party in a by-election last June. Prior to that, there were clear indications from the voting trends that the BJP's influence was on the wane. Given the choice between trying to retain what increasingly appears to be dwindling backward caste support, and opting for a much surer upper caste base, the party has quite unambiguously preferred the latter course.

No one can be sure that the gamble will pay off, but there is little doubt that the BJP believes that if anyone can pull its chestnuts out of the fire, it is Rajnath Singh. Known as an effective administrator, he should be able to impart a much greater sense of purposefulness to the state Government than his forgetful predecessor could. Any change that he can bring about in this respect will be a boon not only to the BJP but also to the general public who saw the state slipping badly during Mr Gupta's tenure. Despite the boost to its prospects which the BJP will now expect from two of its prominent politicians at the helm of the Government and the party, few in the organisation and outside will have any illusions about the uphill nature of their task. But the BJP has only itself to blame for its troubles as a result of appointing the wrong man at the critical time of Kalyan Singh's revolt.

Convergence cometh

THE INDIAN Government is belatedly formulating a policy that comes to grips with the most obvious mark of the digital revolution: convergence. In the past, electronic information followed technology's equivalent of apartheid. Television signals could only be picked up by idiot boxes. Telephones could only connect with each other. Even relative newcomers like e-mail could only travel between computers. Today, these forms of information are becoming dissolved in a homogeneous digital sea. Television and internet are now accessible via the same instrument. Today's cellphones are both e-mail and telephone receptive. At technology fairs one can find newfangled gadgets that allow a person to operate on all four media — and other media as well. The technological trend is clear. Government policy in these areas is not. New Delhi has been setting up bodies for telecommunications, a new Ministry for Information Technology and continues to have an Information and Broadcasting Ministry.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 OCT 2000

Ultras look

SHIVNATH JHA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 28. — The Centre is considering a proposal to make available to the paramilitary forces, arms and ammunition seized from or surrendered by militants.

The Centre will expedite procedures to get possession and distribute to various para-military forces "huge quantity of sophisticated arms and ammunition, seized by army personnel or surrendered by the militants, lying unused at various police stations in J&K, north-eastern states and other parts of the country," a senior home ministry official said. The paramilitary forces include the BSF, the CRPF, the Indo-Tibet-Burma Police and CISF.

The official said the Centre is also considering examining the arms and ammunition recovered by armed forces during opera-

tions, especially in Jammu and Kashmir and the north-east.

"It has come to light that the armed forces (especially Army) are not following the rules and regulations mentioned in the Arms Acts. Instead of depositing the seized or surrendered arms in the concerned police stations (as envisaged by the Arms Act), they are holding large number of weapons in their possession," sources said.

The proposal is a follow-up action of the Centre as massive expenditure has been incurred to give incentives (including monetary) to militants for surrendering arms and joining the mainstream of development in J&K and North-East in the past several years.

In J&K alone, besides seizures by army personnel, the militants have surrendered huge quantities of arms and ammunition including 1,244 AK-47 and AK-56 rifles, 385 pistol and

Rajnath takes oath, Ajit rules out support

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, Oct. 28. — Mr Rajnath Singh's tenure didn't exactly have an "auspicious" beginning today. He missed the time set by his astrologers for his swearing-in — 2.17 p.m. — by a full five minutes.

There was some worrying news too for the new chief minister. The Rashtriya Lok Dal chief, Mr Ajit Singh, today ruled out support to the BJP-led coalition and dared the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party to move a no-confidence motion against the government to prove that they were serious in opposing it. He said the RLD would support such a motion but expressed his inability to move one as he lacks the numbers. Any such motion must be moved by a major Opposition parties, he said.

But the atmosphere under the white canopy was anything but apprehensive. Thousands of people turned up, with and without passes at the Raj Bhavan, which resembled a fair ground today. Slogans were shouted, bells rung and conch shells blown.

The ceremony was initiated by the chief secretary, Mr AP Verma, after Governor Suraj Bhan took the stage and it continued for another an hour and 10 minutes. Mr Singh and 85 members of his council of ministers took oath today.

There was disorder in the Darbar hall too, where Mr Singh addressed his first press conference as chief minister flanked by the state party chief Mr Kalraj Mishra.

The outgoing chief minister, Mr Ram Prakash Gupta, attended the ceremony along with his family.

Thirty-four of the ministers sworn in today were of Cabinet rank. The only change was that the four ministers who were to be part of the interim Uttaranchal Assembly were not included. Portfolios will be allocated within two days. Mr Singh has promised an expansion of his ministry by the end of November. He does not plan to have a deputy chief minister.

Besides senior BJP leaders, like Mr LK Advani, Mr Murli Manohar Joshi and Dr CP Thakur, many from the NDA were also present to show their solidarity with the saffron brigade in UP. Mr Nitish Kumar (Samata Party), Mr Sharad Yadav and Mr Ram Vilas Paswan (both JD-U), Mrs Maneka Gandhi and son Varun, Dr Farooq Abdullah (National Conference), Haryana and Himachal Pradesh CMs and former Delhi chief Minister Mr Sahib Singh Verma were present.

Mr Rajnath Singh does not think he will have to face any political instability. "The main challenge will be administrative point of view," he said. The law and order situation in the state would improve soon, he promised. Mr Singh's declaration that criminals had just 15 days to mend their ways was greeted by thunderous applause.

He had an unusual offer for officials posted in the districts. "If they feel that they cannot deliver then they should write to the chief secretary or the DGP. They could be accommodated in the secretariat."

✓ MONDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2000 ✓

THE CONTINUING HOSTAGE CRISIS

TWO THINGS FOLLOW plainly from the Supreme Court's attitude towards the Veerappan hostage case. First, it is not going to deliver its judgment — on whether 51 TADA detenus may be released as the brigand has demanded — in a hurry. The court was expected to pronounce its verdict on October 12 but has now scheduled the next hearing for the end of this month. Second, although the judgment is deferred, the judicial mind has already been revealed. Having savaged the Tamil Nadu and Karnataka Governments for acquiescing to Veerappan's demands, the court can hardly endorse the proposed barter of hostages for detenus. The judicial pressure exerted by the court seems specifically directed at forcing the resolution of the Rajkumar abduction crisis through other means. It is possible that, at the end of the day, the court may take a sympathetic view of the plight of the detenus, who have unfortunately languished in jail for many years before the commencement of trial. But the point, and this is the nub, is whether a tardy judicial process justifies a barter secured through abduction and blackmail. The Supreme Court clearly thinks not.

The court hit the nail on the head when it suggested that releasing the detenus does not guarantee that Veerappan and his new-found extremist friends will refrain from abducting someone else in the future. In the long-run, giving in to such illegal demands will only encourage the mischief of abduction and blackmail. The series of abductions staged by Veerappan was unlikely to have taken place if he believed that his demands would not be met. The United States has a policy which governs negotiations in such situations and this rules out considering patently illegal demands such as the release of undertrials. In a recent interview to a television channel, the Union Home

Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, suggested that India put in place a set of rules which restrains the state from going beyond a point when handling hostage situations. A country which frees hardcore militants — whether to secure the release of a planeload of people or just the Union Home Minister's daughter — could well do with a policy on dealing with such situations. Perceptions that the state is a soft target only encourage the tactics of blackmail. HD-12 ✓

As for the Veerappan hostage drama, the circumstances which are holding up the release of Mr. Rajkumar are murky. It is not clear why, despite repeated indications from the State Governments that the film star's release is imminent, he has not been freed. It is also not apparent what is holding up the release and the two Governments have chosen to remain tight-lipped about this. If Veerappan continues to link Mr. Rajkumar's release with that of his 51 associates, then the crisis is going to take a while to blow over. If his freedom is tied to some other demand, it is not clear what this is. The new negotiating team, headed by the LTTE sympathiser and Tamil chauvinist, Mr. P. Nedumaran, has boasted of playing a role in the freeing of one hostage but its optimism in securing the quick release of Mr. Rajkumar and another hostage remains belied. In the midst of the enormous uproar over the appointment of someone with questionable political credentials as a Government emissary, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, has chosen to admit that the choice of Mr. Nedumaran and two other Tamil nationalists was dictated by Veerappan himself. In a situation in which absurdity has been piled on absurdity, this is another bizarre twist. Having permitted Veerappan to stage the abduction, it shows how far the two Governments have been willing to go in appeasing him.

CLEAR THE SMOKE

THE HINDU

200

Hostage escapes, being taken to Bangalore

110-1
29/9

By Our Staff Reporter

ERODE, SEPT. 28. Mr. Nagappa Maradagi, assistant film director, who was abducted along with the Kannada thespian, Mr. Rajkumar, and two others on July 30 night by the forest brigand Veerappan, today escaped from the kidnappers in the Thalimalai forests.

According to the police, the Chamarajnagar Superintendent of Police, Mr. S.S. Anne Gowda, met Mr. Nagappa at Tamil Nadu's Gajanur, where he had arrived by 6 p.m. and was staying in the house of Mr. Rajkumar.

After a brief discussion with the Tamil Nadu police, the S.P. took Mr. Nagappa with him to Bangalore by road around 10.45 p.m. It is stated Mr. Nagappa would be presented before the Karnataka Chief Minister, Mr. S.M. Krishna, tomorrow morning.

The police said Mr. Nagappa was in good health.

Our Chennai Special Correspondent reports:

In Chennai, official sources, however, said Mr. Nagappa appeared to have suffered minor head injuries. The police were still trying to find out how Mr. Nagappa had reached Gajanur from the forest.

Our Bangalore Staff Reporter reports:

In Bangalore, the Karnataka Director-General of Police, Mr. C. Dinakar, told the *The Hindu* that it was not known whether Mr. Nagappa was released or whether he escaped from Veerappan.

Meanwhile, rumours were rife that the forest brigand had handed over Mr. Rajkumar and the

other two hostages — Mr. Rajkumar's son-in-law, Mr. Govindaraju, and nephew, Mr. Nagesh, — to the Government emissary, Mr. R.R. Gopal, with an instruction that they be released on hearing further from him.

To ensure his safety, Veerappan was said to have asked Mr. Gopal to proceed further with them only after he had retreated to a safe distance. However, the police top brass did not confirm this development.

PTI, UNI report:

Mr. Anne Gowda confirmed that Mr. Nagappa had escaped from Veerappan. However, Mr. Krishna told UNI tonight that he was yet to receive an official report from Tamil Nadu about the escape. He said the whole thing had happened in Tamil Nadu and the entire picture was confusing. "Neither myself nor Home Minister Mallikarjun Kharge has been informed of this". However, he had instructed Mr. Kharge to keep in touch with Mr. Anne Gowda.

Dare devil act

According to a Mysore report, Mr. Nagappa said he came out of the forest hideout on the pretext of answering a call of nature and assaulted Veerappan's aide, Sethukuli Govindan, who was guarding him and two others at 3.25 a.m.

He also battled his way out of the security ring thrown by the Tamil National Liberation Army chief, Maran, and suffered a head injury in the process.

He reached Bhavanisagar and came to Bannari hitchhiking a ride. He, later, reached Talawadi by bus and then came to Gajanur.

TN also bound by SC order: Karunanidhi

HT Correspondent
Chennai, September 30

THE SUPREME COURT'S injunction against the release of TADA detainees in Mysore jail would also apply to the five extremists in Tamil Nadu jails, whose release had been sought by forest brigand Veerappan, Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi said here today.

Mr Karunanidhi pointed out that in the case challenging the release of Mysore jail detainees in the Supreme Court, the proposed release of five extremists from TN jails had also been challenged, in two separate petitions filed by advocates Adarsh Ganesan and B. L. Vadhwa.

Since the court had included these petitions along with the original petitions filed by Abdul Karim and had issued notice to the Tamil Nadu Government, there was a legal hitch in releasing these five extremists as well, he explained.

The Tamil Nadu Government would also take legal steps to clear the injunction against the proposed release of the five extremists, he observed.

The Chief Minister said that the emissary, 'Nakkeeran' Gopal, would explain this to Veerappan. Mr Gopal is expected to be back in the city on Monday night and Veerappan's response to the court injunction would

be known then.

Meanwhile, All India Radio stations in Bangalore, Chennai and Coimbatore today broadcast a statement of the Tamil Nadu and Karnataka Governments that the Sadasivam Commission, enquiring into alleged atrocities against villagers by the Special Task Force, would resume its hearing at Klothur near Salem on September 11.

Bangalore: The Karnataka Government has convened an all-party meeting tomorrow to discuss the abduction of Rajkumar and three others, reports PTI. Prior to the all-party meeting, Chief Minister S. M. Krishna

has summoned an emergency Cabinet meeting in the morning to take stock of the situation.

The meetings, come in the backdrop of the Supreme Court staying indefinitely the release of 30 Veerappan associates and the latest videocassette sent by the forest brigand.

Meanwhile, the high powered committee, constituted by the Karnataka Government to manage the Rajkumar hostage crisis, met in Bangalore this evening and took stock of the situation. The meeting, chaired by the Chief Minister, was attended among others by Home Minister Mallikarjun Kharge and Director General of Police C. Dinakar, official sources stated.

Rajkumar Abduction

JMM decides to step up campaign for Sibu Soren

Amitabh Shukla
Ranchi, September 10

11/9

THE JHARKHAND Mukti Morcha (JMM) is all set to appeal to the emotions of its supporters and various constituents of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to make its president Sibu Soren the first Chief Minister of Jharkhand.

After its failure to gain support from Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) and NDA constituents such as the Samata Party and the JD(U), the JMM has now drawn a strategy, which the party thinks can endear the "seemingly impossible" BJP and company.

The party has prepared answers in points to all the objections raised by the BJP in making Mr Soren the Chief Minister. For instance, when the BJP says that it has

the largest numbers in the proposed Jharkhand Assembly, the JMM points out that Mr Nitish Kumar was made the Chief Minister despite less numbers than the BJP in the Bihar Assembly.

Similarly, when the BJP says that a charge-sheeted person (Mr Soren) cannot hold any constitutional office, the JMM counters that even in the ruling party there are several charge-sheeted persons, including the Home Minister L K Advani and HRD Minister Murli Manohar Joshi.

Going a step further, the JMM office bearers here allege that it was the BJP which "framed" guruji in the Shashi Nath Jha murder case to "tarnish his image as the undisputed leader of Jharkhand".

"The BJP could not have made any political progress in the area if

it had not framed Mr Soren and subsequently reaped a political harvest from the allegations," says a JMM functionary. He clarified: "No one knew BJP in the area in the 1980's. The party increased its electoral base by attacking Mr Soren and the JMM in a selective and phased manner."

As the counter arguments of the JMM are logical enough, the top brass of the BJP remain silent. The party says that it does not want to join hands with the JMM in allegations and counter allegations. "We would ideally like the BJP to counter our arguments on the issue of Chief Ministership," says Mr Shailendra Bhattacharya, Central Committee members of the JMM.

But can a party with only 12 members out of 81 in the Jharkhand Assembly stake its claim to form a government? "Yes," replies Mr Bhattacharya. "It was the JMM under Mr Soren which revived the Jharkhand movement and made the creation of the State possible."

Referring to Mahatma Gandhi and Jai Prakash Narayan, the Central Committee member says that both of them made a "mistake" by not accepting "positions of influence" in the party. "Had the two leaders, discharged their duties as the head of the State, the political situation in the country would have been entirely different," Mr Bhattacharya said.

He said that it was the "moral duty and responsibility" of Mr Soren to stake his claim in government formation as he was single-handedly responsible for making the Jharkhand movement successful and taking it to its logical ends.

Jharkhand CM

With UP turning sour dream, BJP focuses on Uttaranchal

Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, September 10

WITH ITS political fortunes in Uttar Pradesh uncertain, the BJP plans to sell a new dream to the people of the new State of Uttaranchal to capture power. While the immediate concern of party leaders is selection of interim chief minister, the real battle is to win a decisive mandate when the elections are held for the new State Assembly next year.

The BJP leaders believe that even though the party has a distinct advantage over the Congress because it took the initiative to create the new State despite several odds, it has to project itself as the harbinger of development. "Our party went ahead with its resolve, knowing well that its ministry in UP will face a difficult time because of a reduced majority in the post break-up period," says a senior BJP leader. "Now, it is our turn to say we will usher in a new dream for Uttaranchal," he adds.

Uttaranchal, like the other two new States of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, suffers from under-

development but boasts of a vast potential in economic terms. Unemployment is a serious issue in the hills where hundreds of families have at least one member serving in or retired from the Armed Forces. Several youths have left their villages in search of livelihood.

Regarded as a BJP stronghold, the party accounts for 17 of the 23 Assembly seats in the pre-break-up UP House. Six of the eight MLCs from the region also belong to the BJP, which gives it the authority to set up the interim Government. The BJP legislators and Members of Parliament from Uttaranchal have already urged the UP Government not to initiate any new project or programme in the region without consulting them. They also want the leaders of the region to decide major investment plans for the State rather than by the Ram Prakash Gupta administration.

Besides, they are also pressing the State Government not to force any IAS or IPS officers to opt for the Uttaranchal cadre unless they volunteer for the new posting. "We

want only those officials, who are keen to work in the new State as it will be a major administrative challenge," says BJP Parliamentary Party chief Maj Gen (retd) B C Khanduri.

Maj Gen Khanduri, who is among the serious candidates for the interim chief minister's post along with UP Legislative Council chairman Nityanand Swami and UP Minister Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, says, "the BJP has to be on guard. The people are looking to us for a clean administration and not a repeat of what has happened in the hills in the last 50 years. We can reinvent our party's future only by impressing the people by what we do in the next two years."

Listing the potential areas for development and money-earner for the new State, Maj Gen Khanduri says that the BJP's future lies in its ability to deliver the goods for the region. "You name it, we have it," he says. "Development of hydel power, horticulture, floriculture, tourism, adventure sports, and commercial forestry. The list is endless."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

11 SEP 2000

NDA reaches consensus on chief minister

n/a *Sept 10*
Ranchi, Sept. 10 (UNI): The chief ministerial candidate of the NDA which is all set to form the first government in Jharkhand is likely to be announced by the end of this month.

BJP sources here said the matter had already been informally discussed among the constituents and consensus had emerged on one of the two names doing the rounds here.

The NDA leaders who would take this decision were likely to meet in Delhi soon after Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee returned from the United States.

A state-level NDA meeting was likely to be held here any day after September 14 to evolve a consensus on its official candidate in consultation with its 52 legislators in the area.

Political parties here, barring the NDA, have demanded an interim government and fresh polls thereafter in Jharkhand as the state is going to be given shape shortly. The demand has been made by the Congress, the Jharkhand Vikas Party, the CPI(M-L), few Left democratic organisations and the NCP today.

The BJP with 32 legislators claimed the seat amidst stiff opposition from another NDA constituent the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha with 12 legislators.

The Congress although divided on the issue of government formation was awaiting a split in the NDA and possibilities of a non-BJP government to be installed by "secular" parties. The party expected division in the Samata Party and the Janata Dal (United) on the issue of extending support to Soren.

While RJD with nine MLAs had decided to stay in the area with the Congress and the other like-minded forces for preventing the NDA from coming to power.

The Congress, however, was divided on the issue of fresh polls to the Jharkhand Assembly with only a section of the partymen, including AICC delegate Roshan Lal Bhatia and J.P Choudhary seeking a fresh mandate.

While the Jharkhand Regional

J. Kishore Prasad
Congress Committee office bearers and party legislators were of the opinion that the Congress must sit in Opposition and wait for its turn, party legislator Theodore Kiro ruled out the possibility of the Congress entering into any "opportunistic alliance" or "horse trading". He said the party would benefit by sitting in Opposition.

The BJP was expecting a split in the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Congress for the "unholy" alliance between the two. A number of Congress and RJD legislators had started sending feelers to the party realising that they had lost credibility on the Jharkhand issue, as claimed by the BJP.

According to a highly-placed source in the BJP here, three of the nine RJD legislators and five from the Congress had shown interest in joining the NDA. However their entry, he said, would not guarantee them berths in the council of ministers.

Fresh mandate sought

The Jharkhand Vikas Party has decided to move court for fresh elections in Jharkhand, adds UNI. Talking to newsmen here, JVP president Ramdayal Munda and vice-president Suraj Mandal said the political parties must seek fresh mandate for the Jharkhand Assembly.

The 81 legislators elected to Bihar Assembly from Jharkhand had already taken oath there and now they could not take oath for the new Assembly, said Mandal, adding, it was "unconstitutional" and "undemocratic".

The JVP leaders said it would also be "unjust" that they who had fought for statehood were ignored while making policies and programmes for the new state. Mandal demanded adequate representation in the interim all-party government for those who were not legislators but had fought for statehood. The party also released a document on those who were in the movement for statehood. The brochure had certain demands like right to recall and right to information for the people.

No consensus on CM, capital for Uttaranchal

67-8
DEHRA DUN, Sept. 12. — Having failed to find a consensus chief minister and a unanimously agreed capital for Uttaranchal, legislators and parliamentarians from the hills now have little choice but to accept the BJP leadership's verdict.

Two meetings, one convened by the only UP minister of Cabinet rank from the hills and the other chaired by the UP chief minister, could do little beyond giving the MLAs and MPs a chance to air their differences.

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After the meetings, Mr. Nityanand Swami, chairman of the UP Council and the senior-most contender for the top post among elected politicians of the ruling party, denied any rift

over the contentious issue. Mr. Ramesh Pokhriyal, member of the UP Cabinet and an aspiring candidate, said the party leadership would take a decision after a visit by two emissaries to Dehra Dun later this month.

Mr. Kalraj Mishra and Mr. Kushabhau Thakre are scheduled to confer with party members here on 18 and 19 September to feel their pulse. A decision will be taken by the central leadership after their opinion is conveyed to higher-ups. The prospect of MLAs and MLCs from Uttarakhand electing the first chief minister of the hill state's interim government, therefore, appears virtually ruled out. — SNS

THE STATESMAN

13 SEP 2000

BJP leaders' race begins for post of Uttaranchal CM

Sunita Aron
Lucknow, August 4

47-24
578

NOW THAT the creation of Uttaranchal State is certain, focus has now shifted to its leadership.

With the power-hungry leaders already in the reckoning, it still remains to be seen that who will get the much sought-after post of the Chief Minister.

The majority believes that the candidate will belong to the Bharatiya Janata Party since it will have a majority in the provisional Vidhan Sabha of the new Uttaranchal State.

The leading contender for the post is the present chairman of the Vidhan Parishad, Mr Nityanand Swamy, an MLC from the Garhwal-Kumaon Graduate constituency.

His nearest rival is Dr Romesh Pokhriyal Nishank, who has been spearheading the movement for the creation of a separate hill State. The other significant contender is BJP state president of Uttaranchal State Bhagat Singh Koshiyari, an RSS activist.

The Garhwal-Kumaon rift, which had been kept under wraps by the legislators till the larger goal of

Uttaranchal was achieved, is now re-surfacing, specially in context of the leadership issue.

Some of them speculate that the Chief Minister would be elected from Garhwal region, which will have a majority in the Provisional Vidhan Sabha.

According to them, of the 19 MLAs, nine were from Kumaon and the three legislators from Hardwar are expected to go with their Garhwal counterparts.

While both Mr Nityanand Swamy and Dr Romesh Pokhriyal are from Garhwal, Mr Koshiari hails from Kumaon. Though Mr Swamy's seniority and non-controversial image go in his favour, his fluctuating loyalty to the party is being seen by some as his weak point. Mr Swamy was a part of the Congress for some time.

Dr Pokhriyal, too, is not without drawbacks. Some of the BJP leaders regard him to be quite close to former UP CM Kalyan Singh.

The reason ascribed for this is the fact that he was given the comparatively less important portfolio of Cultural Affairs by the new UP Chief Minister Ram Prakash Gupta, depriving him of the Uttaranchal Development portfolio.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 AUG 2000

MONDAY, AUGUST 7, 2000

THE THREE NEW STATES

2/11/12 2/18
THE ADOPTION BY the Lok Sabha of the three Bills to carve out Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chattisgarh, even while providing some scope for "development" in these regions, could lead to similar demands from several other regions across the country. The creation of these three new States based on the rationale that smaller States are the only remedy for the curse of underdevelopment cannot but strengthen demands for carving out new States such as Vidharba (in Maharashtra), Telengana (in Andhra Pradesh), Gorkhaland (in West Bengal) and Bodoland (in Assam) in the immediate context. Such apprehensions are not at all misplaced given the ability of members of the political class in these and other regions to play upon the sentiments of the poor people and lead them to perceive that the problems they face are due to the largeness (in the physical sense) of the States and the consequent neglect of their problems and needs. That the underdevelopment of the regions that will now constitute Jharkhand (or Vananchal), Uttarakhand (or Uttaranchal) and Chattisgarh was primarily due to the pervasive insensitivity among the political class as well as the establishment in the three States over the years rather than the States being large cannot be glossed over. And yet if popular support to the demand for Statehood was evident it only points to the ability of the members of the political class in those parts to whip up emotions.

Indeed, the temptation to celebrate the idea of smaller States and believe that this could help rectify the regional imbalances is hard to resist. But then, the experience hitherto on a related issue — the business of carving out more districts within the States — has only dispelled such impressions. The exercise was carried out in several States in the past decade and particularly so in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar; yet there are hardly any indications that such measures have triggered development. Instead, it will not be an exaggeration

to say that most parts of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar have been sliding backwards in terms of human development indicators such as health-care or literacy. The story is not very different on the law and order front. The rationale behind carving out new districts has always been that it would bring the civil administration closer to the people and thus help development and administrative efficiency; the outcome, however, has not been happy. If at all, such measures have led to an enormous increase in unproductive expenditure. Given this experience, the three new States could only mean some more positions of power — three more State Governments and all the staff and paraphernalia that come with them — for the members of the political class.

Be that as it may, the passage of the Bills in the Lok Sabha, particularly the ones pertaining to Uttaranchal and Jharkhand, have brought to the fore the fissures within the ruling NDA. While the absence of the two-member Shiromani Akali Dal squad (the SAD had threatened to walk out of the combine if Udham Singh Nagar district was included in the new State but that was when the party had at least eight MPs in the Lok Sabha) when the Bill on Uttaranchal was passed saved the ruling combine of embarrassment, the loud protests from the Samata-JD(U) members and the walk-out by the Biju Janata Dal over the Jharkhand Bill cannot but bother the political leadership of the ruling combine in the days to come. Apart from this, the promise by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, to create a cell in the Planning Commission to look into demands for compensation to Bihar (the State Assembly had demanded a package running into several crores in "exchange" for the 18 tribal-dominated districts rich in mineral wealth) is also bound to lead to further problems and provide a handle to unscrupulous members of the political class to play upon the emotions of the misguided youth in the rest of Bihar.

THE HINDU

7 AUG 2000

Akalis to stay with NDA, oppose Uttaranchal

By Our Staff Correspondent

CHANDIGARH, AUG. 6. The Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), while deploring and expressing its protest 'in the strongest words' against the inclusion of Udham Singh Nagar district in the new State of Uttaranchal, has decided to remain in the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the Centre. However, the party MPs have been directed to protest, speak and vote against the Bill, whenever it is brought before the Rajya Sabha.

This was disclosed by the party president and Punjab Chief Minister, Mr. Parkash Singh Badal, while talking to press persons after chairing a crucial meeting of the Party's Political Affairs Committee (PAC) here this evening. He clarified that the Union Minister for Sports, Mr. Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa, had not been directed to

resign. He appealed to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee to review the decision.

In response to a question, Mr. Badal said that the SAD had decided to carry on its alliance with the NDA "in the interests of the State and the country at large." He failed to elaborate on the conditions, which led the party not to pursue the previous resolution of the PAC, when about two years ago the SAD had threatened to withdraw from the NDA as soon as Udham Singh Nagar district was included in Uttaranchal.

Mr Badal said that though he had taken up the matter over the phone with the Prime Minister and personally with the Union Home Minister, he had received no assurance regarding any amendment in the Bill. He said that he had conveyed the sentiments of the people of Udham Singh Nagar and reiterated that

the SAD had always sought that the new states be carved out in accordance with the aspirations of the people. He said that the SAD had only one demand that Udham Singh Nagar be kept out of Uttaranchal.

When his attention was drawn to the statements of leaders of other political parties, Mr. Badal avoided accepting that the BJP had betrayed the SAD on the Udham Singh Nagar issue. He added that all that had happened was wrong and unfortunate. He said though the SAD had welcomed the creation of the three new states, it would raise its voice against the forcible, illegal and unconstitutional merger of areas.

Mr. Badal stated that the residents of Udham Singh Nagar district were disturbed and agitated over the decision of the Union Government. He denied commenting whether the tension in

the area could lead to an armed conflict. "You can all gauge what tension can lead to. Our party has taken a serious note of the arrests and use of force against the protesting residents of Udham Singh Nagar district in the last few days," he added.

Earlier, Mr. Badal met a delegation of about 250 residents of Udham Singh Nagar, who came here to meet him. He assured them the SAD would stand by them in their hour of crisis and ensure justice is done. However, Mr. Badal failed to draw out a future course of action, in case an agitational programme was required. The Punjab Chief Minister, dwelled in detail to explain that he was not in the picture as far as the report submitted by the Union Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, who headed a three member committee, was concerned.

THE HINDU

7 AUG 2007

Elders clear Chhattisgarh Bill

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

1078
NEW DELHI, Aug. 9. — Legislative action to create a new state of Chhattisgarh was completed today when the Rajya Sabha followed the other House in approving the Madhya Pradesh Reorganisation Bill 2000. The House voted the Bill in a somewhat jubilant atmosphere.

No formal opposition to the Bill was evident though some members questioned the viability of small states, contended that more powers to the states rather than more states would accelerate development, and that a Pandora's box had opened.

During the discussion, members referred to demands for similar action in regard to

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Telengana, Gorkhaland, Vidarbha and Bodoland. The boundary dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka was also mentioned.

Another feature of the debate was the "competition" among members of the BJP and the Congress to claim credit for the creation of Chhattisgarh. Many a passionate presentation flowed from the members from Madhya Pradesh.

The home minister said there should be no dispute over which party had brought Chhattisgarh into being, it was not an issue for gaining political mileage. Mr LK Advani emphasised that without the support of the Congress the Bill might not have secured Parliament's approval. He hoped similar cooperation would be displayed

when the Bills to create Jharkhand and Uttaranchal came to the Elders.

Smaller states were not an automatic solution to problems of development, said the home minister, but distance and size did matter. There was a general feeling that UP, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh were too large to administer, he observed, but even in small states it was the quality of administration that mattered.

There must be much validity to the argument in favour of smaller states if the UP Assembly had approved the creation of Uttaranchal on three different occasions. And he pointed out that it had been done during the tenures of chief ministers as politically opposed to each other as Miss

9-Regional pms.
Mayawati, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav and Mr Kalyan Singh.

When dealing with demands for new states the government had set certain yardsticks: new state should be financially and administratively viable, whether the local populace demand it and whether others in the state object. The last two were determined by the view expressed in the Vidhan Sabhas. And the Assemblies in UP, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh had adopted resolutions in favour of the new states.

Congratulating the people of Chhattisgarh, Mr Advani cautioned that action would have to be taken to ensure that the hopes now raised did not crash. That would require the cooperation of the Central and state governments.

THE STATESMAN

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10 AUG 2000

RS okays Bill to form Jharkhand

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 11

PARLIAMENT TODAY approved the formation of Jharkhand when the Rajya Sabha passed by voice-vote the Bihar Reorganisation Bill, 2000 to carve out the new State out of Bihar's southern region.

This was the third consecutive day when the Upper House adopted a Bill to form a new State. The Bills to form Chattisgarh and Uttaranchal were passed on Wednesday and Thursday, respectively. Home Minister L. K. Advani hoped the three new States would be established by November 1. Mr Advani said appointment of Governors, and constitution of High Courts and provisional assemblies, together with election of their leaders would take place before the new States come into existence.

Members from different parties expressed concern how Bihar would survive financially after the mineral-rich Jharkhand districts were separated from it. Seeking a liberal economic package for Bihar, the Elders said the Centre must know it had special responsibility towards Bihar. The Home Minister said better financial management and adequate devolution of Central funds to Bihar would be ensured by a special cell in the Planning Commission headed by its Deputy Chairman himself.

When Leader of the Opposition Manmohan Singh said the eleventh Finance Commission dealing with devolution of Central funds had already given its report, the Home Minister reiterated that Bihar would be paid "special finan-

cial attention."

Several Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and Congress members from Orissa opted out of the Bihar Bill's voting process when they saw their amendments for transferring some Oriya-speaking areas from Jharkhand to Orissa were getting rejected. Mr B. J. Panda and Mr Birabhadra Singh of the BJD wanted the Bill to be referred to a Select Committee.

Dr. M. N. Das (Cong) moved his amendment and announced his "withdrawal" from the House, even before the amendment was put to vote by Deputy Chairperson Najma Heptulla. Mr Ramachandra Khuntia and Miss Frida Topno followed their party colleague out of the House.

The Home Minister said till some day back, he was not even aware of the demand of the Orissa members. He said the blame for this should be accepted by the BJD, a member of the ruling coalition, which failed to apprise him about the issue. The members maintained that the Oriya-speaking Sadhai Kala and Kharsuan had been wrongfully merged with Bihar about 50 years back and it was time to undo the wrong.

The Home Minister said the present Government could not be blamed for the problem. It was also wrong to say that the Centre was all-powerful and could make changes on its own, he said. Certainly, the Centre could help if Jharkhand and Orissa decide to sort out the issue in future, he said. This applied to Haryana and Punjab also and unless the two agreed to sit together over Chandigarh, the Centre could not help much.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 AUG 2000

Congressmen in race for Chhattisgarh CM's post

BY SHAHID FARIDI

New Delhi, Aug 12: Race for chief ministership of Chhattisgarh has begun among the leaders of Congress party which is set to form the first government in this newly-carved out state.

The party, with 48 of the total 90 MLAs in the new state, has a clear majority. Besides, Congress sources said two party rebels who were elected as independents are keen to return to the party fold. With the party having a comfortable majority, almost all the top leaders from the new state have jumped into the race for chief ministership.

More than half a dozen top party leaders from the region are in the fray. Among these are the Shukla brothers — Mr Vidya Charan and Mr Shyama Charan — two Cabinet ministers in Madhya Pradesh government who hail from the region, Mr Satyanarain Sharma

and Mr Ravindra Choubey, former state minister and sitting Rajya Sabha member Jhumuklal Bhedra and AICC spokesperson Ajit Jogi. Former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Motilal Vora, too, is considered a strong contender for the post.

A keen campaign has been launched by these hopefuls who are constantly shuttling between Bhopal and New Delhi to garner support of MLAs as well as the party high command.

For the party high command, the choice of a new chief minister would be a tough one. The state with about 40 per cent tribal population has more tribals than Jharkhand. And there is a demand for allowing a tribal to take the reins of the new state. But Madhya Pradesh chief minister and the Shukla brothers do not seem to agree with this demand.

The chief minister is reportedly backing Mr Satyanarain Sharma and Ravindra

Choubey, both Brahmmins. While the Shukla brothers, who gained prominence in state and national politics by virtue of their strength in the Chhattisgarh region, are keen on taking over the reins of the new state. The elder of the brothers, Mr Shyama Charan Shukla, has headed the Congress government in Madhya Pradesh in the past, while Mr Vidya Charan held charge of important ministries at the Centre.

The Shukla brothers claim support of at least a dozen Congress MLAs. There are also reports that if the party high command does not appoint one of them as the chief minister, they might break away with their loyal MLAs and explore other ways of heading the government.

The BJP, having 36 MLAs in the new state, however, is divided on the issue of giving support to the Shuklas.

BJP leader and Union minister Ramesh

Bais, who hails from Raipur which is likely to become the capital of the new state, firmly ruled out the Shuklas' bid for chief ministership.

Speaking to *The Asian Age*, Mr Bais said: "The Shukla brothers are have to take the responsibility for the backwardness of the Chhattisgarh region. They dominated the politics of the region for decades but refused to carry out any developmental programme. Their rule pushed the region into backwardness. How can they stake claim for the chief ministership now. We will not allow them to head the government of Chhattisgarh."

The candidature of chief minister Digvijay Singh's nominees — Mr Sharma and Mr Choubey — is also being opposed by local Congress MLAs on the ground that a Brahmin cannot be allowed to become a chief minister of a state having 40 per cent tribal population.

THE ASIAN AGE

13 AUG 2000

INDIA'S POLITICAL map is being redrawn once again with the creation of three new states — Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand. And with the new geographical boundaries, may come new political alignments as parties scramble for a foothold in the newly-created states.

The state of Chhattisgarh will comprise Bastar, Bilaspur, Dantewada, Dhamtari, Durg, Jangir-Champa, Jashpur, Kanker, Kawardha, Korba, Mahasamund, Raigarh, Raipur, Rajnandgaon and Surguja districts with 11 Lok Sabha seats and 90 Assembly seats. Madhya Pradesh will now have 29 Lok Sabha seats (down 11) and 230 seats in the legislative Assembly.

The state of Uttaranchal will comprise Pauri Garhwal, Tehri Garhwal, Uttar Kashi, Chamoli, Dehradun, Nainital, Almora, Pithoragarh, Udham Singh Nagar, Bageshwar, Champawat, Rudrapur and Haridwar districts with five Lok Sabha seats

and a 70-seat Assembly. Uttar Pradesh will now have 80 Lok Sabha seats (down five) and 403 seats in the legislative Assembly. The state of Jharkhand will comprise Bokaro, Chatra,

Deogarh, Dhanbad, Durgam, Garhwa, Giridih, Godda, Gumla, Hazaribagh, Kodarma, Lohardaga, Pakur, Palamu, Ranchi, Sahebganj, Singhbhum (East) and Singhbhum (West) districts with 14 Lok Sabha and 81 Assembly seats. Bihar will now have 40 Lok Sabha seats (down 14) and 283 legislative Assembly seats.

The history of redrawing the map of the subcontinent dates back to British India which consisted of a number of provinces

SUNNATION

Will the debut of the three new states — Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand — be an administrative boon or a political bane? **Bhoy Shyama** reports

Agrees Babulal Marandi, minister of state for environment and forests in the Vajpayee government and among the top contenders to head the government in the state of Jharkhand, "The division of states was neces-

Small may not be bountiful

The new states certainly won't solve any economic problems

'L's autonomy' (read sub-division) the last possible sop that a resource-starved Centre feels confident of doling out? Already there are dangerous signs of that. "We demanded it first" claims are flying thick and fast, along with political petitions like 'go on, give them more'. Even as far back as November 18, 1999, the Congress (I) had been at pains to stress how that party had verily been the first to demand statehood within existing states. But wait, how viable are these states likely to be?

This year's RBI Report on state finances says that the power of states to act as they wish depends (as always) on the tax and non-tax resources allied with market borrowing abilities. But the hole will be even bigger

WHO'S FUNDING GROWTH?

Change in revenue receipts and total expenditure of states in 1999-2000



The resolution was passed by all the three state Assemblies before it was introduced in Parliament
RAM VILAS PASWAN

sary for the all-round development of the areas. It was also needed for better and more effective administration. The boundaries of states should not be too big so that it becomes cumbersome to govern. UP, Bihar and MP were all very big states and hence had become unwieldy. The division would usher in peace and prosperity in the region." Similar demands like Bodo state, Telangana, Harit Pradesh, Bundelkhand, Vindhyachal,

That process of federalism, which began in 1935, continues

A smaller state has its benefits — in Bihar per capita income is Rs 4,000, a third of Punjab, and literacy rate is 38.4 per cent compared to Kerala's 90 per cent. Infant mortality rate is a staggering 72 in Bihar compared to 13 in Kerala. The division would adversely affect the state of Bihar and would send its economy into a tailspin because Jharkhand accounts for Rs 1200 crore out of a total sales tax collection of Rs 1700 crore. Add to that another Rs 700 crore in terms of royalty earned by Jharkhand and you get the picture.

The scenario is just the opposite in Uttaranchal which has a tax revenue of only Rs 174 crore and would have to be totally dependent on grants till the time it

speeded up. It would not affect the economics of the state of Bihar adversely. Even with Jharkhand, Bihar's liabilities exceed its assets. It's all because of bad governance rather than anything else — Bihar's in a mess, thanks to Laloo Prasad and his team. "He too is not worried about similar demands to form new states. "This will die soon. It's like a viral fever if anyone catches it in the house, the other members are also affected by it," he says.

Not everyone is that ecstatic though and there are a few dissenting voices as well. The Uttaranchal Bill which was opposed by the Akali Dal which objected to the inclusion of the Sikh-dominated enclave Udham Singh Nagar in Uttaranchal and the Samajwadi

minister, Ram Vilas Paswan, "there is no question of subservience here. The resolution was passed by all the three state Assemblies before it was introduced in Parliament. These states fulfill the aspirations of the people of these regions. It will also help governance and provide effective administration to the people." In 1948 the Dar Commission recommended reorganisation on administrative convenience but it was rejected and the States Reorganisation Commission constituted which suggested the formation of linguistic states. The creation of the state of Andhra Pradesh in 1953 had strengthened the demand for reorganisation of states on linguistic

time being, but if the new state governments follow their predecessors, the idea of creating three more states (ostensibly to improve administration and speed up development) could easily come to naught. Add to that pressure from regional parties for further division of states to suit their kind of politics and the picture gets messier. Besides, administrative expenditure will also mount at a time when there is a need to reduce it. It's a trend that's diametrically opposite of what's happening in corporate India. While India Inc is going for mergers on a megacale, political India is splitting up existing states. The political and economic progress of these states

Illustration & Graphic: AJAY

NDA rules out offering post of Jharkhand chief minister to Soren

By Sachchidanand Jha
The Times of India News Service

PATNA: The National Democratic Alliance (NDA) may offer the post of deputy chief minister of the proposed Jharkhand state to one of the nominees of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) president Shibu Soren to keep the latter away from the race for the post of Jharkhand CM.

While ruling out the possibility of the NDA offering the post of Jharkhand CM to Mr Soren, a central leader of the BJP said that the NDA may offer the post of deputy CM either to the wife or son of JMM supremo or the leader of JMM legislature party Stephen Marandi.

The NDA may also offer the Dumka Lok Sabha seat to a family member of Mr Soren if the Union minister of state for forest and envi-

ronment Babulal Marandi, who represents the seat, emerged as the consensus choice for the post of CM. While Mr Marandi has emerged as a front runner for the post, the BJP national vice-president Karia Munda may just prove to be the dark horse. The BJP MLA from Piraiyahat in Godda district, Pradip Yadav, has already offered his seat to Marandi to enable him become a member of the Jharkhand assembly in the event of his being elected as the leader of NDA legislature party.

Incidentally, all the three top contenders for the post of Jharkhand CM are MPs. While Mr Soren is a Rajya Sabha member, both Mr Marandi and Mr Munda are Lok Sabha (LS) members.

Although leader of opposition in the Bihar assembly Sushil Kumar

Modi and state BJP chief Nand Kishore Yadav have refused to comment on Mr Soren's claim over the post of Jharkhand CM, both of them have already given fair indication about the formation of a BJP-led government there. Both of them said that the BJP had a natural claim over the post since the BJP legislature party would emerge as the largest single party in the 82 member Jharkhand assembly having a strength of 32.

When asked for his comments on Mr Soren's claim, Nand Kishore said that the issue would be decided at a high-level meeting of the NDA constituents. "There is nothing wrong with nurturing ambition for the post of CM", he said. Mr Modi said that one could not say anything with certainty in the era of coalition governments.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

16 AUG 21M

CM wannabes march in battle for Jharkhand

COCHIN
THE STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

COCHIN, Aug. 16. — The BJP and its allies have as many as five chief minister aspirants for Jharkhand, each of whom has pulled out all stops to show off his claims to the post.

The wannabes have taken to the streets with a vengeance during the past week, each doing his best to take a bigger procession or organising a rally than the others.

Four of the aspirants are BJP MPs from the region: Mr Babu Lal Marandi, Mr Karia Munda, Mr Ram Tahal Choudhary and Prof Dukha Bhagat. The fifth is the JMM(S) chief, Mr Shibu Prasad Yadav, who continues to insist he is with the National Democratic Alliance, Mr Prasad Yadav's offers to make himself minister if he came with the Congress notwithstanding.

Mr Soren's claims centre on the fact that he has been the lone fighter for Jharkhand for long — the other claimants hardly have any record of active participation in the five-decade-old struggle.

The BJP leadership, appearing initially to be against a man chargesheeted in two criminal cases and facing trial, did a seeming volte face on Monday when party vice president and a claimant for CMship, Mr Karia Munda, denied having ever said that a person facing trial ought to stand automatically disqualified from obtaining the post.

It was for the party leadership to decide who would be chief minister, Mr Munda said, though it had already decided that the post should go to an *adivasi*.

Mr Munda's statement has set off speculation here that the BJP, despite having the largest number of lawmakers

in the proposed House, has recruited to Mr Soren becoming the first chief minister of Jharkhand. The NDA seems to be acutely aware that ignoring Mr Soren could drive him and his 12 MLAs to the RJD-Congress which might then be able, with the help of the Left and Independents — to pip it to power. Besides, Mr Laloo Yadav, acknowledged master at breaking parties and weaning away lawmakers, can always be trusted to get some of the Samata's five and JD-U's three MLAs to switch.

The spectre of a split in the Samata has in fact, already had the Union agriculture minister, Mr Nitish Kumar, rushing to Jharkhand. He spoke with his party's MLAs, and reportedly discussed ways of forming an NDA government in Ranchi.

The JD-U leadership too is reported to be in constant touch with its three

MLAs in the region. It is learnt to have issued a fiat to the three MLAs to stand firm and not fall prey to allurement from Mr Soren or the RJD-Congress.

The Congress and RJD have sounded out all their "contacts" to the JMM, Samata and JD-U in order to prevent the BJP to forming Jharkhand's first government. The regional Congress committee chief, Mr Thomas Hansda, has been camping here for some time — despite a serious illness, he is learnt to be in the thick of chalking out strategy to hold the BJP back from power.

It is reported the Congress-RJD are willing to give away both chief ministership and deputy chief ministership to lawmakers belonging to other non-BJP parties, should they help them keep the BJP at bay. In this scenario, while Mr Soren becomes chief minister, the deputy CMship might go to a Samata or a JD-U rebel.

THE STATESMAN

17 AUG 2000

BJP-JMM tussle to form Govt. in Jharkhand

By Our Special Correspondent

PATNA, AUG. 20. Government formation in the new Jharkhand State is now a touch and go affair, thanks to the drama being unfolded by the BJP and the JMM, both of which have drawn the battle lines, in the race for the top job.

The power struggle has intensified with the marriage of convenience between the BJP and the JMM going on the rocks and the two wooing new bedfellows to emerge as the major partner in the new dispensation to govern the tribal heartland.

The BJP has set at rest all speculation about a possible alliance with the JMM and allowing the latter to head the maiden government as and when the new State comes into being, probably on November 15, so as to coincide with the Birsa Munda Jayanthi. The proposed date is the idea of the BJP, which heads the NDA Government at the Centre, and hence its success in finding the numbers is crucial for formation of the Government on the said date.

Senior leaders of the BJP, including its outgoing president, Mr. Kushabhau Thakre, held a meeting of the 32-strong legislature group to assure that the party had not forsaken its claim and that only a tribal leader of the party would head new Government.

The BJP's decision does not completely solve its problem, internal or external. Rather it makes its task of installing an NDA Government more arduous. It has to choose between the Union Minister, Mr. Babulal Marandi, and the senior MP, Mr. Karia Munda.

Moreover, it would have to placate the Samata Party, which favoured the JMM leader, Mr. Shibu Soren, heading the new Government, in accordance with the earlier arrangement to make a bid to set up an NDA Government in Bihar. Without the JMM's support the NDA, in a hopeless position, would not have succeeded in its design to stake claim and influence the Governor to extend invitation to it to form the government, which, nevertheless, turned out to be short lived.

The BJP, along with the Samata Party (5) and JD-U (3), together has 40 members on its side, one short of the majority in the 81-member Assembly. Hence, it needs one more if its desire is to fructify.

But the effective strength during a confidence motion will be 82, taking the nominated member into account. The BJP could count on the nominated member as it was the NDA Government led by Mr. Nitish Kumar, who had nominated him. Still the BJP will flounder by one vote.

Ditched by the BJP, the JMM is on the look out for greener pastures by trying to forge a front with the RJD-Congress(I)-MCC-UGDP front. The RJD-led combine was indeed hoping for a split between the BJP and the JMM for it to make a move to keep the "communal" forces at bay.

The JMM is 12 strong, and, along with the Congress(I) (11), the RJD (9), UGDP (2), and the MCC (1), and two Independents who support the RJD, accounts for 37, five short of the magic figure. The JMM could bridge the gap if the CPI (3) and the CPI-ML (1), decide to fall in

line. That would put it abreast with the BJP-led combine in what promises to be a photo-finish race.

10-9 2/8
The JMM legislature party leader, Mr. Stephen Marandi, has claimed that his party was in touch with the CPI and the CPI-ML and that the two independents supporting the RJD would back them and not change their loyalties with a change in political equation emanating from the division of the State.

The JMM might not find much opposition from the RJD despite the former playing spoil sport in refusing to support the latter in Ministry formation in Bihar and trying to help its adversary, the NDA. The RJD president, Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav, has been harping that only a tribal leader should become the Chief Minister of Jharkhand state.

The JMM for the first time claimed that its leader, Mr. Shibu Soren, has had a talk with Mr. Yadav while his son, Mr. Durga Soren, is said to have called on the AICC(I) President, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi. The Congress(I) also has problems, as some of its leaders, including the Tribal Welfare Minister, Mr. Bagun Sumbhui, aspire for the top job. Keeping that in mind, the JMM is offering the post of Deputy Chief Minister to the Congress(I).

The JMM, along with the RJD-Congress(I), is trying to woo the Samata Party and the JD(U) to help Mr. Soren brace the tape and pip the BJP to the post. On the other hand, the BJP's efforts are to win over the Independents and the UGDP.

THE HINDU

21 AUG 2000

Shibu Soren meets Advani, says JMM deserves CM's post

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 21

JHARKHAND MUKTI Morcha chief Shibu Soren today met Home Minister L K Advani to "thank" the Centre for its initiative and Parliament's approval for creation of the new State of Jharkhand, amid signs of a tussle between his party and the BJP for Chief Minister's post.

Speaking to *The Hindustan Times*, Mr Soren said he did not discuss the formation of the interim government with Mr Advani since his meeting was to convey his party's gratitude to the NDA and the Government.

But he expected the NDA leaders to discuss the issue and take into account his party's struggle for formation of the new State for more than two decades.

Asked about the offers from the Congress and the RJD to support his party for forming the Government, Mr Soren said every political party was playing its own game and it was for the NDA to take into account all the factors.

Stating that the JMM was still very much a part of the NDA, Mr Soren, however, refused to specify his party's response to the Congress and the RJD.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 AUG 2000

The Jharkhand Dream

New Political & Development Strategy

11-10

By K S SINGH

24/8

THE events leading to the passage of the bills establishing the new states of Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Uttaranchal could not have been more striking. There was only a demand for Chattisgarh hardly backed by a movement. Uttaranchal emerged as a result of bitter and intense struggles spread over a relatively short period. Jharkhand came at the end of almost 100 years of prolonged movements, ideological conflicts and a gradual widening of its social bases. In 1900, Birsa Munda was the first tribal leader to have demanded the establishment of Munda Raj and independence. One hundred years later, in the year of the centennial celebration of his martyrdom, the Jharkhand state has taken shape.

The demand for Jharkhand was first made in 1940. Jharkhand is a Sanskrit word first mentioned in a 13th century inscription, later occurring in Sanskrit and Persian texts in the mediaeval period, which was absorbed by the tribal groups speaking Mundari and Dravidian languages. There emerged a Jharkhandi tract dotted with place-names with the prefix 'Jhar', and cultural symbols of a Jharkhand culture defined by ecology and language. The language, Saadri, was a product of the close interaction of various languages spoken in this region and the emerging traditions of sharing and togetherness.

In the early 1940s, Jaipal Singh, who was easily the most charismatic tribal leader, flirted briefly with the Muslim League, bringing his party closer to the nationalist mainstream. The Jharkhand party was established on January 1, 1949, as a regional political platform where both tribes and non-tribes could join hands to create a Jharkhand state. From 1951 to 1961, the Jharkhand party was the strongest political party in the region, capturing most of the assembly and Parliament seats. From 1963 onwards, following its brief merger with the Congress, the party disintegrated and could not recapture the old heights.

The rise of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha in 1973, represented a shift in the social base of the Jharkhand movement. The combination of Santhals and Kurmi-Mahatos, showed that it was capable of playing the power game in Bihar and at the Centre. The All Jharkhand Students Union (AJSU), born in 1986, despite splits, continued to press for a separate state. An ideological underpinning was provided by the theory of Jharkhand nationality in the 1970s

and 1980s. It brought together various sections, divided by years of hostility, for a joint struggle for political space. A cultural resurgence began, judged by the output of literature in local dialects and languages.

Through the many vicissitudes that affected the Jharkhand movement, the groundswell of support for a separate state continued and even intensified, bringing within its sweep major political parties. They started by setting up regional structures in the 1980s. The then prime minister declared in 1980, that Chhotanagpur was a culturally distinct area. This was translated into an autonomous political authority in the early 1990s. In 1988, the BJP committed itself to the formation of a Vananchal state. All Left parties, barring the CPM, supported the demand for a separate state in the '80s, while highlighting land and forest issues, nationality, class and ethnic questions, generally ignored by major parties. Thus

state represents the fulfilment of a very old dream. A dream of an order free from exploitation and discrimination, that promises dignity, equality and happiness, deeply cherished by the tribal communities. The tribal factor as articulated by the Jharkhand parties in spite of the divisions has been a catalyst in the Jharkhand movement and will continue to influence the development of the Jharkhand state.

The Jharkhand state starts with many advantages including enormous support and goodwill from all sections of people including those who had reservations about it. It will be a state incredibly rich in resources, an "industrial" state as envisaged in the 1940s but with a vast countryside. It also has a tribal ethos marked by egalitarianism and sharing which still survives. Caste does not exist in its vicious and divisive forms in the tribal region. A political culture shaped by new values is possible in the state.

However, the challenges of living up to the expectations of the people of Jharkhand are daunting. For the last 50 years, its resources have been extensively exploited, even plundered. Illiteracy, malnutrition and unemployment are rampant. The tribal population has declined with outmigration and the influx of outsiders. Growth has declined as Bihar as a whole has registered a negative growth rate. Therefore, there is a need for an all-encompassing development strategy that, among other things, should restore the *jhar* or shrub, the green cover, cleanse the polluted rivers, and address the basic problems of poverty and identity. The safeguards for the tribals will have to be further strengthened and enforced in the age of globalisation with market forces on the rampage. While some infrastructure exists, Jharkhand state will have to set up new institutions which should be managed by local people, suitably trained.

A cultural resurgence has preceded the formation of Jharkhand; this must go on with the support of institutions, old and new. The demand by women for a larger leadership role and representation, denied so far in spite of years of mobilisation, must be met. A clean and honest administration which will be now within the reach of the people, combining the policy of all round development, sound financial management and fiscal prudence, is the need of the hour.

(The author is a former head of the Anthropological Survey of India.)

IN BRIEF

- Jharkhand is the result of an almost 100-year movement
- While Jharkhand parties split repeatedly, the support for a Jharkhand state grew steadily
- The Jharkhand state starts with enormous goodwill from all sections of people
- A political culture shaped by new values is possible in the state

while on the one side, the Jharkhand parties faced repeated splits, the popular support for the Jharkhand state was steadily growing and this was translated into electoral gains for the pro-state parties, particularly the BJP in the 1990s.

The committee on Jharkhand matters recommended the setting up of an autonomous authority. The Jharkhand area autonomous council (JAC) came into existence in 1993, but it fell short of the expectations of the people who demanded nothing less than a full state.

The two rounds of the states reorganisation of India were conducted in terms of language in 1956 and ethnicity in the North East in the 1970s. Both ethnicity — tribals are present in considerable numbers in Jharkhand and Chattisgarh — and a common language, Saadri or Chattisgarhi, are present in the new formations.

The formation of the Jharkhand

THE TIMES OF INDIA

24 AUG 2008

Choosing the leader

IT IS a seductive thought that the Chief Minister of a 'tribal' state, or one in which the tribals constitute the single largest ethnic bloc as in Jharkhand and Chhatisgarh, ought to be a tribal. But it cannot be a sustaining thought if the interests of democracy and development are kept uppermost. Therefore, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijay Singh is quite right in saying (in the context of Chhatisgarh) that its Chief Minister need not be a tribal, although his reasons may well be the compulsions of Congress factional politics. It is more than likely, however, that this proposition will be hotly contested by tribal politicians in Raipur and Ranchi, and also by their non-tribal colleagues, whether political or otherwise.

No sooner was the legislation enacted in Parliament for the creation of new states than lobbying commenced for the top job in each of the proposed states. True to expectation, names of competing tribal politicians came to the fore to the exclusion of their non-tribal counterparts, and in this many saw the delivery of much-delayed justice. Weren't the states created, after all, to bring development to the poor tribals, ran the argument. And *sotto voce*, it's more insidious part followed: won't such states flourish only under tribal tutelage? But these are specious arguments. Development is a complex matter which requires a certain vision and a democratic will in which good governance plays an important part. Tribal Chief Ministers in north-east India, for instance, have not been successful in eradicating the backwardness of the region. It is, thus, clear that poverty and ethnicity are used by vested, often unscrupulous lobbies for their own narrow ends without a thought to the development question.

Indeed, the new states about to begin their administrative and political journeys will find it hard to rise to their potential unless they make a genuine effort to satisfy the urges of their people in a transparently democratic manner. And it does not matter who is the Chief Minister. If it is a tribal leader, so be it; but that cannot be a precondition. In political terms, this simply means that a natural evolution of an organic leadership must be permitted to occur without carpetbaggers of any ethnicity getting into the act. Particularly in the case of Chhatisgarh and Jharkhand, as also in Uttaranchal, there is every need to guard against the manipulations of the timber, mining and liquor mafias, led by tribals or others.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 AUG 2000

Formal process of creation of new States initiated

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 25

THE ADMINISTRATIVE process for the creation of the new States of Uttaranchal, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand began today with the Home Ministry convening a meeting of senior officials of UP, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar to chalk out the modalities for giving shape to the new States.

According to a Home Ministry spokesman, preliminary discussions were held to identify sites for the respective State capitals and high courts. Other administrative steps like the distribution of assets and liabilities were also considered towards meeting the November 1 deadline for the creation of these

States.

The meeting, presided over by Home Secretary Kamal Pande, was attended, among others, by Chief Secretaries of UP, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar. A decision was taken to bifurcate the cadres of all-India and State services within the stipulated time frame.

The three successor States would appoint officers on special duty to coordinate with the Centre on affairs related to carving out the new entities.

Advisory committees at the Central and the States levels would be set up to facilitate bifurcation of cadres and other related administrative measures.

However, at the top level of the administration, first priority would

be accorded to the appointment of Governors and chief justices of the proposed high courts. This would be followed by the process of Government formation.

According to available indications, as a stop-gap arrangement, Governors and chief justices of the neighbouring States might be given concurrent charge of the new States till such time as the required infrastructure was in place.

Home Ministry sources described this proposal as the "most feasible arrangement" to meet the November 1 deadline announced by Mr L.K. Advani in Parliament.

On the financial front, the beginning would have to be made by opening Reserve Bank of India

accounts for Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chattisgarh. At today's meeting, this aspect was dwelt upon by senior officials. Accordingly, the existing State Governments were directed to work out estimates for the new States for the remaining part of the financial year.

Official sources described today's high level meeting as the inauguration of a complicated process for the formal creation of the three States.

In their view, the distribution of assets and liabilities was a potential problematic area, which could give rise to fresh disputes. At least that was the experience when Haryana and Himachal were carved out of undivided Punjab.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 AUG 2000

Jumbo Ministry in the making in Jharkhand

Ashish Sinha
Ranchi, August 26

HEB 22/8
THE BJP'S promise of providing "good governance" to the people of Jharkhand may see its biggest stumbling block in the expected size of the first Council of Ministers. Constitutional experts opine that the ideal size of a ministry should not exceed 10-15 per cent of the total strength of the elected House.

If the BJP were to follow the 10-15 per cent norm, the total number of Ministers in the new Government would be between eight and 12.

However, this was described as "unrealistic" and "too little" by a senior party vice-president during an informal chat here last week. The BJP leader, however, claimed that the size of the Ministry would not be "very vulgar".

The party functionary said that "political circumstances" would compel the first Chief Minister to have between 20 and 25 ministers in his Council.

This was another way of saying that the MLAs of all political outfits that form part of the ruling group would have to be satisfied. One way of doing this is by offering them ministerial berths, the other is by making them heads of corporations, boards and local bodies. In

effect, the first Ministry of Jharkhand is expected to be "jumbo-sized."

Interestingly, the BJP has repeatedly criticised the Rashtriya Janata Dal for imposing upon the people of Bihar a "jumbo" Cabinet, which, the party has said, puts heavy burden on the State exchequer.

The BJP has been particularly critical of the Rashtriya Janata Dal for making all Congress MLAs (except one, who was elected Speaker) ministers in lieu of the party's support. Conveniently, the party has chosen to maintain silence over the jumbo BJP-led Ministry in the neighbouring Uttar Pradesh.

The UP case indicates that the BJP is not averse to the idea of having massive ministries if that is the only condition for coming to power.

The situation as it is unfolding in Jharkhand will be no different from the Bihar and UP cases.

The BJP's allies like the Samata Party (five MLAs) and JD-United (three MLAs) clearly expect that all its legislators are either made ministers or handed over some corporation.

In case, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha also decides to join the Government, its 12 legislators will have to be satisfied. This would make the job of the first Chief

Minister much more difficult. While the Chief Minister (if he comes from the BJP) would naturally like to have as many ministers from his own party as possible, the other supporting groups would exert pressure for accommodating their MLAs too.

In the worst-case scenario, the BJP will have to convince its MLAs to be content without ministerial berths.

This would be a tough job given the aspirations of the party legislators.

Another reason for which the BJP had criticised the Rabri Devi regime was the non-inclusion of "specialist" ministers in the Council.

Even the Congress had wanted specialists to become ministers so as to "pull Bihar out of the morass in which it had slipped." The BJP functionary, while admitting that the challenges in Jharkhand would be no different from Bihar, indicated that specialists had no chance of becoming ministers since "there was an acute shortage of space even for the elected representatives."

One indication of the competence and administrative acumen of the BJP's Jharkhand legislators is the hint given by the party brass that the first Chief Minister is unlikely to be a sitting MLA!

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 AUG 2000

Uttaranchal: Congress divided, PCC on hold

SANJIV SINHA
NEW DELHI, AUG 27

THE countdown for the creation of Uttaranchal has already begun but the Congress is yet to get its act together for setting up a separate state unit for the region.

Plagued by internal differences on the issue, the party has been postponing the setting of a Pradesh Congress Committee for the hill state. Ironically, the pro-

posal is being opposed by a section state partymen led by senior CWC member and MP from Nainital N.D. Tiwari.

The issue of an early setting up of a separate PCC for Uttaranchal was a subject of intense debate at a recent meeting of the Coordination Committee for UP, convened by Shinde. While Shinde and senior CWC member Jitendra Prasada favoured the proposal, Tiwari sounded a "dissenting

be maintained since a separate PCC for Uttaranchal could create a rival centre of power for the senior leader, who is at present the party's undisputed leader from the region. Considering his seniority in the party, Tiwari himself is an unlikely candidate for the PCC's job but obviously the area is crucial to his political survival.

The Congress' lackadaisical approach on creating a separate organisation for Uttaranchal is all the more surprising since the hill state — the only one among the three newly carved-out states — which will go to polls to elect a new government, after an interim government is

sworn in later this year. This is because the present strength of MLAs from the region

stands at 22, while the new state is slated to have a 70-member assembly.

Fresh elections will have to be held for the new state after the necessary delimitation is carried out by the Election Commission.

Shinde keen on PCC formation, Tiwari says at this stage it will further fuel factionalism and infighting in Uttar Pradesh unit



posal for setting up a regional Congress committee (on the pattern of the one in Mumbai) for Uttaranchal was approved at the party's Calcutta session nearly three years back and was subsequently endorsed by Congress Working Committee (CWC).

According to party sources, while AICC general secretary in-charge of Uttar Pradesh Sushil Kumar Shinde has been keen on setting up the PCC "at the earliest," his

note". Tiwari was of the view that creation of a separate PCC at this stage would only further fuel factionalism and infighting in the UPPCC and as such it would be better to postpone it until Uttaranchal formally comes into being.

Party circles say that with party's organisational elections near, Tiwari wants the *status quo* to

REMAPPING THE STATES

INDIAN EXPRESS

28 AUG 2000

Front meet advanced on Basu's request

OUR BUREAU

Calcutta, Aug. 27: The CPM today brought forward the Left Front Committee meeting to Wednesday following a request from chief minister Jyoti Basu. The meeting was earlier scheduled for Saturday.

Basu's retirement will figure high on the agenda of the meeting in which the chief minister is likely to be present.

Sources said Basu, who has made up his mind to retire by the middle of next month, wants to keep the Front partners informed about his decision before it is discussed in the party's politburo.

A meeting of the CPM's apex decision-making body will be fixed shortly after party general secretary Harkishen Singh Surjeet's returns from China.

Asked if he will step down next month, Basu evaded a straight answer but said tonight that he was not in a position to continue "even for a single day as chief minister".

"But I will not comment on

this at the moment as the politburo, which has the final say in my retirement, is supposed to take up the matter at its forthcoming meeting," he added.

Basu, however, maintained that he would attend a string of meetings in the coming days, rounding his tour off in Bolpur on September 15. This will be preceded by a rally at Uluberia in Howrah district on September 10. A similar rally is also lined up at Chinsurah in Hooghly.

CPM sources said deputy chief minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya will accompany Basu to all these meetings where the chief minister might throw light on the reasons for retirement.

The meetings are being organised in those districts where the Front has fared badly in recent elections. Political observers view the move as the CPM's calculated design to mould public opinion in favour of the ruling coalition in the wake of the Trinamul Congress' steady inroads into Left strongholds.

Taking the cue from Basu, Left

Front chairman Sailen Dasgupta said the politburo meet would settle all speculation about the chief minister's retirement. He also hinted that the issue might figure in the forthcoming Front meeting "if partners want a discussion on this". He said Front constituents had been informed of the advancement of the date.

CPM state secretary Anil Biswas refused to elaborate on Basu's retirement when reporters sought his comment today.

Several Front partners reiterated their demand for a discussion on Basu's retirement. PWD minister and a key RSP leader, Kshiti Goswami, said the question of Basu's stepping down from office as well as the selection of his successor be taken up with Front partners. "Basu is not only the chief minister but a leader of the Front," he added.

Echoing Goswami, CPI and Forward Bloc leaders said Front partners must be consulted. "There should be a collective decision on such sensitive issues," they added.

THE TELEGRAPH

28 AUG 2000

President clears State reorganisation Bills

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 28

THE PRESIDENT has given his assent to the Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Bihar State Reorganisation Bills which provide for the creation of Uttaranchal, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand respectively.

With this, the three Bills have been notified in the Gazette as Act Nos 28, 29 and 30 respectively.

"These three Acts shall come into force from a date to be notified by the Government of India in the Gazette of India in consultation

with these States," according to a PIB handout.

The Acts provide for the territories of the States concerned and make the necessary supplemental and incidental provisions relating to representation in Parliament and in the State legislatures, distribution of revenues, apportionment of assets and liabilities, management and development of water resources and other such matters.

The Uttar Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2000 contains a clause allowing the continuance of the present level of ceilings on land holding, as applicable in Uttar

Pradesh, in Uttaranchal also.

To give effect to the implementation of the Bihar Reorganisation Act, 2000, the Government has set up a unit in the Planning Commission under direct charge of the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission.

This unit will deal exclusively with matters relating to the development of the rest of Bihar following the formation of Jharkhand as most of Bihar's industries and power generating plants would go to the new State, with Bihar being left with the vast rich landmass which is prone to natural calamities.

Following the bifurcation, the existing Patna High Court at Ranchi would be converted and enlarged into a new Jharkhand High Court. Similarly, the existing High Court at Allahabad, which has a bench at Lucknow, will also stand reorganised with a new High Court at Uttaranchal in the new State.

Likewise, under the MP State Reorganisation Act, the existing High Court at Jabalpur will be bifurcated and a separate High Court of Chhattisgarh set up in the new State.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 AUG 2000

BJP adamant on Jharkhand CM post

Soren can't stake claim on basis of having led the movement: Venkaiah

By PURNIMA S. TRIPATHI

New Delhi, Aug. 30: The BJP has almost ruled out supporting the JMM leader, Mr. Shibu Soren's candidature for the post of chief ministership of Jharkhand, saying his claim to the top post was not justified.

"If he thinks he can stake claim on the basis of having led the movement for the new state, he is wrong. So many others have contributed to the movement as well," party spokesman M. Venkaiah Naidu told *The Asian Age* on Wednesday.

He said if anyone should get the credit for having created the state, it was the BJP and being the largest party in the region, it was only natural that it wanted to form the government.

"Yes, we certainly wish to form the government in Jharkhand because we are the largest party in the region with 32 MLAs in the 81-member Assembly," Mr Naidu said.

He said the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha claim for the top post was not backed by numbers as it had only 12 members in the Assembly. "They do not have the numbers with them," he said. When asked whether the Samata

Party's claim was backed by numbers when Mr Nitish Kumar was made the chief minister of Bihar, he said that was a different case altogether.

He, however, said the party was still to take a final view on the issue which it will do only after consulting all its allies in the NDA. "At the moment, we are only holding informal discussions with our allies like Janata Dal (U) and Samata Party. We are also in touch with JMM leaders. But all that is informal and the final decision will only be taken in the NDA meeting."

The date for this meeting, he said, has not yet been fixed. "It is still too early for that. The new state comes into being only in November so what is the hurry," he asked.

Meanwhile, the Samata Party and JD(U) have washed their hands off the leadership issue in Jharkhand in view of the stern attitude adopted by the BJP. It is reliably learnt that when Mr Soren called on JD(U) president Sharad Yadav, he told Mr Soren that personally he had nothing against him and would be happy to support his candidature but with only three MLAs in the region he was in no position to influence the BJP's

decision which did not appear to be in his (Mr Soren's) favour.

Mr George Fernandes too, it is learnt, told Mr Soren that it was primarily for the BJP to decide on the issue as the Samata Party, with only five MLAs in the region, was in no position to do much.

"You convince the BJP first. We will only be too happy to support you," Mr Fernandes is learnt to have told Mr Soren. The two leaders, however, also made it clear that there was no question of their forcing the issue as they wanted to remain in the NDA.

It is quite clear that Mr Soren will find the going tough. Even if the Congress-RJD combine, which has a strength of 20, supports him, along with three MLAs of CPI and one of CPI-ML, he will still require the support of five more MLAs. With JD(U) and Samata not in a mood to part ways with BJP at the moment, there is little possibility of their MLAs supporting him at the moment.

Besides, sources in these two parties said that since the BJP has already promised these MLAs Cabinet berths, there was no question of them leaving the NDA. "They do not stand to gain anything and remaining in

the NDA will be in their long-term interest," said a senior Samata leader. He said the Samata MLAs have conveyed to the party high command that they will abide by the party decision on this issue.

The JMM, however, emboldened by the support extended to it by political forces opposed to the BJP, is in no mood to compromise on the issue of government formation in the new state. Mr Soren has made it clear that the party was not interested in anything less than the post of the chief minister. "Any compromise on the issue would mean betraying the cause of about three crore Jharkhandis who have reposed faith in us for realisation of a Jharkhand of their dream," Mr Soren has said.

But possibilities of a non-NDA-JMM led government in Jharkhand, appear bleak at the moment. It could be possible when, barring the BJP, all other parties and Independents decide to back Mr Soren: a tall order going by the mood among NDA constituents. Even the JMM's first attempt is to make itself acceptable in the NDA and install its government with the support of the BJP.

SIKKIM'S DEMAND

Centre must honour 1973 tripartite accord

SIKKIM fears Article 371(F), under which it enjoys special status. Not surprisingly, a move is on to make it more relevant. Strong feelings on the subject justify a fresh look. All parties have made the restoration of assembly seats for three ethnic communities — Sikkimese Nepalese, Bhutia and Lepchas — an election issue. If Delhi's attitude has remained unchanged it is perhaps because the parties forgot to pursue the matter after coming to power. The original inhabitants, Buddhist Bhutia-Lepchas who comprise 35 per cent of the state's population, have reasons to be unhappy at the reduction of reservations for them. Sixteen of the 32 assembly seats were originally allotted to them. But this was reduced to 12 when Bhutia-Lepchas were classified as scheduled tribes and later others like Tibetans, Sherpas, Dukpas and Yolmos were lumped together under "Bhutia". Further evidence of the dilution of the Article in letter and spirit was the abolition of reserved seats for Nepalese of Sikkimese origin. In 1980 several Nepalese tribes were included in the OBC list and efforts are on to Mandalise more. The argument is that if the Bhutia-Lepchas join hands with the OBCs, upper-caste Nepalese like Nar Bahadur Bhandari can never hope to come to power.

Sikkim has come a long way since the merger — it celebrated the 25th anniversary this year — but emotional integration is far from total. The influx continues. The delay in resolving the issue may encourage communal disharmony. Delhi is no longer the Delhi of 1986 when the chief minister reportedly received a letter from the PMO addressing him as Nar Bahadur Singh Bhandari. A Union minister wrote to him saying he would first visit Gangtok before going to Sikkim. Delhi must respect tribal sentiments as reflected in the May 1973 tripartite accord which protects the distinct regional identity of the state.

THE STATESMAN

- 6 JUL 2000

Uttar Pradesh CM to stay

By Neena Vyas

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677
NEW DELHI, JULY 5. A crucial dinner meeting at the Prime Minister's residence this evening decided — against all previous indications — that the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. Ram Prakash Gupta, will stay on in office. This was announced by the BJP president, Mr. Kushabhau Thakre, after a three-hour meeting.

It seems that there was no consensus on who should replace Mr. Gupta. Though the party had earlier favoured the Union Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh, as the replacement.

Party leaders had been earlier indicating that the change of Chief Minister would take place some time by the end of July to coincide with the completion of the party's organisational elections in the State.

The poor performance in the panchayat elections seems to be the immediate provocation for today's meeting, but the party has not been able to arrive at a consensus on replacing Mr. Gupta.

The dinner meeting came at the end of a day which saw a flurry of activity in relation to the impending changes in the party's Uttar Pradesh set-up. In the morning, Mr. Gupta arrived here along with his Cabinet colleagues, Mr. Lalji Tandon and Mr. Kalraj Mishra, as well as the State party president, Mr. Om Prakash Singh. Mr. Gupta met Mr. Kushabhau Thakre for over an hour.

In response to questions from reporters Mr. Gupta said that he had been asked to take this responsibility in Uttar Pradesh by the Prime Minister and he would go whenever the Prime Minister indicated that he should put in his papers. "I was neither happy when I was given this position, nor will I be sad if I

lose it," he said. Mr. Gupta also met other party leaders. It seems that Mr. Mishra and Mr. Tandon, both known to oppose the replacement of Mr. Gupta by Mr. Rajnath Singh, also did the rounds meeting senior party leaders and indulging in some hectic lobbying.

The guest list at the Prime Minister's dinner included Mr. L.K. Advani, Mr. Thakre, the BJP general secretary in charge of Uttar Pradesh, Mr. K.N. Govindacharya, Mr. Rajnath Singh, Mr. Ram Prakash Gupta and the other State leaders who have come here from Lucknow.

It was also indicated that the party's State-level elections are expected to be completed by July 20 or a few days later. Mr. Om Prakash Singh was given this job as State president in an ad hoc manner after Mr. Rajnath Singh was moved to the Centre as Cabinet Minister. Although the new president has to be elected, the name of Mr. Kalraj Mishra, a former State party president, is doing the rounds as the possible choice for the party post.

However, even this change is not certain since the present incumbent belongs to the backward caste and the party may like to retain him for that reason. But what is certain is if that happens, Mr. Om Prakash Singh will have to resign from his ministerial position in Mr. Gupta's Government.

UNI reports:

When reporters asked why Mr. Gupta was being summoned repeatedly to Delhi, Mr. Thakre said the party high command reviewed the performance of all its State units, wherever they were in power and that this was part of that exercise.

He clarified that there was no pressure on him from any quarter, including that of the allies to change the leadership in Lucknow.

THE HINDU

- 6 JUL 2001

SATURDAY, JULY 8, 2000

THE STALEMATE IN U.P.

HD-12/877

THE FRESH LEASE of life for Mr. Ram Prakash Gupta as Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh may have been the only option before the BJP leadership in New Delhi to stave off an open battle in the party's State unit for the top office. If Mr. Gupta's selection as Chief Minister in November 1999, after the BJP was forced to expel Mr. Kalyan Singh from the party, was guided by the simple fact that they could not agree upon anyone else to lead the State Government, the situation now is no different. Caught up in a crisis, caused essentially by the craving for office among the various leaders in the State unit, Mr. Gupta seems to be spending more time in New Delhi meeting his party leaders than in Lucknow. The crisis is no longer an internal affair of the BJP as its president, Mr. Kushabhau Thakre, has sought to make it appear. The squabbles among important leaders in the party have begun to reflect poorly on the civil administration as well. This clearly is a cause for concern.

The civil society in parts of Uttar Pradesh had been sliding into a state of anarchy even before the BJP appointed Mr. Gupta as Chief Minister; the manner in which the party had managed a majority in the State Assembly, an "achievement" of Mr. Kalyan Singh, by way of inducting several history-sheeters into the Cabinet, had even otherwise left the civil administration in many parts of the State shaken and demoralised. That incidence of crimes such as abduction and extortion have increased several fold during the last couple of years has been established by enquiries conducted by the National Crime Records Bureau. The spurt in such activities around the same time when Mr. Kalyan Singh constituted his Cabinet could not have been a mere coincidence. It is also a fact that there was no change in the situation after Mr. Gupta took over from where Mr. Kalyan Singh left off. The BJP high command let Mr. Gupta retain all those men in the new Ministry

(on the plea that it was the Chief Minister's prerogative) while at the same time doing nothing to restrain others in the State unit aspiring for the Chief Minister's post from indulging in faction feuds. Such senior members of the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet as Mr. Kalraj Mishra, Mr. Lalji Tandon and Mr. Om Prakash Singh apart from Mr. Gupta himself were busy, since November 1999, settling scores among themselves rather than attending to their ministerial responsibilities. The visible slide in the law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh cannot but be seen as a fallout of this.

Indeed, the need for a change of guard in its Uttar Pradesh unit and also a replacement for Mr. Gupta must have assumed some urgency now insofar as the BJP is concerned. The poor showing by the party in the recent elections to the local bodies cannot bring cheer to the party leaders. With elections to the State Assembly likely anytime in the middle of 2001, the BJP is hardly in a position to retain power; this seems to be a certainty at least as long as Mr. Gupta steers the State Government. The complex social mosaic that continues to propel the political discourse in the State renders Mr. Gupta with hardly any clout in terms of garnering votes for the BJP. The sense of urgency displayed by the party's top brass must have been due to a realisation of this harsh reality.

Be that as it may, an effete political leadership is a factor that a polity fragmented by caste and other socio-economic identities can hardly afford to have. Mr. Gupta's term as Chief Minister has been extremely effete with the civil administration in Uttar Pradesh having become much more insensitive than it was in the past. For this reason alone, it is necessary for the BJP high command to put an end to the uncertainty; the polity in Uttar Pradesh has been haunted by this mockery for far too long now.

RECEIVED

8 JUL 2000

North is north & South is south ✓

Once the North-dominated Central structure crumbles, Tamil leaders in the NDA will wholeheartedly support LTTE's Prabhakaran, says V. GANGADHAR 17/7

THE DOUBLESPEAK in the recent Erode meet organised by Mr Vaiko's MDMK has now been forgotten. Home Minister L.K. Advani, who told the gathering that the Centre was not in favour of a separate state of Eelam in Sri Lanka, conveniently left Erode after his speech. It was not known if he was aware of the presence of the 'Tamil warriors' who goose stepped in the style of former Nazi troops and sported photographs of the LTTE chief, Prabhakaran, on their chests. Even before Mr Advani's shadow had disappeared, the rabble-rousing PMK leader, Dr Ramadoss, castigated the media for 'misrepresenting' the cause of the Sri Lankan Tamils and said that nothing but a separate 'Eelam' would satisfy them.

The double-talk came later when the two leaders met Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and assured him that they would abide by the wishes of the Centre on the Sri Lankan issue. Mr Vaiko and Mr Ramadoss must have found it difficult to suppress their giggles. Hadn't they taken the Centre for a ride?

Today, the idea of a great Tamil state is only a dream. But the average 'Dravidian Tamilian', immersed in historical novels, passionate Tamil films and unceasing propaganda on the glory of his state and language, is positive that one day, his dream would be realised. Hadn't the flags of the ancient Chera, Chola, Pandya and Pallava kings flown all over India and even Lanka in the past? Hadn't the great Tamil historical novelist, 'Kalki', mentioned in his epic novel, *Ponniyin Selvan*, how the Chola kings had fought to gain a foothold in Lanka?

This obsession has not affected the Tamil Brahmins who were denied opportunities in their own State, and hence were quick to seek their fortunes elsewhere in India and abroad. Over the decades, the Dravidian Tamilian, who was less educated and less enterprising, had been fed an endless stream of propaganda focused on the former greatness of his land and the eternal glory of his language. The Dravidian politicians fed him on dreams and eloquence and urged that it was possible to regain the lost glory of his State.

Yes, ancient Tamil Nadu had a glorious history. Since it was not torn asunder by foreign invaders, the region produced a glittering procession of kings who were excellent administrators and cared for the people. The Dravidian movement which began during the Twenties was

PLATFORM

never tired of saying how their kings had conquered the North and brought back holy stones which were used in building temples for goddesses like Kannagi. Tamil ships had traded extensively in the South Asia region.

The Dravidian leaders, beginning with 'Periyar' (E.V. Ramaswamy Naicker) and his Dravida Kazhagam followers, held the North and its 'Brahmin' leadership responsible for much of the ills of their own region. They felt that the Congress party which was dominated by North Indian leaders had monopolised the freedom struggle. The achievements of Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Azad were no doubt laudable, but the South too had contributed to the struggle by way of Rajaji, poet Bharati and patriot V.O. Chidambaram Pillai, who broke the monopoly



of British commercial shipping.

For several years, the Dravidian movement remained casteist and focused against Brahmins who represented the hated North Indian Aryans. The DK organised feasts featuring beef in front of Hindu temples, brought out its own version of *Ramayana* which ridiculed Rama, scandalised Sita and lauded Ravana. But such an attitude was not bringing them any closer to capturing political power.

The Dravidian cultural onslaught through the films scripted by C.N. Annadurai and M. Karunanidhi (which often featured the late MGR in lead roles) was a potent political weapon. But the decisive moment came in the Sixties, when the State came under an orgy of violence over the language policy of the Lal Bahadur Shastri Government. Even the

Dravidian firebrands trusted Jawaharlal Nehru's word that English would remain an associate national language as long as anyone wanted it. But Shastri was seen as a North Indian small time leader and his lack of assurance on the language policy put the Congress out of power in Tamil Nadu.

But even a Dravidian state had limited influence in the overall Indian frame. A definite move for secession was thwarted by the Chinese invasion in 1962. Dravidian leaders like Annadurai realised it would be fatal to open the issue when national security was threatened. Yet, the average Tamilian was made to feel that in independent India, his intellectual and cultural superiority was never appreciated. The North was all-dominating.

The cow belt was no doubt associated with corrupt, brutal politicians, but it held the key to India's political future. Every political leader talked only of UP and Bihar. Added to this was the cultural isolation. Most North Indians believed that anything or anyone south of Maharashtra was just *madrasi*, who ate *idlis*, slurped *sambhar* and screamed *aiyeyo* all the time. How many North Indians tried to pick up languages from the South or learnt to appreciate Carnatic music? When the average Tamilian went to the North, he often felt he was in a foreign country.

And having been brainwashed by his mentors on his own superiority, the Dravidian Tamilian naturally sympathised with the persecution of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. It was easy to visualise Prabhakaran and his gang of killers as the real 'saviours' of the Tamils and their culture. If the North Indians could not appreciate this, what was wrong in supporting the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka and dreaming that one day, 'Eelam' and Tamil Nadu could form a greater Tamil State?

The people of Tamil Nadu have more in common with the citizens of Jaffna and other Tamil strongholds in Sri Lanka, than the UP and Bihar *bhaiyas* or the Shiv Sainiks of Mumbai who hate the Tamilians. Of course, the DMK, MDMK and the PMK had to ally themselves temporarily with the North-dominated National Democratic Alliance but Vaiko and company know that the weak Central structure would crumble one day. It has to.

And then they would come out more strongly and passionately for a permanent alliance with Prabhakaran's Eelam.

Hindu leaders clash with UP govt over watchdog Act

PRASHANT RAHI
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DEHRA DUN, July 19. — A UP Cabinet minister wanting to get his back on Hindu religious leaders in the Uttaranchal hills has created a new problem for the tottering government of Mr Ram Prakash Gupta.

The leaders are up in arms against the government, the chief minister was ignored by hill MLAs on a recent trip to Hardwar and Dehra Dun, and his Rs 2-crore largess for the development of religious sites in the area was described as a "futile bribe".

The storm began to brew when Mr Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, UP minister for culture and religious affairs, got issued a note announcing implementation of a 1962 law that would bring under an official scanner activities and finances of the state's religious leaders, trusts and bodies.

The law, popularly known as the Dharmada Bill, was passed by Govind Ballabh Pant's government nearly four decades ago. Subsequent regimes

had, however, refused to implement it, and the Act had been mothballed and forgotten.

Mr Pokhriyal apparently decided to pull the law out of cold storage to teach a lesson to recalcitrant religious heads who had been consistently frustrating his attempts to get Hardwar and neighbouring Hindu pilgrimagesites in the new state of Uttaranchal.

The minister is a vocal representative of the BJP faction in the state and at the Centre which wants the boundaries of Uttaranchal to include Hardwar, Badri and Kedarnath.

Many mahants and mahaman-daleshwars — and even a couple of sankaracharyas — have, however, opposed the idea. Going over to a new state would upset the status quo that is favourable to them, they fear.

Mr Pokhriyal began with energetic efforts to forge a "consensus" in favour of including Hardwar in the proposed state. When he failed, he had the

UTTARANCHAL CREATES NEW COMPLICATION

senior BJP leader, Dr Murl Manohar Joshi, visit the holy city. But when even this could not get the religious dons to accept the mainstream BJP view, the minister tried to browbeat them with the Dharmada stick.

Unfortunately for him — and the chief minister — however, the move backfired. Most leading dons of the various sects and sub-sects of the conservative Hindu faith have hit back — not only at Mr Gupta and his party, but also at their perceived sympathisers: Mr Ashok Singhal and the VHP.

A day after the chief minister's failed trouble-shooting visit to Dehra Dun and Hardwar, the chief priests met and resolved to launch a decisive agitation to get the Dharmada Act scrapped.

They poured scorn on Mr Gupta's Rs 2-crore grant, and decided to boycott the planned anti-Tehri dam march of VHP Kanwariyas carrying urns of



Mr Ram Prakash Gupta

water from the Ganga.

A shaken Mr Gupta has already shown signs of cracking. He has promised to give a "welfarist shape" to the Dharmada Act, and made a series of blunt utterances against Mr Pokhriyal.

But this is not all that is to the story. In their headline against the government, the religious leaders have found the unlikelyst of allies: Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav. The man who is perceived to be anti-Hindu and pro-Muslim by those who call him "Maulana Mulayam", and one who had recently campaigned shrilly against the government's recent proposal to curb growth of religious buildings in the state, has come out in the priests' support.

And backing both him and the religious leaders is another leader who would not normally be expected to involve himself with things Hindu — the Congress's Uttar Pradesh in-charge, Mr Sushil Kumar Shinde.

Letters by the two politicians have boosted the agitationists who seem to proceed on the assumption that a BJP-led government should have fallen over itself to cooperate with leaders and institutions of the majority faith.

ics does make strange bedfel-

THE STATESMAN

20 JUL 2000

Madras HC order set aside **Jaya faces trial in coal import case**

5/11 19/5
OUR LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 9. — The Supreme Court today set aside a Madras High Court order quashing charges against the former Tamil Nadu chief minister, Miss J Jayalalitha, in the case of a controversial coal import which caused a loss of about Rs 6.5 crore to the state.

The AIADMK leader now faces trial in the Special Court along with another accused, for criminal conspiracy to misappropriate government funds between February 1992 and October 1993. She can, however, seek exemption from personal appearance. S. H. T. N.

The 11 accused and certain coal suppliers, the prosecution says, had entered into a criminal conspiracy to import coal for Tamil Nadu Electricity Board. They allegedly used the deal to get pecuniary advantages for themselves, causing huge losses to the state.

A Division Bench, comprising Mr Justice KT Thomas and Mr Justice RC Lahoti, said: "We direct the Special Judge to proceed against the respondent (Jayalalitha) as one of the accused in the case. Regarding the witness already examined by the prosecution we permit the prosecution to treat the examination-in-chief already done as part of the evidence

recorded in this case with all the accused on the array."

"Prosecution can elicit from those witnesses any further materials and they can be recorded as the remaining portion of the examination-in-chief. Thereafter, she shall have full opportunity to cross-examine such witnesses as though the entire chief examination was conducted with her on the array of the accused," Mr Justice Thomas said.

"This provision is made by us for avoiding unnecessary delay and repetition of re-recording of examination of such witnesses. Prosecution can examine any remaining witnesses. Thereafter the trial can proceed," the court observed.

But Miss Jayalalitha is free to seek exemption from personal appearance in the trial. The Special Court shall exempt her from personal appearance after recording her plea and if she agrees to abide by some conditions.

A counsel on her behalf would be present in the court whenever the case is taken up. She would not dispute her identity as the particular accused in the case. She would be present on any day her presence is requested. "It is needless to say that if she fails to abide by any of the above conditions it is open to the Special Judge to revoke the benefit granted to her."

THE STATESMAN

10 MAY 2000

Govt. will not allow LTTE activity: M

By Our Special Correspondent HD-1

CHENNAI, MAY 12. The Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, today categorically declared in the Assembly that his Government would give no room for any activity in the State by the LTTE, a banned organisation in the country, in the wake of the military offensive in northern Sri Lanka.

"There can be no two views on this issue," he asserted and made it clear that the Government would not allow the LTTE to use Tamil Nadu as a base for any acts of violence in furtherance of their (the militants) objective.

Stating that the DMK's stand on 'Tamil Eelam' was well known, Mr. Karunanidhi reiterated that "we will be happy if they (LTTE) get Tamil Eelam," either through negotiations or an armed conflict. But there was no question of the DMK backing or supporting any moves by the LTTE on Indian soil, he emphasised.

Twitting the main Opposition, the TMC, for seeking to raise the pitch over this sensitive issue, Mr. Karunanidhi, in a half-serious-half-mocking tone, asked whether the debate in the House was on the "demands for grants for the Police Department or the LTTE."

The Chief Minister was intervening in the discussions after two strong but opposing views were presented, first by the TMC MLA, Dr. Chellakumar, and then by the PMK member, Mr. G. K. Mani, on the fallout of the latest developments across the Palk Straits.

Dr. Chellakumar, who initiated the debate today, took a swipe at the DMK by voicing a wide-felt apprehension of LTTE rearing its ugly head in Tamil Nadu again through a clandestine network, going by the recent spurt in the activities of certain pro-LTTE outfits, sympathisers and

leaders. Recalling the "free-run" the LTTE had during 1989-90 when the DMK was in power, Dr. Chellakumar packed into his critique the circumstances that led to the murder of the EPRLF leader, Padmanabha, and the subsequent "free escape" route given to the killers and the assassination of the former Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, in 1991.

Ten years after the ban on the LTTE, local Tamil groups, ostensibly empathizing with the former, were now camouflaging their orchestration under the guise of "Tamils Awakening Conferences," Dr. Chellakumar said, explaining why apprehensions about the LTTE was growing among the people.

Though the recent one slated at Chidambaram (under the auspices of Mr. P. Nedumaran heading the Tamizhar Desiya Iyakkam) was banned, the TMC member said a closed-door meeting was still held there to which the Police had been mute spectators. Smuggling by the LTTE of diesel and medicines was also on the rise through certain landing-points like Thondi, he alleged.

Later, the PMK member, Mr. G. K. Mani, termed the TMC's perception on this issue as "condemnable." The reason, the member claimed, was that Tamils the world-over welcomed the prospect of "Tamil Eelam" and TMC, "belittling the sacrifices of the Eelam fighters" in Sri Lanka, was diverting the issue.

Even as Dr. Chellakumar retorted that the TMC stoutly opposed any political party here voicing LTTE's concerns as it meant "abetting the forces of terrorism," the CPI MLA, Mr. G. Palanichamy, wanted to know whether the PMK would quit the BJP-led NDA at the Centre when the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, had clearly ruled out India recognising "Tamil Eelam." Mr. Mani, however, said

the PMK was entitled to its view.

Mr. Karunanidhi, who felt that the sides (TMC and PMK) had said enough on the matter, also dispelled impressions that he had not heard the views of the political parties in Tamil Nadu on issue before meeting the Prime Minister recently.

Adverting to all the parties expressing themselves against sending the Indian Army to Sri Lanka again and dead set against "repeating the mistakes of the past," as was gleaned during the course of an adjournment motion in the Assembly, Mr. Karunanidhi said it was on that basis that he had explained his views to the Prime Minister.

THE HINDU

CHENNAI

13 MAY 2000

AT IT A LONG TIME!

12/4 The discomfiture in Uttar Pradesh

Uttar Pradesh Assembly can be for-
getting excited over the refusal of the leave of the
House to introduce a Bill dealing with trade taxes. However,
they were wrong to demand the resignation of the
Government on this account. According to established parlia-
mentary practice the defeat of the Government on a money
bill ought, normally, to result in the resignation of the
Government but there are two reasons why the principle does
not apply here. The first is that the Bill in question was not
certified as a money bill by the Speaker. Normal practice is for
the Speaker's certificate to be attached to the Bill when it is
introduced; although there is some uncertainty on this
account, the Speaker has *post facto* certified that the Bill was
not a money Bill, a questionable action even by the standards
to which one is, by now accustomed. The better reason is that
to defeat the Government on the floor of the House on a money
Bill, it is necessary for the Bill to be the property of the House
and this can only happen after it is introduced. *Ex hypothesi*,
defeat of the motion to grant leave means that the Bill was not
at that stage the property of the House. The Ram Gupta
Government are not therefore obliged to resign.

There can be no doubt that the floor management of the
Government was sadly out of joint. Treasury benches comprise
222 members — BJP and allies — of which 93 are ministers, a
record by any standards. Those who stood up to grant leave
were only 56, most of the ministers did not bother to attend.
The shortfall in numbers was so glaring that even a novice at
the game would have been on guard; a chief whip with mini-
mal experience, would have either prolonged the debate to get
members into the House or made some excuse not to introduce
the Bill. It avails chief minister Ram Gupta nothing that the
bill was not certified as a money bill and therefore he would
not resign; no government should allow itself to be the victim
of such gross incompetence. That it was entirely avoidable is a
lesson Gupta and his jumbo Cabinet should read and under-
stand. There is no evidence that the lesson is being learnt, on
the contrary a rumour is being floated that some disgruntled
legislators of the ruling group arranged the discomfiture of the
chief minister either because he did not accommodate them in
his Cabinet or if they were in, did not give them the posts they
desired. No credence need be given to the rumour; it makes no
sense for legislators, however disenchanted to risk the fall of
the Government, they would then lose all. Whatever they may
lack in ability or good sense, they are not fools.

Whatever the truth of the matter, the central leadership
would do well to get to the bottom of it all; no one will be sur-
prised if the former chief minister, Kalyan Singh is found to
have a messy finger in the pie. He is the only one who could
have thought it up in advance or have the presence of mind to
think on his feet and act accordingly. Sadly the most populous
state in the country with the most legislators is setting a bad
example. All that can be added is that they have been at it a
long time.

THE STATESMAN

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