

# Lok Sabha passes Bill for statehood of Chhattisgarh

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 31

THE LOK Sabha today passed by voice vote the Bill for creation of Chhattisgarh state, which will be carved out of Madhya Pradesh.

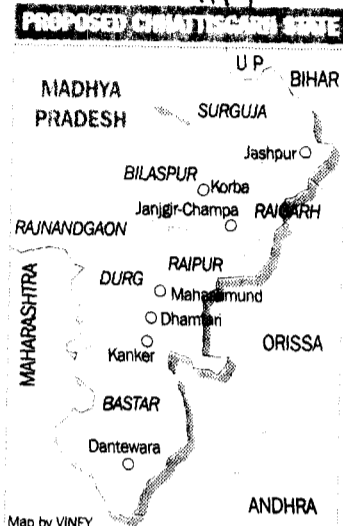
Home Minister L.K. Advani said that this will lead to speedy development of the area. He said the new state will comprise 16 districts with a population of 1.76 crore. Of this, around 78 lakh belong to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

The House cleared the Madhya Pradesh Reorganisation Bill 2000 after four hours of debate. Barring the RJD, Samajwadi Party and the CPI (M), all the other parties supported the Bill. They opposed the Bill on the grounds that the NDA Government was trying to draw political mileage with the creation of smaller states. They warned that this move could lead to division of the country.

However, according to most members (particularly from Chhattisgarh area) the Bill was in line with aspirations of people of Chhattisgarh and would lead to faster economic growth there.

Replying to the debate, Mr Advani said, "We are not only creating a separate state but also paying attention to the large section of people who have been feeling ignored."

Mr Advani said the Centre will



## HIGHLIGHTS

- The new state will have a 90-member State Assembly.
- It will have 11 Lok Sabha MPs. But the term of the sitting members will remain unaltered.
- It will have a separate HC.
- There will be a new Chhattisgarh cadre for IAS, IPS and Indian Forest Services.

have the right, for three years, to directly deal with the problems faced by the state even after con-

stitution of Chhattisgarh.

Mr Advani said that creation of Chhattisgarh had the support of the entire state. The MP Assembly passed a resolution to this effect. He said he would look into the issue raised by Congressman Sunder Lal Tiwari that the State Assembly had passed a non-official resolution on the formation of Vindhyaachal state.

Initiating the discussion, Shyama Charan Shukla (Congress) said development work in Chhattisgarh had come to a standstill during the last two decades. He requested the Centre to grant Rs 2000 crore for building of a new capital and Rs 8,000 crore for the construction of infrastructure to enable the state catch up with other areas.

But Mr Bajuban Reang (CPI-M) said that the creation of new states would not solve developmental problems. Mr Akhilesh Singh (SP) and Mr Raghuvansh Prasad Singh (RJD) demanded that the Bill be referred to a select committee of Parliament. According to them, this Bill was part of a move to divide people for political gain.

Mr Indrajit Gupta (CPI) welcomed the Bill and said it would go a long way in ensuring balanced development of the region.

BSP leader Mayawati said Centre should extend all assistance to the new state apprehending that Madhya Pradesh may not extend any assistance.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 03 OCT 2000

# Crisis in Left movement and govt, says RSP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, July 31. — RSP leaders emerged from a meeting with CPI-M mandarins at Alimuddin Street today to announce a crisis in the Left movement and its government in the state.

People were losing faith in the administration which had failed to curb political violence statewide, said the PWD minister, Mr Kshiti Goswami. His party colleague and irrigation minister, Mr Debabrata Bandopadhyay, said the Left had its back to the wall, and a grave crisis lay ahead.

The RSP and CPI-M spoke as part of separate meetings Alimuddin Street held with the RSP, CPI and Forward Bloc today. Law and order was discussed. Mr Sailen Dasgupta, Mr Anil Biswas and Mr Biman

Bose represented the CPI-M.

"We in the LF should do everything to restore confidence of the people in the state administration," Mr Goswami said.

On his recent controversial comments on the Kespur and Nanoor violence, Mr Goswami said: "Whatever I have said is in the interest of Left solidarity. I have never said anything to belittle the stature of the LF. How can I keep mum, if people seek answers from me on the political clashes? Even in S 24-Parganas, my party workers are being attacked. How can I remain quiet?"

In an obvious reference to differing versions emerging from the CPI-M on the Suchpur killings, Mr Goswami said instead of contradictory reports, he would like to believe the one being prepared by his party.

A section of the poor had turned against the Left, the PWD minister said. "We should do everything to bring them back within the fold." But violence can never be checked by counter-violence.

Mr Debabrata Bandopadhyay said the Left needed to launch a sustained and uncompromising struggle against capitalism. He described Miss Mamata Banerjee as an agent of a global conspiracy hatched by sections of the bureaucracy, the bourgeoisie, media and international capitalist forces.

Mr Sailen Dasgupta, Left Front chairman, told a press conference he had not sought an explanation from Mr Goswami for his comments on law and order. It would be better, however, if LF constituents had identical views.

Senior state Forward Bloc



Mr Kshiti Goswami

leaders including Mr Asoke Ghosh, succeeded during the day in convincing the CPI-M leadership that LF partners should be allowed to take up individual programmes.

The CPI-M said it had no objection to the FB's "peace march" on 11 August.

THE STATESMAN

1 AUG 2 1971

# LYNCH: mob dispenses 'justice'

(Continued from page 1)

Mosta Mollah and Suber Ali.

There was a large crowd waiting at Milan Bazar to see the lynched "dacoits." Similarly, there were hundreds outside the Bhangar police station to see the mutilated bodies and the police had a tough time keeping the curious onlookers at bay. Tension gripped the area and a strong police contingent had been posted in the area.

All the bodies had multiple injuries and were mangled beyond recognition. Fluids were oozing out of their bodies, and some had their skulls cracked with brain matter spilled out. A few had their limbs chopped off and the faces of the dead were horror-stricken. Later, the bodies were sent for post-mortem.

Some villagers doubted the lynching theory. They claimed that the "dacoits" were dragged out of their homes and lynched this morning in a planned way

and added that they were not allowed to come anywhere near when the lynching took place.

Throughout the night, the "dacoits" were beaten up after being nabbed from different places, villagers said, and later lynched this morning around 6.30 am. The villagers hacked them and some had their eyes gouged out. Some were stoned to death, with broken bricks strewn around.

The Additional SP (Rural), Mr Gyanwant Singh, does not believe the villagers' version that all the "dacoits" were lynched at one particular spot. Mr Singh said that they were lynched at different spots around Kachua village and later brought to Milan Bazar, where they were further tortured.

As the villagers took Mr Singh to the spot where they claimed that the victims were lynched, the little amount of blood stain on the ground could not convince him. Only some broken staff bore the evidence

of the torture.

Dr RK Vats, DM, South 24 Parganas, said that the people were lynched at different spots as late as this afternoon. The body of Khokan Mollah was spotted at a canal in Gazapur.

Trouble started last evening at around 6.30 pm, when 30 dacoits raided Milan Bazar of Bhangar, South 24 Parganas. The villagers said that the plunder continued for about two hours. The dacoits had injured over 40 local shopkeepers. This infuriated the villagers.

The dacoits first raided a garment shop and injured its owner, Ezer Ali Dhali. Then they attacked the local video parlour where the criminals clashed with the locals and were soon chased.

The criminals took their positions on a two-storeyed building at the bazaar and hurled bombs to prevent anyone from approaching.

Soon the shop of Tapan Karmakar, an iron merchant,

was attacked and his brother, Suman Karmakar, was seriously injured. Tapan Karmakar said, "Four men entered the shop with pipeguns and pistols."

The dacoits even removed the tin sheets from some of the shops and looted them. The villagers soon plugged all the roads of escape.

The villagers chased the criminals when they were sharing their booty at Bodra and were cornered. Some took shelter in the ponds to escape the mob. Most of them were located and assaulted, but some managed to flee. The police...

**Paresh makes Congress a laughing stock**

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, July 31. — The Youth Congress today made the party a laughing stock and inconvenienced manv. espe-

## Mob lynches 8 'dacoits' in Bhangar

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

MILAN BAZAR, July 31. — Mob fury led to the lynching of eight alleged dacoits this morning at Milan Bazar in Bhangar of South 24 Parganas. The incident is reported to be a sequel to looting of a dozen shops here last evening.

The villagers claimed that they had flushed out the "dacoits" from their hideouts during night-long raids. The eight lynched were known to the villagers as Ammad Ali, Ennath Dewan, Raju, Abdar Mollah, Khokan Mollah, Araf,

■ See LYNCH: page 4

THE STATESMAN

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(EXECUTIVE, JUDICIARY TENSION WELCOME)

110-1  
2/8

# Jethmalani spares Vajpayee

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 1.** The former Law Minister, Mr. Ram Jethmalani, finally got a chance to read out a statement in the Rajya Sabha, detailing the circumstances leading his resignation from the Union Council of Ministers. But much to the treasury benches' relief and to the Opposition's disappointment, the former Law Minister failed to create any kind of fireworks.

"I have no bombs to explode nor dynamite," observed Mr. Jethmalani, rising to make his submission. And looking at the Opposition benches, he added: "I am sorry to disappoint you. I have to make a simple statement, in self-defence".

The statement, supposed to be a highly-sanitised version, was elaborately negotiated by the political and official intermediaries during the last few days. It cer-



tainly appears to have spared the Vajpayee Government an occasion for further embarrassment. The Prime Minister's parliamentary managers were inclined to believe that the "Jethmalani episode" now stood capped.

Contrary to many hints that a piqued Mr. Jethmalani would "take on" the Prime Minister, the former Law Minister was almost

sycophantic today. He noted: "I have said that this Government is the best that this nation can produce today and it is better than many that we have had in the past. Despite my being out of the Government I have not changed that opinion. I am not a weather cock which keeps changing its direction with every breeze that blows. I wish the Prime Minister and his Government a full and glorious tenure".

Mr. Jethmalani even acknowledged a Prime Minister's right to select — or sack — any one as his ministerial colleagues, and noted that Mr. Vajpayee's "action in asking me to resign is both legal and constitutional".

Yet Mr. Jethmalani asserted that he was unwilling to change his ways of outspokenness. Referring to Mr. Vajpayee's admonishment last week that the former Law Minister never learnt the ad-

vantages of "silence", Mr. Jethmalani pleaded guilty, and added: "It is too late to change and I have no desire to change either. My teachers and professors whom I revere taught me exactly the opposite. Silence in the face of wrong is no different from being a conspirator and truth must be loudly trumpeted from the house tops".

Nor was Mr. Jethmalani willing to budge from his well-considered views on the judiciary, though he was not allowed to use the language he would have preferred to express himself in on the subject. He acknowledged that he did not share the Government's

**No violation of secrets; Echo  
in Lok Sabha: Page 15**

views on the Judiciary-Executive relationship. "The Supreme Court and, in fact every court, is to be on the side of the common man who needs constant protection against executive insolence, corruption and incompetence. Tension between the Judiciary and Executive is a welcome sign. The so-called harmony of the two may well be at the expense of the constitutional democracy itself".

At the same time, the former Law Minister took an underhand swipe at the Chief Justice, of course, without referring to him directly he said: "While I am a supporter of judicial activism and all my life I have fought for the independence and glory of the judiciary, I will not surrender any executive privilege to please a judge even if he happens to be the highest."

110-1

- 2 AUG 2000

# Lok Sabha clears Uttaranchal amid protests

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 1: The Bill for the creation of Uttaranchal was passed in the Lok Sabha amid protests from the CPM, Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal and Akali Dal. A section of Congress MPs from Punjab also resisted the move, though the main Opposition party is in favour of the new state.

Defence minister George Fernandes told Lok Sabha that the

panel headed by him has supported the inclusion of Udham Singhnagar in Uttaranchal. But landowning Sikhs, apprehensive that they will be "swamped" by the Uttarakhndis, are opposed to the idea. The Sikhs are also afraid that a change in Udham Singhnagar's status will bring their holdings under the Land Ceiling Act. Udham Singhnagar does not come under the Act at present.

The CPM, the Samajwadi Party and the RJD have been opposed to the Uttaranchal Bill from

the very beginning. Members of these parties rushed to the Well of the House protesting the Bill and demanded that the Fernandes committee report be placed in Parliament for discussion.

"A committee was set up and the members have a right to know what is in it," demanded Samajwadi chief Mulayam Singh Yadav. During his tenure as Uttar Pradesh chief minister, Mulayam had countered the Uttarakhnd movement brutally.

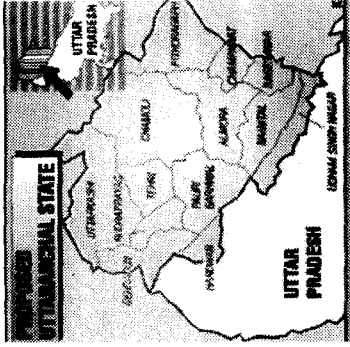
Fernandes, sitting in the front

row of the Treasury bench, kept mum. "It was not the government which had set up the committee. It was the National Democratic Alliance which had authorised the committee—it is a party and not a government decision," said parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan.

But the members pressed for an answer from Fernandes as the government maintained that a discussion on the committee's recommendations can take place only after the Bill is moved by the

home minister. Former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar supported the government for not informing the House about the committee's recommendations. "If the House had been informed about the committee, the members have a right to know about its report."

After 30 minutes of wrangling, home minister L.K. Advani moved the Bill as Samajwadi and RJD members rushed to the Well of the House. Congress members from Punjab walked out, defying the party whip.



# I violated no law, says Jethmalani

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Former law minister Ram Jethmalani on Tuesday justified making government documents public and held that silence in the face of wrongdoing was an offence.

"He (the Prime Minister) has complained that I had not learnt the lesson of silence. To this charge, I gladly plead guilty. Silence in the face of a wrong is no different from being a conspirator, and truth must be loudly trumpeted from the house tops," Mr Jethmalani told the Rajya Sabha.

Arguing that there was no merit in accusing him of breaching the Official Secrets Act, Mr Jethmalani said, "I regret that there is no light in the hearts and minds of those who level such charges."

Criticising the move to set up a committee to probe the alleged leak of official documents, he said he had not committed any theft as copying one's own correspondence did not amount to such a crime. "That making or keeping copies of one's own correspondence is theft will shock the dumbest of law students. I won't waste time on it," he said.

Although he chose not to attack the Prime Minister in the course of his long statement, at one point he remarked acerbically, "The Prime Minister and his young law minister would be hard put to answer some embarrassing questions from the liberals of the world. For God's sake, do not make us look ridiculous."

Holding out a veiled threat to the government, Mr Jethmalani said, "If any member of my personal staff is harassed in any manner, it will be an act both dirty and mean, and will evoke from me an appropriate response." He said the Prime Minister's action—asking for his resignation—was "both legal and constitutional". Mr Vajpayee, he said, had been a "silent beneficiary of my loud and discordant speech".

Accepting his disagreement with the government's perception of relations between the judiciary and the executive, Mr Jethmalani said tension between the two arms of the system was "a welcome sign". He said that "the so-called harmony of the two may well be at the expense of constitutional democracy itself".

Meanwhile, in the Lok Sabha, the opposition raked up the Jethmalani affair once again on Tuesday and, this time, directed its attack against Mr Vajpayee, asking him to come clean on the issues, especially those relating to the attorney-general, which had been raised by Mr Jethmalani.

The opposition's remarks were met with loud protests from the treasury benches, with parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan stating that the government had nothing to hide.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

- 2 AUG 2000

# Jethmalani dares govt to take action

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 1 AUGUST

**I**N A spirited defence of charges against him, former law minister Ram Jethmalani on Tuesday dared the government to take action against him for making documents public. Finally permitted to make an explanatory statement in parliament before leaving for a stint overseas, the fiery lawyer however, ensured that his tirade did not scorch the government he had just left.

With a vintage mix of sarcasm and wit, Mr Jethmalani started out by deriding charges of leaking documents, especially his own correspondence.

"Making or keeping copies of one's own correspondence is theft will shock the dumbest law student."

Serving a backhanded compliment to the recently introduced Freedom of Information Bill, Mr Jethmalani asserted that the "confidentiality"

of documents cannot be maintained by "stamping it as secret and putting it in some safe." His endorsement of the Bill was in sharp contrast to his attack of the government which, he said, was bereft of light in "hearts and minds," perpetuating this "colonial mindset."

Although the Prime Minister had justified the government's line against Ram Jethmalani, the latter reiterated that he was proud to serve Mr Vajpayee, though not the government. "I have said that this government is the best this nation can produce today and it is better that many we have had in the past."

Mr Jethmalani's statement on Tuesday was redolent of the fire-and-brimstone personality of the

former minister, but it had been cleverly crafted to ensure that the government was not overly inconvenienced. Although he darkly predicted strong consequences for those who "harassed" his former personal staff, and insisted that his acts were "consistent with the strictest standards of public probity and ethics," he refused to give the opposition any window of opportunity to use his statements to attack the government.

His protests and defence notwithstanding, Mr Jethmalani's tirade failed to puncture the comfort levels of the government, which rests in a restored cordiality

between the executive and the judiciary — Justice B.M. Lal's appointment as chief of the MRTPC is testament to that. Parliament has been functioning as usual and the government has been going ahead with its agenda for the session.

Mr Jethmalani laid out, chapter and

verse, how he had been on the right side of the law when he leaked documents pertaining to his resignation. Citing parliamentary rulings of 1971-72, he made a case for MPs to use classified documents to further the people's "right to know."

However, he lashed out on the differing views of relations between the executive and the judiciary. "The Supreme Court, and in fact every court, is to be on the side of the common man who needs constant protection against executive insolence, corruption and incompetence. Tension between the executive and the judiciary is a welcome sign. The so-called harmony of the two may well be at the expense of constitutional democracy itself."



Jethmalani: Spirited defence

The Economic Times

- 2 AUG 2000

# Trinamul jumps to Shah's defence

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Aug. 1. — The Trinamul Congress has welcomed the Governor's initiative to help restore peace in the state, criticising the CPI-M's confrontationalist attitude.

The Governor had not made any move to convene an all-party meeting on the state's law and order, Mr Pankaj Banerjee said today. Mr Viren Shah merely wanted to know about the prevailing situation and "every political party should help the Governor by providing information".

The CPI-M state secretary, Mr Anil Biswas and politburo member, Mr Biman Bose, have questioned the propriety of the Governor issuing a statement on last week's killings at Nandoo. They have also asserted that Mr Shah has no right to convene an all-party meeting on any issue as

## ALL-PARTY MEETING

CALCUTTA, Aug. 1. — Mr Jyoti Basu plans to convene an all-party meeting on the issue of political violence. The chief minister told reporters at the Assembly today that he was in favour of talking to various parties on the issue.

An all-party meeting was held earlier at the district level in Midnapore, Mr Basu said. He added that though all political parties attended the meeting, most took no initiative to implement its decisions.

— SNS

long as an elected government is in place.

Mr Shah had urged all political parties and people's representatives to help restore peace at the scene of violence and prevent recurrence of such incidents in

other parts of the state. He also said that "his government" would take all steps to ensure peaceful co-existence in the area.

The CPI-M's "over-reaction" to the Governor's press statement only shows it has nothing to say on the breakdown of law and order and is taking an escapist policy, the Trinamul spokesman said.

The Governor had not made any official statement on the need for calling an all-party meeting. The state CPI-M leadership apparently chose to react on the basis of such a claim by a Trinamul delegation which met the Governor last week.

The Trinamul has also rubbished the CPI-M's claim that the killings at Nandoo were the outcome of Trinamul-backed big land owners' attempt to evict patta holders from land the state government had acquired from them and vested it among landless labourers.

THE STATESMAN

12 30 11



# Centre keen on finalising ceasefire terms by next week

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 4 AUGUST

**T**HE CENTRE is keen to finalise the ground rules of its ceasefire agreement with the Hizbul Mujahideen by as early as next week.

This will pave the way for security forces to step up counter-terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, in the wake of Tuesday night's mayhem, without the risk of striking Hizb cadres.

The Hizb, according to gov-

ernment sources, is also keen on an early finalisation of modalities for the ceasefire, in anticipation of a military offensive against other Pakistan-sponsored militants who are trying to undermine the peace process with a fresh round of violence.

With the security forces facing "serious post-ceasefire difficulties" in the absence of ground rules to identify Hizb cadres from those belonging to other militant outfits, the government's negoti-

ating team headed by special secretary (home) M.B. Kaushal is expected to be in Srinagar by Monday to discuss the modalities for cessation of armed operations.

The negotiating teams will try to finalise the ceasefire pact within a week so that the army and para-military forces can crack down upon the militant hideouts while sparing the Hizb.

The deliberations will explore the possibility of the gov-

ernment issuing identity cards to the Hizb rank and file so that they can forego the security personnel's scrutiny during the latter's anti-militancy operations.

The Hizb team, led by Mr Khalid Saifullah, will be consulted on the option of demarcating certain areas dominated by its cadres as "peace zones" where the security forces would not enter. Only the state administration and police would continue its jurisdiction over these zones.

The Jammu and Kashmir ground rules will be on the lines of the ceasefire pact with the NSCN(IM) in Nagaland and with the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT) in Assam. Of course, the problems specific to the Valley, that may arise while observing the ceasefire, will be identified and a way found during the course of discussions between the Central and Hizb teams.

The decision to jointly frame the ground rules for implementa-

tion of the ceasefire was taken after a high-level government team led by Union home secretary Kamal Pande opened a formal dialogue with the Hizb representatives led by their chief commander Abdul Majid Dar in Srinagar on Thursday.

Both the sides had agreed that "modalities for preparing the ground for restoration of peace should be pursued seriously so that elements opposed to this peace process could be identified."

# Cong wants judicial probe

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, August 4

**P**RIME MINISTER A.B. Vajpayee's statement in Parliament today on Tuesday's Amarnath massacre prompted stinging criticism by the Opposition in both Houses.

In the Lok Sabha, the Congress and Rashtriya Janata Dal staged a walkout. In the Rajya Sabha, Mr Vajpayee postponed his reply to the clarifications sought by members till Monday.

The government came under attack in the Lok Sabha for glossing over the "security lapses" which led to so many lives being lost.

Leader of the Opposition Sonia Gandhi demanded a judicial inquiry and said responsibility must be fixed if such incidents are not to recur in the future.

In his short statement, the Prime Minister said India's fight against terrorism would continue and it would not give up efforts for restoration of peace. He said he had been briefed by the chief of Unified Command and security forces that the perpetrators of the "heinous crime" were foreigners. Arms and ammunition recovered clearly establish their links with the Pakistan based Lashkar-e-Tayyiba.

## Hizbul 'analysing' talks

HIZBUL MUJAHIDEEN leaders here are analysing the outcome of the discussions their representatives had with the Central Government team but refrained from making any public statements.

The leaders were in touch with their supreme commander, Syed Salahuddin, in Islamabad where the Hizbul's top decision-making body is said to be in session mulling over Thursday's session in preparation of the next round of talks scheduled "very shortly."

PTI, Srinagar

The Prime Minister was accompanied to Pahalgam and Srinagar yesterday by a high level parliamentary delegation which comprised Mrs Gandhi, CPI(M) leader Somnath Chatterjee, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav (Samajwadi Party), Mr Yerran Naidu (Telegu Desam) and Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad (Congress).

Cabinet colleagues Defence Minister George Fernandes, Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee and Minister of State for Civil Aviation

Chaman Lal Gupta also joined him.

"I made it clear at Srinagar that the dialogue with the Hizbul Mujahideen is a part of this effort. Other groups who have chosen the path of violence should also realise that the people of Jammu and Kashmir want peace.

"It is futile for them to continue on the path of violence. They should come forward for talks with the government for redress of their grievances," the Prime Minister said.

When Mrs Gandhi wanted to react to the statement, the Speaker objected saying clarifications could not be sought in the Lok Sabha, but only in the Rajya Sabha.

This angered the Opposition benches and they began to protest. Finally, when the Speaker decided to make a concession only for the leader of the Opposition, the National Democratic Alliance members began to protest saying rules should not be broken.

This resulted in angry scenes which lasted over half an hour with neither side willing to withdraw from their positions. Finally the Prime Minister stepped into the breach offering to withdraw his side's objections to Mrs Gandhi making a remark.

Related reports on Pages 8 and 12

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 5 AUG 2000

# No need for Central rule: Shah

Arindam Sarkar  
Calcutta, August 7

THE STATE is passing through difficult times and political violence is spiralling. There is a clamour for Central intervention, but Governor Viren J Shah does not think things are as bad. There is no constitutional crisis here and West Bengal is not a fit case for imposition of President's rule.

"Only the Governor can recommend to the President imposition of Article 355. The situation here doesn't warrant any such step. If at all there is one, the Governor would apply his mind," Shah said in an interview to *The Hindustan Times*.

"I urge the people of my State to shun violence. The Government of West Bengal is alert. If there is any possibility of escalation of violence before the Assembly elections, the State Government and the Election Commission would take care to ensure that polls are held peacefully here," he said.

Shah said it was unfortunate that his name had been dragged into

unnecessary controversies. The politically volatile situation notwithstanding, he was facing no problems in dealing with Chief Minister Jyoti Basu or any of his ministers.

"I have received a very positive response from Basu and his ministers. I conduct myself in a correct manner. So do they. The talks between the Governor and the Chief Minister on any matter are not for public consumption. I meet Opposition leaders too and treat the interpretation of the law and order situation given by the ruling party and the Opposition with equal importance," Shah said.

But what of Mamata Banerjee's memorandum to him on the deteriorating law and order situation and her hope that the Governor would act quickly to restore peace?

"What does a Governor do? He sends these memorandums to the State Government. I can't give any direct orders. I don't know what she believes. But if she believes anything different, then I wouldn't like to comment on it. Even the State Government has given a report on

the law and order situation, but I would not comment on who is right. Everything has got its proper time and place," he explained.

But does he think the situation is getting out of hand? It's the State Government that assesses the situation. If at all he had to submit a report, he would do so to the President. "I will not say whether I have sent any report to the President," he said. Asked about the storm over his reported demand for an all-party meeting to stop violence in the districts, he referred to his March 2 address to the Assembly.

"The policy on law and order was clearly stated in my address. I had said...it is also necessary to have the active cooperation of political parties to eradicate violence. This political process has been initiated at the district level and will be followed at the State level".

"At no point of time did I make any public statement or issue a press statement urging that the State Government should hold an all-party meeting," said Shah.

(Interview, photograph on Page 3)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

8 AUG 2000

# Remove US Consul General: Anil

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Aug. 7. — The CPI-M today demanded the immediate removal of the US Consul General and his wife for allegedly interfering in the affairs of the state by gathering information on the killing of 11 people in Nanor last month.

The CPI-M state secretary, Mr Anil Biswas, said the party MP in Rajya Sabha, Mr Biplab Dasgupta, had been asked to take up the matter with the Prime Minister and the external affairs minister.

He alleged that two officers of the political section of the Consulate went to Nanor recently to collect information under instruction from the Consul General and his wife, which was an attack on India's

sovereignty. "We have the proof and we can produce it, if necessary." The report, he alleged, had already been sent to an US-based human rights organisation.

In a fax message to the Prime Minister, Mr Dasgupta wanted to know if the Consulate had obtained permission from the Centre, bypassing the state government. If this was not done, the Centre should communicate to the US Embassy its displeasure, he said.

He wrote that according to the autobiography of Patrick Daniel Moynihan, former US Ambassador to India, the US government twice used money power and otherwise interfered in Indian politics, in Kerala and West Bengal, to keep the Communists from power.

Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya said that since a responsible secretary of a party had commented on the issue, the government would look into it.

Asked for her comments, Miss Mamata Banerjee said: "Why should I react?"

Mr Ajit Panja said he hadn't yet received any complaint from the CPI-M. He "had read about it only in newspapers". He has faxed the clippings to the foreign ministry and asked officials to send him details. The ministry had sent the clippings to the Consulate in Calcutta for their side of the story, he said.

The minister said the allegation "if true, is of a very serious nature .. We can't allow any country to interfere in our affairs." But he added that Mr

Biswas's demand for the expulsion of the Consul General and his wife was "hot-headed".

"Our government is run from the secretariat, not from any party office," he said. The matter would have to be handled cautiously and any step would be taken only after receiving the detailed report from the ministry, he said.

Mr Manash Bhuniya, PCC general secretary, said Mr Biswas had made a serious complaint that needed to be properly investigated. "First it has to be ascertained if there is any truth in the allegation. We will use our channels to seek the truth and demand that the state administration investigate the matter."

US Consulate officials were not available for comment.

THE STATESMAN

20 AUG 2000

# Hizbul accuses PM of shifting stand on talks

Negotiations fail to make headway Govt. firm on pursuing peace process: PM

The Times of India News Service and Agencies

SRINAGAR: In a new twist to the ongoing ceasefire talks, the Hizbul Mujahideen on Monday accused Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee of changing his stand and asked the Centre to come out with a "fresh and unequivocal" statement that the government wanted to have an unconditional dialogue with the organisation.

Hizbul's chief commander Abdul Majid Dar said Mr Vajpayee's statement in New Delhi on Sunday that talks on the Jammu and Kashmir issue with the Hizbul Mujahideen would have to be held within the framework of the constitution had "dashed all hopes generated among the common people that dark days are numbered" after the Hizb had announced a ceasefire and the government had "responded positively".

Mr Dar, who made the surprise announcement of a unilateral ceasefire on July 24, said the fresh statement from the government was all the more necessary as the head of the government had "changed" his stand within four days of bringing the Hizbul Mujahideen to a crossroads—whether to stand by its promise of ceasefire or not.

In Islamabad, the Hizbul on Monday hinted that it would be difficult to review Tuesday's deadline for India to agree to tripartite talks involving Pakistan to settle the Kashmir issue.

There was no "positive" response from India as yet to its proposal for tripartite talks, the militant outfit's spokesman Saleem Hashmi said, accusing New Delhi of adopting "delaying tactics".

"How can we review the deadline if we are not receiving positive signals from across the border? The situation remains unchanged," Mr Hashmi said, adding, "We still stand by that demand." He warned that India would be responsible for any failure of the Hizbul's unilaterally declared ceasefire in J&K.

Meanwhile, the outfit's supreme commander Syed Salahuddin urged Islamabad-based diplomats to persuade India to agree to the tripartite talks.

"They (India) intend to tie the affair to a bilateral dialogue which is not an acceptable proposition. The Kashmir tangle can be solved only by a just negotiating process involving all three parties—Kashmiris, India and Pakistan," he said in a letter to the ambassadors.

Mr Salahuddin said India's acceptance of the tripartite talks would help in convincing other militant groups to work towards a comprehensive peace.

Reports from Srinagar said there was no progress in the talks between the Hizbul and the Indian army on Monday although the Hizbul Mujahideen had reiterated it was sincere about the talks.

Mistrust appears to have crept in between the two sides as the army is believed to have not yet suspended its operations and the Hizb has alleged that its cadres are being harassed, a charge denied by the army here.

Special secretary in the Union home ministry M.B. Kaushal, who had been appointed as the principal negotiator by Union home secretary Kamal Pandey last week, could not come here on Monday. But Hizb spokesman, "commander" Masood, said on Monday that the talks might take place this week.

The Times of India News Service and Agencies

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee told the Rajya Sabha on Monday that the government was "doubly determined" to pursue the peace process in Jammu and Kashmir and fight terrorism sponsored by Pakistan. But there was no question of opening a dialogue with Islamabad unless a "conducive atmosphere" was created for it.

India, he said, had shown exemplary tolerance, patience and restraint in the face of extreme provocation by Islamabad. "We have shown a degree of generosity few other countries can match.

"Unfortunately, Pakistan has misread our generosity and our desire for friendly relations as a weakness and has adopted cross-border terrorism as an instrument of state policy," Mr Vajpayee said, replying to clarifications on his statement on the recent J&K massacres.

"These killings have not and will not deter us," he said, adding, "We are committed to protecting our national interests and preserving national unity and none should doubt that we have the means to do so."

Opposition members, mainly from the Congress, were dissatisfied with Mr Vajpayee's reply and demanded a judicial inquiry into the killings. They kept up their shouting for 20 minutes as Mr Vajpayee watched in silence. At 1 p.m., chairman Krishan Kant adjourned the House for lunch.

In his reply, Mr Vajpayee said the dialogue with the Hizbul Mujahideen would be within the framework of

the constitution. However, if during the dialogue, issues were raised which were outside the constitution, as in the case of Nagaland talks, the government would not be unwilling to talk.

"I do not know what direction the dialogue will take. We want to take it further. If the other side does not accept, we will decide what to do and how to defend our country," he said, adding that "no condition has been imposed and the dialogue should continue". He called on the militants to emerge from underground. "A solution to the Kashmir problem.. cannot be found with faces covered with cloth."

On the demand for a judicial probe, he said, "We do not want to conceal anything. However, whatever action we take, our enemies should not take advantage of it." A high-level inquiry under the GoC of the unified command, and also comprising the Union home secretary and the deputy commissioner of Amarnath district, was being conducted.

Responding to Kuldip Nayar's claim that Pakistani rulers were ready for a comprehensive ceasefire, Mr Vajpayee said India had tried to find out, through diplomatic channels, if this was correct. "There is no such proposal."

An agitated opposition pushed the government into a corner by demanding a time-bound judicial probe into any possible security lapses in parliament.

During the debate, which was marked by acrimony and noisy scenes, the Congress demanded home minister L.K. Advani's resignation.

In the Lok Sabha, Madhavrao Scindia (Cong.) pointed to defence minister George Fernandes' statement to the media from Jammu describing the killing of the pilgrims as an avoidable tragedy.

## WAR OF WORDS

- Opposition demands judicial probe into Kashmir killings
- Congress calls for Advani's resignation
- Delhi adopting delaying tactics, says Hizbul

# Hizbul call to arms ends peace bid

ANKARSHAN THAKUR

1, Aug. 8: Kashmir has resumed security and armed militant as New Delhi's latest initiative collapsed because of mistrust between the government and Hizbul Mujahideen. Security forces have been on special alert since the serial massacres of August 1 in which over 100 people were killed but the ceasefire had dictated that security personnel retreat from pursuit positions and ease the guard. That is now being rapidly reversed. Army and paramilitary forces were fanning out to vantage posi-

tions and possible flashpoints tonight as the government geared up to take on the militants afresh. It is likely that the security forces will mount a series of pre-emptive searches on suspected militant strongholds beginning tonight. The Hizbul blamed New Delhi for the breakdown of talks and the resumption of hostilities, saying the government had not conceded their basic demand for unconditional tripartite talks involving Pakistan. Salahuddin charged the Centre with reducing the negotiations to a "mockery" and warned of renewed armed strikes against security personnel and installations in the days to come. "Our guns are ready and we are deter-

mined to carry on our war for the liberation of Kashmir from Indian hands," Salahuddin was quoted as saying. Signs that the initiative would break down were evident from the very start of negotiations as basic differences erupted between the government and the Hizbul on the modalities for a solution. While the government has not been prepared to concede a solution beyond the Constitution, the Hizbul, prodded by other militant Pakistani organisations, was demanding unconditional talks. Another major point of dispute was the Pakistani role in talks. New Delhi was obdurately against it, the Hizbul was insisting that Is-

lamabad be brought on board, if only at a later stage. Government circles here are not ruling out the possibility of some Hizbul commanders defying Salahuddin's diktat and continuing negotiations with the government but such an exercise will suffer from a debilitating credibility crisis. One top official admitted: "Even if some Hizbul commanders do continue talks, they will be isolated from the mainstream and talks with them will be meaningless. They will be like showpieces in government safe houses."

There have been reports of Hizbul cadre being uncomfortable with the prospect of surrendering and prepared to shift loyalties if their leaders agreed to come over-ground. Abdul Majid Dar, the commander-in-chief of Hizbul forces in the Valley and the man being tipped by the government to split away, had himself in a statement yesterday authorised Syed Salahuddin to take a final decision on the ceasefire. Dar's initial ceasefire call had been endorsed by Salahuddin from Pakistan but he later fixed August 8 as the deadline for the government to agree to unconditional tripartite talks involving Pakistan. "If Dar now

goes against his bosses, he will lose face and credibility. But even if he goes with the government, his cadre are more likely to follow the directions of Salahuddin," sources close to the Hizbul said. There has been no word on the whereabouts of the four Hizbul commanders who came for the first and only round of talks with the government on August 8. These commanders have perhaps all retreated to their underground bases. Another indication that ceasefire was becoming increasingly unpopular among Hizbul ranks was that Khalid Sullah, named as leader for talks on the logistics of ceasefire, declined to show up.

THE TELEGRAPH

9 AUG 2000

# Basu picks up oust-consul baton

BY OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

9-8r  
WD

Calcutta, Aug. 8: The West Bengal government today stamped its seal of approval on the CPM's campaign against the US consulate with chief minister Jyoti Basu saying he would shortly write a letter to the Prime Minister, seeking action against the consul-general for prying into the internal affairs of the state.

"The US consulate here has transgressed the bounds of diplomatic propriety as it has been meddling in our internal affairs. It must be advised not to interfere in Indian politics. I hope the Centre will initiate action in this regard," Basu said tonight.

But foreign ministry sources said it would be difficult for the Centre to recommend action since

9-1  
9/8

the consulate has not gone against any law or diplomatic protocol.

Basu said he had no reservation about diplomats and foreign government officials touring areas torn by natural calamity. But he made it clear that their undeclared visits to political flash-points would be opposed. "Such visits are unethical," he added.

Pointing out that the government was not informed before the team was sent, the chief minister felt such visits would heighten tension in sensitive areas.

Basu joined hands with his party colleagues, saying he supported their demand that Christopher Sandrolini, the US consul-general in Calcutta, be removed for sending analysts to Nanoor where 11 people were massacred.

"I am in full agreement with the position taken by my party

leaders," Basu said. "It is nothing new for them (the US)... Daniel Patrick Moynihan (former US ambassador to India) had confessed that they had twice taken an active role in dislodging the communists from power in Kerala and Bengal," Basu said.

Basu's hard-hitting statement is being perceived as an extension of CPM state secretary Anil Biswas' tirade against Sandrolini.

Biswas kept up his offensive today. "Last Sunday, Daniel Harsh, an administrative officer, had visited Nanoor. What was the purpose of this visit?" he asked.

"The issue is serious and we politicians know how to tackle this," he added, dropping hints that the party would launch an agitation if no action was taken. Biswas said MP Biplab Dasgupta had written to the Prime Minister

and the party was awaiting his response.

The CPM found support from an unlikely source with the state BJP criticising the consulate. "We must condemn the Nanoor massacre, but we are against any interference by the America lobby," state BJP president Asim Ghosh said.

But the America-bashing is being viewed with concern by industry which fears an adverse impact on funds flow from the US if the issue snowballs.

The reservation is being shared by a section of the CPM which had earlier opposed the party's boycott of President Bill Clinton's visit. Party veteran Somnath Chatterjee had then pointed out to the leadership that the boycott might affect the state's industrialisation programme.

THE TELEGRAPH

7-1-1978

# Anti-climax at Mamata rally

UDAY BASU  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

5/1/1978

CHAMKAITALA, Aug. 9. — It was a bit of an anti-climax. The homes were deserted, Trinamul workers having fled the village the evening before. Their counterparts from other parts of the district thronged Miss Mamata Banerjee's rally, braving blinding rain to listen to their leader warning the Left Front that its days in power were numbered.

CPI-M men were nowhere to be seen, though red bunting with the hammer and sickle painted in white adorned large stretches of village streets. For all the war of words between the two parties over the past few days, there was no trouble.

Indeed, it was rain, and not

## Panja convoy attacked

9-8-78 WS

CAICUTTA, Aug. 9. — Mr Ajit Panja's convoy was attacked on the way back from Chamkaitala, at Goghat, Hooghly this evening, in Miss Mamata Banerjee's presence. Police dispersed the attackers. — SNS

■ Quit Bengal, Mamata tells Left Front, page 3

the CPI-M, that threatened to disrupt the Trinamul's much hyped rally this afternoon. It started raining when Miss Banerjee was about to speak, and continued to pour till her speech was over. The more the sound of pattering raindrops drowned her amplified voice, the more she raised its pitch.

Though there was no violence, the police would take no chances and the atmosphere was

one of suffocating fear. Policemen continually prevented Trinamul workers from straying into the village, insisting that they remain within yards of the rally venue.

Asked why police were behaving thus, an officer said: "Let me tell you this much: please do not try to go inside the villages, if you want to avoid trouble."

The rally was attended almost entirely by Trinamul

workers from outside Chamkaitala. Villages in and around Chamkaitala looked haunted and Trinamul workers who ventured into empty courtyards were greeted by stray dogs.

Some women who had stayed back said CPI-M activists had threatened them with dire consequences if they attended the rally. Trinamul leaders alleged water and electricity connections to Chamkaitala had been snapped.

An old man, who came from a neighbouring village to visit a relative, had to return finding the village deserted. "The upshot of this political war is that we are yet to sow seeds even at the height of monsoon," he said as he trudged back home.

THE STATESMAN

10 AUG 2 1978



# Do not meddle in our affairs, Basu tells U.S. Consul

By Malabika Bhattacharya

CALCUTTA, AUG. 9. The West Bengal Chief Minister, Mr. Jyoti Basu, today asked Mr. Sandrolini, U.S. Consul-General here, not to associate himself with the Opposition parties, especially the Trinamool-BJP combine.

"You have no business to poke your nose in our affairs", Mr. Basu told Mr. Sandrolini who met him at his chamber in Writers' Buildings this afternoon.

That American efforts to smoothen the Communists' ruffled feathers failed became evident today when Mr. Basu wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, urging him to look into what he said the U.S. interference in West Bengal's affairs.

Mr. Sandrolini is scheduled to meet the State's Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. Buddhadev Bhattacharya, tomorrow.

"You tried to destabilise Kerala's communist Government in 1959. You also financed the Congress Government in Bengal in 1971 to help it spoil the Leftists' chances of assuming office in the State. Now, we hear you are funding Trinamool-BJP combine in the State" a visibly angry Mr. Basu is reported to have told Mr. Sandrolini.

Sources said Mr. Sandrolini tried to explain that the Consulate was not associated with any political party in West Bengal. "It was an innocent visit, nothing to read between the lines," he said.

Today's meeting took place in the backdrop of the CPI(M)'s outbursts against the U.S. for sending two political analysts to Nanur in Birbhum district to investigate the killing of 11 persons in a clash in July.

Contrary to media reports that Mr. Basu would not risk taking a hard position against the U.S. because it could jeopardise investment flow to the State, he criticised Mr. Sandrolini for the Nanur visit.

"You are free to pursue your economic interests in the State, but do not pry into other areas," he is reported to have told Mr. Sandrolini.

The CPI(M) has asked parliamentarian, Mr. Biplab Dasgupta, to apprise the Union Government of the alleged U.S. interference in Nanur.

## Dasgupta to meet Jaswant

Mr. Dasgupta will meet Mr. Jaswant Singh, External Affairs Minister, in New Delhi soon and urge him to check the Trinamool's source of funding.

The CPI(M) parliamentarians are also preparing to corner the BJP and its allies in the Lok Sabha.

Interestingly, the Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. Ajit Panja, has decided not to wait for Mr. Jaswant Singh's response to issue.

He said the Bengal CPI(M) was wrong in asking the Consul-General and his wife to leave the country. "What's the problem? The U.S. team's Nanur visit was a regular one," he said.

The Centre has asked for a full report on the controversy.

CPI(M) leaders have alleged that the anti-Left campaign Ms. Banerjee launches before each national and local election and her rallies across the State showed that her party was being financed by "foreign powers."

Mr. Dasgupta said Ms. Banerjee's Chamkaitala rally, which is taking place today in the trouble-torn Midnapore district, is an example of "foreign funding."

"Or else how can they put up such a big show where hundreds of buses, mini-buses, trucks and so on are used? We contribute to the party fund on a regular basis, but what about them? Where do they get the money from?" Mr. Dasgupta asked.

## CPI(M) protests

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 9. The CPI(M) today protested the visit of two officials of the United States Consulate in Calcutta to Suchpur village in Birbhum district, where violence had broken out recently with the CPI(M) and the Trinamool Congress blaming it on each other.

The party's politburo said in a statement that given the history of "hostile" U.S. actions against the Left Front Governments, "the suspicion arises why the U.S. diplomatic agency should directly interfere in such a matter."

It criticised the Union Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. Ajit Panja's reported statement justifying the U.S. Consulate's action. "For the Vajpayee Government which has allowed the FBI to open an office in Delhi, such gross interference by the U.S. diplomatic establishment may seem normal, but for patriotic Indian citizens this stance is a serious affront," the party said.

It urged the Centre to ensure that foreign diplomatic missions did not visit sensitive areas without the permission of the State Government concerned.

11/11/80

10/11/80

# Advani blames Pak for breakdown of talks with Hizbul

The Times of India News Service and Agencies

NEW DELHI: The government has held Pakistan responsible for the ruptured dialogue with the Hizbul Mujahideen and affirmed that while it is still determined to pursue peace, there will be no let-up in the drive against terrorists refusing to lay down arms.

"We shall persist with our policy of firmness and flexibility," home minister L.K. Advani told the Lok Sabha on Wednesday. Responding to the Hizbul announcement calling off the cease-fire, he stated that despite India's commitment to peace, it was capable of demonstrating its gritty will to join issue with terrorist outfits as well.

"In the days and months to come, India will not deviate from its chosen course of talks with all those in Kashmir who eschew the path of terror and violence and our simultaneous battle against all those who continue to stick to that path," Mr Advani said. About the Hizbul suggestion that Islamabad be involved in the peace talks, Mr Advani said, "India has all along maintained that the question of a dialogue with Pakistan is a separate issue."

In his three-page statement, Mr

Advani blamed Pakistan for the failure of yet another peace effort, saying, "The nature, location, context and content of the announcement by Hizbul leader Syed Salahuddin can leave no doubt in anybody's mind that it is Pakistan which has sabotaged the prospects of peace" in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said there was no doubt that the Hurriyat leadership had also played a negative role in the entire episode. "From the beginning, their response to the Hizbul initiative was not just cold, they even labelled it as a 'hasty' move."

Accusing Pakistan of "sabotaging" the initiative, Mr Advani said, "The rulers of Pakistan are terrorised by the prospect of peace in J&K." However, he sought to remind both Pakistan and the terrorist groups that if their activities continued in Indian territory, the country's armed forces would repulse the subversive attempts. "Our security forces are ready to face the challenge and threat of renewed militancy in the state of J&K," Mr Advani said.

Despite the tough posture, Mr Advani held out the promise of discussing Kashmir with Pakistan if the latter agreed to create a conducive atmosphere.

## Hurriyat mum as Hizbul attacks army building

The Times of India News Service

SRINAGAR: The All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC), which met here for over two hours on Wednesday, refused to comment on the withdrawal of the cease-fire by the Hizbul Mujahideen on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, militants fired rockets on an army building in Baramulla late on Tuesday night. The Hizbul claimed responsibility for the attack.

On Wednesday, APHC leaders met at Hurriyat headquarters to discuss the latest developments. Yasin Malik and Syed Ali Shah Geelani were also present at the meeting. But the leaders, including its chairman, Abdul Ghani Bhat, who came out of the meeting, refused to talk to the media.

The APHC, which had described the cease-fire on July 24 as a hasty action by the Hizbul, had all along been opposed to the decision. Mr Bhat had last week commented that the Centre-Hizbul talks would not bring peace to the state.

However, Wednesday's silence on the part of the Hurriyat leaders surprised even political observers who felt that they may react only after getting the reaction of the local 'commanders' of the Hizbul who had gone underground and resorted to attacks on the security camps.

Meanwhile, the army headquarters building at Baramulla town in south Kashmir was attacked with rockets by militants late on Tuesday.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

10 AUG 2000

# Consul-General meets Buddha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

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CALCUTTA/NEW DELHI, Aug. 10. — The US Consul-General in Calcutta, Mr Christopher Sandrolini, today met Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya over the controversy on the visit of two Consulate officials to Nannoor, while Mr Jyoti Basu dashed a letter to the Prime Minister expressing "surprise" over the visit.

Both refused comment on their talks. Mr Bhattacharya said it wouldn't be proper to comment for diplomatic reasons. On whether the controversy would hinder foreign investment in the state, the deputy chief minister said the government had no such apprehensions.

In his letter, Mr Basu said Mr Sandrolini had explained to

him during their meeting yesterday that the two officials were well within their rights to visit any place. The US diplomat had cited a provision in the Vienna Convention to substantiate his argument, Mr Basu wrote.

The Chief Minister said he had explained to Mr Sandrolini that the "nature of activity indulged in by these two officials amounted to interference".

He said the Consulate personnel had violated Article 41 of the Vienna Convention "which prohibits such interference in the internal affairs of any country", and requested the PM to deal with the matter appropriately.

Mr Anil Biswas also iterated

that the Consulate had violated the Vienna Convention by sending its officials to Nannoor. He said the officials could go anywhere where there was no restriction, but could not hold independent inquiries.

He said both the Chief Minister and party MP Mr Biplab Dasgupta had written to the PM seeking clarification on whether the Consulate had any right to hold independent inquiries. "We are waiting for the PM's reply, after which we will disclose everything we know about the matter."

The external affairs ministry is in touch with the US Embassy on the issue. A ministry spokesman said: "We are aware

of the misgivings of the state government. Diplomatic missions have unrestricted access but we do not expect any intrusive activity.. We will take further action if considered appropriate and necessary."

On whether any "intrusive activity" had indeed occurred, officials said the full facts were awaited. But normally, diplomatic staff are allowed full freedom of movement except restricted areas, which Nannoor isn't. Even Jammu and Kashmir is not a restricted area.

**BJP stand:** The state BJP today said the statements of CPI-M leaders on the Consulate controversy were "irresponsible". The party said CPI-M leaders were now trying to divert attention from the Nannoor killings.

THE STATESMAN

11 AUG 2000

## FOREIGN EQUITY CAP OF 49 PER CENT

# STD segment thrown open

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 13.** The Government today announced the opening up of the national long distance communications segment with no restriction on the number of players. The announcement thus beats the August 15 deadline set by the Prime Minister for throwing open this sector to competition. The first licence will, however, be issued only after a month as several technicalities have to be completed by the companies.

The Government's step could reverse the decline in actual foreign investment in the telecom sector for the last 15 months. It will allow Government organisations with surplus fibre capacity to earn additional income as the guidelines permit them to sell their capacity to national long distance companies. On the flip side, the appraisal of the Department of Telecommunications is sure to decline by 10 to 15 per cent because its monopoly in this segment is effectively over.

It is not clear whether the ordinary consumer will benefit in the near future because new companies will initially focus on attracting institutional callers. As it is, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India is scheduled to announce lower STD and ISD rates next month. It remains to be seen whether the DoT and private companies offer even lower STD rates to the ordinary consumers. But the STD bills of corporates are sure to decline substantially.

The guidelines prescribe a foreign equity cap of 49 per cent, a one-time entry fee of Rs. 100 crores and stiff eligibility criteria — net worth of at least Rs. 2,500 crores and minimum paid up equity capital of Rs. 250 crores. At least 30 per cent of the total equity in the company would be held by an organisation with experience in the telecom sector. Companies

would have to pay 10 per cent of their income annually to the Government as licence fees and five per cent to a fund for financing telecom expansion in areas inimical to the private sector due to their low revenue earning potential.

The Union Communications Minister, Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan, admitted to mediapersons that the Government resisted pressure from many quarters while formulating the guidelines. A lobby comprising Indian companies wanted lower benchmarks for minimum net worth and paid up equity capital. But the Government stuck to its original formulation in order to attract only the serious players.

Another section of the industry was pressuring the Government to allow a free-for-all within telecom circles. But in order to protect the interests of the existing fixed service providers (FSPs), the guidelines mandate an agreement with FSPs before national long distance companies can pick up calls within telecom circles.

Fielding technical questions on behalf of the Minister, senior officials said applications would be processed within 15 days of submission and licences issued once formalities relating to entry fees and proof of eligibility criteria were completed. They denied that the procedure of issuing licences was a problem area. The usual area of conflict was the selection and bidding process both of which had been done away with.

Companies had been asked to submit all-India coverage plans along with bank guarantees (BGs) of Rs. 400 crores. The BGs would be returned in four phases after the companies demonstrated that they had covered the entire country. Failure to fulfill the roll-out obligation would result in forfeiture and encashment of the bank guarantees.

Little role for TPAI: Page 13

12 AUG 2000

# CMC asks owners to give up unsafe buildings

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, August 12

COME MONSOON and old, dilapidated buildings of the city can no longer bear the weight of age. A century-old building at 29/1, Phears Lane in Bowbazar collapsed yesterday.

Unable to convince occupiers to vacate insecure buildings, member, Mayor-in-Council (Buildings) Swapan Samaddar today even offered incentives to owners who surrender such buildings for demolition.

"I promise to give concessions to owners of such buildings if they agree to demolish the structure. Apart from our demolition squad carrying out the task free of charge, we are also ready to give them incentives," he said.

The sops will include speedy sanctioning of a new building plan and permission to build an additional floor if the owner loses ground space due to new building rules. "I will try and give them every kind of incentive in my capacity as MIC, Buildings," promised Samaddar. A list of unsafe buildings will also be published in newspapers.

But, if residents of the century-old 29/1, Phears Lane are to be believed, it was rats that led to yesterday's collapse of a portion of the three-storied building. Nobody was injured as residents, sensing danger, had vacated the premises the day before.

But Corporation officials summarily dismissed the rodent factor

as cause for collapse. "The building was old and so it fell to pieces. How can rats cause the collapse of a building that big," asked Samaddar. Orders to demolish other insecure portions of the building have been issued.

Chief Municipal Architect and Town Planner S M Ghosh also rejected the possibility of rats causing a building, particularly a heritage structure, to collapse.

"These heritage buildings have solid foundations which cannot be said about most of the buildings that have come up in the last 50 years or so," he said.

CMC's building department has identified 184 buildings, most of them in north and central Calcutta, as unsafe. "Boards declaring the building as unsafe have been hung on 50 such structures. Survey is on to identify more such dilapidated houses," said Samaddar.

The owners are being given a 15-day notice to vacate the building; a final notice is issued after another fortnight. "If they do not vacate these even after that we have to inform the police," said the MIC.

Within a week of taking charge, Samaddar warned occupiers of strict action if the buildings were not vacated after the second notice.

But such warnings made little difference. "As per law, CMC can at best request the residents to vacate a dangerous building. Only the State Government can take action," the MIC said.

## Mayor keen on staging revival of Bengali theatre

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, August 12

CALCUTTA'S FLEDGLING theatre groups have something to cheer about. Calcutta's first citizen has taken upon himself to resurrect the city's theatre scene.

Mayor Subrata Mukherjee is reading a blueprint that will make Bengali theatre compete with television and the Internet. "I have spoken to some intellectuals and theatre personalities about how the Calcutta Municipal Corporation can help revive the theatre movement in the city. They have come up with some ideas that we are considering," said the mayor.

The blueprint, though still in a nebulous form, will aim to create an infrastructure to facilitate the theatre movement. "CMC can organise theatre festivals, find sponsors for prizes and also reduce amusement tax," said Mukherjee.

He is due to meet theatre personalities and intellectuals on Wednesday and is hoping that some more concrete suggestions will follow.

But for starters, work is on to convert the recently

restored Town Hall's second floor into a small auditorium. "Calcutta Museum has come up on the first floor but the second floor is lying vacant.

"It will be converted into an air-conditioned multipurpose hall which will be rented out at nominal rates to theatre groups as well as for other cultural activities," said the mayor.

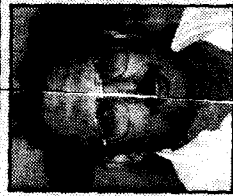
In spite of the stiff competition from the electronic and the virtual media, Mukherjee is hopeful of a revival in interest in theatre. "When I was young I would go to watch *jatra* rather than cinema.

"Just like *jatra*, even theatre can be revived with proper support and attention," he said. But, he wants the State Government to support the revival plan.

Mukherjee today also visited the dumping ground opposite the Yuba Bharati Krirangan that is being converted into a complex for showcasing Bengal's culture.

The complex, developed by the Ambuja group, will have houses and huts modeled on houseside.

"It will also have stalls offering Bengali cuisine apart from delicacies from other regions," the mayor said.



**Subrata Mukherjee is readying a blueprint that will make Bengali theatre compete with television and the Internet. The blueprint, though still in a nebulous form, will aim to create an infrastructure to facilitate the theatre movement**

But for starters, work is on to convert the recently

# PM asks rebels to break free of Pakistan

FROM OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Aug. 13:** Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee today made an open offer to Kashmir militants to come out of Pakistan's shadow and talk independently with the Indian government.

"We are ready for talks. We want to resolve the long-pending Kashmir issue. But the militants have to take a decision on their own," Vajpayee said in what could be interpreted as an oblique call to the Hizbul Mujahideen in Kashmir to cut loose of the Pakistan faction.

In his earlier statement in Parliament, Vajpayee had not advocated "independence" for the militant groups, a majority of which are bankrolled and armed by Pakistan.

The Prime Minister's offer today was aimed more at the international community than at the militants since Delhi is keen to drive home the message that it has not left any option unexplored to facilitate talks.

The Vajpayee administration believes that the best it can do after the failed dialogue is send out right signals so that the international community can keep pressuring more malleable groups like the Hizbul to approach the negotiating table. After the withdrawal of the ceasefire, the White House had urged the Hizbul to return to the talks.

But the Pakistan faction of the Hizbul is also taking care to fashion its responses with the international audience on its mind.

Hizbul chief Syed Salahuddin said in Islamabad the outfit could again declare ceasefire if India accepted the participation of Pakistan in the talks — a condition Delhi has repeatedly rejected. "There is a possibility of ceasefire again if India accepts our logic that talks should be tripartite.

Our doors are open," he said.

The Prime Minister's appeal is not expected to have an impact on the militants. The undercover contact between intelligence agencies and the Hizbul's Indian component holds a greater chance of reviving the dialogue.

Speaking to reporters after meeting a delegation of farmers at his house, Vajpayee iterated the charge that Pakistan sabotaged the peace process. Condemning today's blasts in the Valley, he said they were acts of desperation by militants who were "disappointed and dejected" at having failed to elicit support from the international community.

That Vajpayee envisages a split in the ranks of the militant groups came through when he said there were "differences" within them.

"We are hopeful that the sections of militants, who want peace, would be able to convince other sections to hold talks."

He made it clear that his government still believes that sections within the Hizbul have adopted a softer stand and they can persuade their colleagues on the need for a peaceful solution.

The rift among the several players operating in Kashmir also came to the fore today with the Hizbul slamming the Hurriyat Conference for opposing the collapsed ceasefire.

"We want to ask the leadership of the Hurriyat who openly came out against the ceasefire to tell the nation what programme they have to achieve freedom for the people of Jammu and Kashmir," PTI quoted the Hizbul as stating in Srinagar.

India also sought to keep up the pressure on Islamabad by asking the US to declare Pakistan terrorist state. Minister of state for foreign affairs Ajit Panja told a TV channel that "we have already given enough evidence".

THE TELEGRAPH

14 AUG 2001

# Subrata volte-face: 21 intersections to be out of bounds for hawkers

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, August 16

IN A major volte-face today, Mayor Subrata Mukherjee assured State Municipal Affairs Minister Asok Bhattacharya that hawkers would be removed from 21 intersections after the Pujas.

"I agree with the previous board's stand. The minister and I have agreed that hawkers will be evicted from 21 intersections after the Pujas. No hawkers will be allowed on the stretch from the Writers' Building to Victoria Memorial," the Mayor said.

Hawkers, he said, would not be allowed to erect permanent and semi-permanent structures in the rest of the city. "I will also urge the hawkers to occupy the stalls built for them on Eastern Metropolitan Bypass and other places," Mukherjee said.

The Mayor, a few days back, had assured the hawkers' union that they would be allowed to conduct business on the city's pavements,

including the 21 intersections from where they were evicted in 1996 during Operation Sunshine.

The rider, though, was that they would not be allowed to erect permanent or semi-permanent structures. At a half-hour long meeting, both Bhattacharya and Mukherjee assured each other of full cooperation. The Mayor, conceding that the previous board had done some good work, assured the minister that the projects started by the previous board would be completed. "I told him that we do not have any objection to the formation of ward committees but are still not clear about their role," said the Mayor.

The CMC will submit a detailed proposal on infrastructure demands for the formation of the committees. Bhattacharya and Mukherjee will meet the Planning Commission Deputy Chairman KC Pant and Union Urban Development Minister Jagmohan on August 21 in New Delhi. "We will urge them to release more funds for the CMC, as well as the

Megacity Project," Bhattacharya said. The two will ask Pant to restore the Rs 50-crore grant for slum development issued by the Tenth Finance Commission but rejected by the Eleventh. "The Eleventh Commission has turned down our request to tax Central Government properties in the State. We would like the Central Government to pay at least the service tax," the minister said.

The two agreed to review and simplify the CMC tax structure. "The tax structure of other municipal corporations and municipalities too will be reviewed. We will even amend laws, if necessary, to achieve this," Bhattacharya said.

It was decided that another water pumping and boosting station would be set up at Kaligha. The State Government will provide Rs 25 lakh for the renovation of Town Hall. Chief Minister Jyoti Basu will inaugurate the CMC's website, calendar, on August 24. This was the first meeting between the two after Mukherjee took over as Mayor.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 AUG 2000

# BJP shuts Soren out of CM race

FROM TAPAS CHAKRABORTY

**Ranchi, Aug. 19:** The BJP high command today decided to back Union minister Babulal Marandi for chief minister of the new Jharkhand state, edging ally and JMM(S) chief Shibu Soren out of the race.

The decision not to back Soren was taken at the BJP Jharkhand Legislative Party (BJLP) meeting which deliberated for four hours. Later, a core group which met separately under national president Kushabhau Thakre, assessed the viability of individual contenders who could chair the post.

The core think-tank, which included national general secretary K.N. Govindacharya, finally settled on Marandi who is likely to be called back from the Union ministry, said sources.

BJP insiders said Marandi was chosen over Ramtahal Chowdhury, a powerful Kurmi leader, beca-

use the party's Jharkhand Legislative unit had made it clear that only a tribal could be the chief minister.

Marandi, a Santhal from Dumka — the cradle of the Jharkhand movement — was chief of the BJP's Vananchal unit before being appointed environment and forest minister. What also weighed heavily in his favour was his RSS background and stints with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

But it wasn't entirely smooth sailing for Marandi. There was some resistance from supporters of another tribal leader, Karia Munda, who has a strong base in Ranchi. But though seen as an honest and outspoken leader, the MP from Khunti who is also a party vice-president lost out because of his lack of national image. Besides, insiders said, he also heads a rebel faction.

Both Thakre and Govindacharya refused to divulge details of to-

day's deliberations. But they stressed that the BJP had a natural right to the Jharkhand throne.

"BJP being the largest political force with 32 MLAs is the natural claimant to the post of chief minister," said Thakre, while Govindacharya said: "It will be an NDA government. But the BJP will have the right to choose the chief minister from its own candidates."

When asked if the marginalisation of Soren — the "history man of the Jharkhand movement" — wouldn't be politically improper from the ethnic viewpoint since he backed Nitish Kumar's bid for chief ministership of Bihar, Govindacharya said: "Even a history man has to alter his role."

The BJP is aware that giving the short shrift to Soren could end in a consolidation of non-NDA forces. But the party felt that even if the JMM snapped ties with the NDA, the alliance's votebank wouldn't be affected.

With the JMM, the Congress and the RJD enjoying the same support base, they said the moment Soren sides with the Congress, non-tribal, indigenous residents of the region would switch loyalties to the BJP as they were against the JMM leaders for exploiting them for so long.

According to sources, the party will soon begin an anti-Soren campaign for his alleged involvement in pay-off scandals and a murder case in which he has been chargesheeted. The BJP also wants to forget the JMM's "friendship with the NDA" on the eve of Nitish Kumar's bid for Patna. Thakre, in fact, went as far as saying that the JMM was not a part of NDA, but "our ally".

But though the party is not averse to seeking help from the JMM, the district administration is bracing for a backlash from JMM supporters in case it is left out of the government.

THE TELEGRAPH

20 AUG 2000



Finance panel recommendations not final

# Delhi softens on Naidu meet-eve

9-299M 9.1.21/8

FROM OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Aug. 20: As Chandrababu Naidu prepared to go ahead with his meeting of chief ministers despite the thinning ranks, the Vajpayee government appeared to be making room for redressing his grievances over the finance commission recommendations.**

A government official said: "It is not mandatory on our part to accept all these recommendations."

Naidu's decision to convene a meeting of chief ministers tomorrow stems from his unhappiness with the 11th Finance Commission recommendation which has reduced the share of developed states in central revenue. The Andhra chief minister is also protesting against the Centre's decision to accept the recommendations without consulting the states.

"There is still time for the states to have their grievances redressed by the finance commission itself," the official said, indicating Delhi's pliability and making it clear that the decision whether or not to accept the recommendations is far from final.

"This report can be treated as an interim one," he added.

As the Centre hoisted the white flag, Naidu was making

friendly noises before taking off for Delhi for the meeting. Sources at Andhra Bhavan, where the chief ministers will gather tomorrow, claimed seven states have confirmed participation. These are Maharashtra, Punjab, Haryana, Kerala, Assam, Manipur and Meghalaya. Naidu had invited 17 chief ministers.

"There is no politics involved in this. It is only a financial problem affecting states," Naidu said. He has assured Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee that the meeting is not intended to send a "confrontationist" message.

He explained to Vajpayee last evening that his was a "democratic" protest on the basis of what he felt to be a genuine grievance. Naidu thinks that the parameters set by the commission for devolution of central funds do injustice to "performing" states.

Naidu said he would meet Vajpayee and finance minister Yashwant Sinha tomorrow to seek "justice". "I have sought a meeting with him (Vajpayee) to explain our grievances," he added.

Despite Naidu's assertion that he had no political agenda, the Centre was watching with some trepidation the meeting of finance secretaries and other senior officials from 13 of the affected states in Delhi this afternoon to set the stage for tomorrow's conclave.

The Prime Minister has al-

ready told Naidu that at this stage the government could do nothing about his grievances. The commission will bring out a supplementary report in a fortnight and Naidu and other aggrieved chief ministers should refer their objections to the A.M. Khusro-headed panel, the government has said.

Politically, the Vajpayee administration has been somewhat surprised by the open protest by Naidu, who, with 29 MPs, is capable of pulling down the government. So far, he has opted for quiet and subtle bargains with the Centre. One instance is the way he extracted concessions for Andhra when foodgrain prices were raised.

This is simply not Naidu's style, government sources said.

Among the 13 secretaries who met this evening was the finance secretary of BJP-ruled Gujarat. It appeared that though chief minister Keshubhai Patel is not coming to Delhi following a diktat from Vajpayee, he did not want to be left out of the discussions and made sure he had a representative to find out what was happening.

At this meeting, there was no rift between rich and poor states. It considered the 37.5 per cent ceiling on devolution of central funds to states recommended by the commission and worked on a draft memorandum to be presented by the chief ministers to the Prime Minister.

THE TELEGRAPH

21 AUG 2000

# CMs' meet to focus purely on economics

Nothing political about it: Naidu

HT Correspondents

New Delhi/Hyderabad, August 20

THE PRIME Minister's Office has discounted any "political meaning" to the TDP-sponsored meeting of Chief Ministers that opens here tomorrow. Andhra Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu has covered the meeting to discuss certain aspects of the 11th Finance Commission's recommendations.

Sources in the PMO pointed out the States' grievances were against the Finance panel's report and not the Centre, and CMs were well within their rights to make a representation, specially when the recommendations are interim in nature.

Finance secretaries of the participating States - including BJP-ruled Gujarat - today gave finishing touches to a memorandum the CMs are to submit to Prime Minister Vajpayee after

tomorrow's deliberations. Among states represented at today's meeting of finance secretaries were NDA allies such as the Akali Dal (Punjab), the INLD (Haryana) and the DMK (Tamil Nadu).

TDP sources in Delhi said that it wouldn't matter even if the Gujarat CM, Mr Keshubhai Patel, failed to turn up at tomorrow's meeting under party pressure. They claimed that by assigning his Principal Secretary (Finance), Mr S G Mankad, to participate in today's discussions, Mr Patel has associated himself with Mr Naidu's stand on the implications of the Finance Commission's report.

The officials of 13 States held discussions on issues such as the

37.5 per cent ceiling the Finance panel has proposed on fiscal transfers from the Centre to the States, debt relief and rescheduling of repayment, allocation among States, revenue grants and market borrowings by States.

In Hyderabad, Mr Naidu told newsmen that he had spoken to the PM on the phone. "I pointed out to him that the meeting has nothing to do with politics. It's agenda is related solely to economics. I have also informed him that

we (CMs) want to explain our grievances to him, the Union Finance Minister and Finance Commission chairman Dr A M Khusro, after the meeting," Mr Naidu said.

Except for Andhra Pradesh, none of the southern states will be represented by their CMs. Tamil Nadu and Karnataka have deputed their finance ministers because Mr Karunanidhi and Mr S.M. Krishna

are "preoccupied" with the Veerappan hostage drama.

Kerala CM E.K. Nayanar, according to Andhra Pradesh CPM state secretary B.V. Raghavulu, will be in Delhi tomorrow to meet the PM.

But he will not be participating in Mr Naidu's meeting. Mr Raghavulu said the CPM politburo decided against Mr Nayanar attending the meeting "because Mr Naidu has not invited West Bengal CM Jyoti Basu".

When asked whether he thought Gujarat CM Keshubhai Patel has been prevented (by the BJP high command) from participating in the conference, Mr Naidu said he did not.

## Attendance register

### States represented by their finance secretaries at Sunday's meeting:

Gujarat, Punjab, Haryana, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Arunachal Pradesh, Kerala, Manipur, Meghalaya, Assam and Nagaland.

### CMs who will be conspicuous by their absence on Monday:

Karunanidhi (TN), S.M. Krishna (Karnataka), E.K. Nayanar (Kerala), Jyoti Basu (West Bengal) and Keshubhai Patel (Gujarat).

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 AUG 2000

# Please, sir, can we have some more, ask CMs

## But PM remains non-committal

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, August 21

THE TDP-sponsored meeting of Chief Ministers here today rejected most of the recommendations made by the Eleventh Finance Commission (EFC) headed by Prof. A.M. Khushro and approved by the Union Cabinet.

The CMs have called for review of the recommendations which they described as being "against the interests of the developing states that are already stifled by additional fiscal responsibilities."

Apart from host N. Chandrababu Naidu, only six of the 17 CMs invited to the meeting turned up. They met Prime Minister Vajpayee in the evening with their long wish list but failed to extract any tangible commitment from him. Sources said the PM only promised to evaluate their demands and ask the finance panel to consider them.

The States want 33.5 per cent of net taxes that accrue to the Centre; the finance commission has in its interim report recommended 29.5 per cent conditional devolution on a pro rata basis.

As for the aggregate transfer of funds to the States, between 1990 and 1995, they ranged from 38.72 to 44.06 per cent. It was pointed out that imposing an upper ceiling at much lower level was unfair.

The CMs have also asked the

Centre to include the proposed Rs 35,000 crore revenue deficit grant in the total divisible pool of Centre's taxes. Thereby, the states have sought to delink it to the reduction in non-developmental revenue expenditure. They justified this, saying "projected revenue deficits were grossly under

assessed, thereby denying revenue deficit grants to most of the states". However, revenue deficit grants for special category states like Jammu & Kashmir, the North-Eastern states were sought to be continued under different criteria.

The CMs want the Centre to use 1971 population figures for computing share of Central funds. They have also opposed the reduction in weightage points for population control to 10 per cent instead of 20 per cent for flow of tax funds, duties and grants in aid. Further, they have asked for lesser weightage points to per capita income as the cri-

terion because States such as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where the per capita income is low, are provided disproportionately more funds.

As for the Centre's debt relief scheme, the CMs have asked for funds based purely on revenue performance of states vis-a-vis expenditure rather than other parameters. Special packages and funds for states facing terrorism and external threat have also been proposed to the centre.

### CM's wish list

- Currently, only up to 37.5% of the Centre's total annual revenue goes to the States. The CMs want this ceiling removed and want 37.5% to be made the minimum devolution of Central revenues.

- The States' share of taxes collected by the Centre is 29.5%. The CMs want it to be 33.5%.

- The Rs 35,000 crore earmarked for States that rein in their revenue deficit (caused by non-developmental expenditure), should be part of the pool of Central resources for States and not linked to their record of fiscal discipline.

- Weightage for effective population control by a State has to be 20% (instead of 10%, as recommended by the finance commission).

- The CMs want Central loans to be linked to a State's good performance in revenue collection and spending. (Finance panel recommends linking loans to optimal utilisation of Central grants)

# Anti-malaria drive taken up on war footing

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, August 21

CALCUTTA MUNICIPAL Corporation's health department wants to restore people's faith in its clinics. The new regime at the CMC has planned a publicity blitz that will involve putting up banners and hoardings in front of the city's hospitals and nursing homes saying, "Not even a single death due to malaria in our health clinics in the last 18 years. CMC clinic welcome you."

This will be a major shift from CMC's earlier campaigns. "We have to get rid of the disease from its roots. For this, we need an aggressive campaigning. The biggest breeding grounds of mosquitoes are the NRS and SSKM

hospitals," said member, Mayor-in-Council (health), Javed Ahmed Khan. Criticising the earlier board's defensive campaign of asking people to use mosquito nets to ward off malaria, the MIC says such a mind-set defeats all the efforts. "We have to go to town with the fact that CMC's drug regimen is the most effective. It has been even accepted by all the leading medical institutes in the city," he claimed. Khan has also written to the commissioner of police and deputy commissioner of police (south) complaining that the dumping ground within the Park Street and Ballygunge police stations are breeding ground for malaria.

The MIC has already directed

that hoardings asking people to use mosquito nets should be pulled down. These will be replaced by a photograph of a mother with her sick child with the message, "If you don't want this to happen to you, get yours and your family members' blood tested".

Meanwhile, another malaria death was reported in the city today. Lambodar Behera, 74, died of malignant malaria and jaundice at Bangur hospital. "It is the eighth death this season.

Khan expressed his inability to have checkpoints at Howrah and the airport. "They do not come under our jurisdiction. I cannot station people there," he said. In July, 23,665 people have been test-

ed and 6,068 found to be positive. In comparison, the figures were 1,13,115 and 1,12,721 respectively for the corresponding month last year. Sixty-four deaths were reported due to malaria in the city till March 2000. "Malaria cases have gone down by 50 per cent and malignant malaria by 25 per cent," Khan claimed.

The anti-malaria drive started in right earnest on Saturday. "On Saturday, Ward 68 was covered and today fogging and spraying in wards 77 and 78 were done," Khan said. CMC has 45 clinics, which are to be extended to 141 within a year. Lions Club has offered its services for malaria detection and treatment in 40 wards. If the experiment succeeds they will to extend their services to all the 141 wards.

## CMC Campaign

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 AUG 2000

# Sonia replaces Ghani Khan, Pranab new state PCC chief

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 22 AUGUST

FINALLY ending the indecision over the leadership change in West Bengal Congress, Ms Sonia Gandhi, on Tuesday, removed PCC chief A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhary and appointed senior leader Pranab Mukherjee in his place.

Mr Mukherjee's new assignment in his home state, after being in the centre of Congress politics for several years, comes virtually as a non sequitur — forced by Ms Gandhi's inability to find any other acceptable person. He has conceded to the "elevation" with remarkable stoicism. He stated in Calcutta a couple of days ago that he would abide by whatever assignment was given to him by the High Command.

The compromise formula worked out by Ms Gandhi will now bring Mr Ghani Khan Chowdhary to the CWC as a special invitee. Mr Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, on the other hand, who was the working president in the state, has also been discharged of his responsibilities there. "Mr Khan Chowdhary is more useful to advise us at the Centre. And Mr Das Munshi has got much work to do in Parliament," AICC general secretary in charge Prabha Rau said while making the announcements.

The question of Mahajot with the Trinamul Congress — which was the genesis of the entire controversy of leadership change — however, may not be over as yet. Mr Mukherjee's disposition towards Mamata Banerjee is well known and the expectation

is that the change of guard in Bengal is a sure indicator of the Mahajot being a dead entity now. However, as a parting shot, Mr Chowdhary, on Tuesday, while accepting the high command decision, made it clear that his views on the Mahajot remained unaltered.

"The Mahajot is a necessity in Bengal. It is not a question of my opinion or someone else's in the matter," he said.

The assessment of party circles, hence, is that the issue will arise again as the Assembly elections, scheduled for March next year, come nearer. And the possibility of a further split in the party over the issue cannot be ruled out, given the number of silent supporters Ms Banerjee has within the state Congress.

Which is why there has been surprise in party circles as to why Mr Mukherjee, who clearly seemed disinclined to take up the challenge, did not give any indication of his feelings to Ms Gandhi.

For all purposes, Mr Mukherjee, at 68, will be presiding over the state unit that is in a shambles and unable to match the strides of the Trinamul Congress.

Moreover, his role at the Centre has been almost indispensable — with Ms Gandhi seeking his opinion on almost every issue. The pressure on Mr Mukherjee is only expected to increase since it is doubtful whether he will be able to concentrate solely on state affairs. Sections of the Congress are cynical about the move. Raising questions about the signal that the change of guard would send.



*The Economic Times*

23 AUG 2002

# Suspected J&K militant nabbed in N 24-Parganas

Kinsuk Basu  
Calcutta, August 23

HR/1 29/8  
A SUSPECTED Jamaat-ul-Mujaheedeen (JUM) member was arrested in North 24-Parganas today when he was trying to cross over to Bangladesh.

Last evening, around 8 pm, Golam Mahiuddin Bhat, 30, was walking down Taki Road with Hossain Ali when some local residents, finding their movements suspicious, stopped them. Golam spoke in an unfamiliar accent and this convinced them that something was amiss. They searched his bag and recovered a diary.

People from the neighbourhood then beat Golam and his companion up and handed them over to the BSF at Hasnabad. Both were remanded to 14 days' police custody. Interrogations revealed that Golam, a resident of Baramulla in Jammu and Kashmir, was on his way to Pak-occupied-Kashmir through Bangladesh to a camp for militants.

Son of Abul Ahad Bhat, Golam was planning to cross the Ichhamati to reach Dhaka. From there, he would head for Pakistan.

State Intelligence and RAW officials have rushed to Hasnabad to probe Golam's links with the militant group and red alert has been sounded in the area.

A matriculate, Golam started off as a cleric, before meeting JUM leader Daar in 1990 at Srinagar. Golam was offered a fat monthly payment as bait to join the group. This he refused initially, but caved in under pressure. He and a group of youths were sent to an arms training camp, 35 km from Srinagar.

"In early August, Golam was asked to come to Calcutta and meet a contact at a Tiljala mosque, who would help him sneak across the border. He was given Rs 5,000, of which he paid Rs 2,500 to Hossain Ali, who worked as a sweeper at the mosque," said K C Sharma, principal staff officer, BSF.

Golam, IB sources said, was carrying the telephone number of his contact in Dhaka who was supposed to arrange for his passport to Pakistan. Interrogating officials say that apart from Ali, some other people were aware of Golam's arrival in Calcutta on August 19.

Golam took the Himgiri Express from Jammu. "The district police

and the State Intelligence officials are probing the Tiljala youth's links with the JUM top brass. We are still trying to find out whether Ali too was a member of the outfit," Ajit Sarkar, sub-divisional police officer, Basirhat, said.

Intelligence officers here are not satisfied with Golam's description of Daar and claim that he was trying to confuse the sleuths with the description of Hizbul Mujahideen leader Syed Salahuddin. Some officers have refused to buy the claim that Golam was a JUM member, for the outfit is almost defunct in PoK. Efforts are on to find out Golam's links with Akhtar Jamil, a suspected Harkat-ul-Mujahideen member who was arrested on August 10 in Calcutta.

Special Branch officers quizzing Jamil suspect he was involved in the recent Pahalgam killings. He, it seems, sheltered the six Pakistanis involved in the IC-814 hijack drama.

Both the IB and the CBI are trying to crack the network of informers in Calcutta who help these terrorists cross over to Bangladesh.

A senior intelligence officer said they had definite information on an ISI hideout near Dhaka.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 AUG 2000

# Another flyover on Gariahat Road in a year

TARUN GOSWAMI  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Aug. 25. — A new flyover has been planned on Gariahat Road between Garcha Road and Queen's Park to ease traffic.

It's learnt that traffic congestion along the stretch of Gariahat Road between Ballygunge Phanri and the Gurusaday Road-Gariahat Road intersection is likely to go up because of the proposed Gariahat flyover.

The decision to build the flyover was recently taken at a meeting held in the chief secretary's office. Senior officials of the state transport department, CMC, HRBC and CMDA

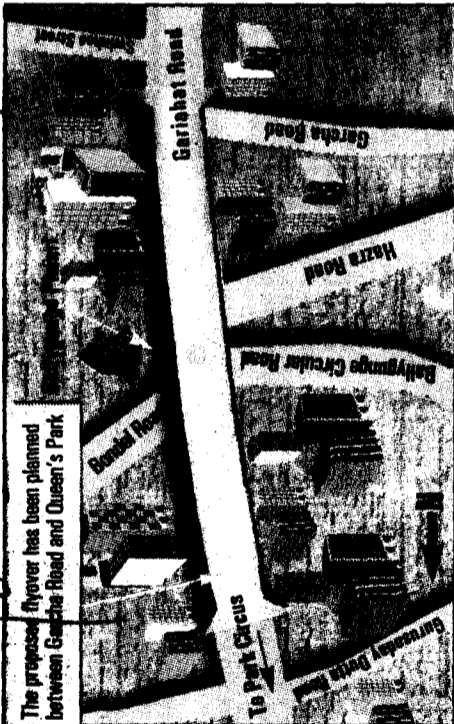
were also present.

A transport department official said the flyover would be 500 metres long. Construction will begin in November-December and is likely to be completed by February 2002.

Tender for the project will be floated shortly. The state government will approach a foreign agency for funds. Engineers of HRBC have prepared the design of the proposed flyover which will be finalised by the state government soon.

He said the decision to set up the flyover was taken after it was felt that traffic congestion around Ballygunge Phanri would go up as the roads adjoining the slope on the northern

The proposed flyover has been planned between Garcha Road and Queen's Park



side of the proposed Gariahat flyover will face difficulty after getting off the flyover near Mandeville Gardens. He

said attempts would be made to complete the Gariahat and Ballygunge Phanri flyovers around the same time.

Construction of three flyovers on AJC Bose Road, Park Street and Lockgate begins in November. The 2.6-km AJC Bose flyover will start from Bangladesh High Commission on Circus Avenue and stretch up to DL Khan Road. The one on Park Street will connect Middleton Street and Lindsay Street. The Lockgate flyover will connect BT Road and Girish Avenue.

Tram services along Gariahat Road between Garcha and Gariahat will be suspended for 2 years from November. This

order has been issued by the state transport department.

After the Gariahat flyover is constructed, trams will ply along the two flanks.

Tram services around Esplanade will be suspended for three months from 15 November to facilitate construction of the road connecting Rani Rashmoni Avenue with Esplanade East. The new road will ease traffic congestion around Metro cinema.

The official said the transport and traffic departments of the city police were preparing a blueprint to tackle traffic movement and congestion following the construction of the flyovers.

## NEW STATE OF AFFAIRS: TUSSLING OVER CM'S POST

# NDA given 15 days to make Shibui Soren Vananchal CM

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 25 AUGUST

**T**HE JHARKHAND Mukti Morcha (JMM), on Friday, gave a 15-day deadline to National Democratic Alliance (NDA) to decide on the appointment of Mr Shibui Soren as chief minister of the newly created state of Vananchal.

The announcement made by JMM leaders is a clear indication that the issue of leadership of the new state, comprising the tribal regions of South Bihar, will become controversial. BJP has so far not ruled out the possibility of staking its claim to the post of chief minister.

"A meeting of the NDA should be called immediately to put an end to all speculation," JMM leader Simon Marandi, whose party is part of the NDA, said.

To boot, the JMM leaders were firm that their party would not settle for anything less than the post of chief minister in the new state. Also, they flatly ruled out the possibility of any leader from the party, apart from Mr Soren, being anointed chief minister.

To aggressively promote their demand, a delegation of 12 leaders of the JMM met home minister L.K. Advani on Friday. The delegation will also meet Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and urge him to drop any attempts by BJP to stake claim to the post.

In addition, the JMM leader-



Vajpayee: Catch dropped?

ship will also meet Samata Party president George Fernandes to lobby for support to their cause.

Asserting that the commitment of anointing Mr Soren as chief minister to the new state was made by the NDA constituents before the elections, the JMM leaders stopped just short of charging the BJP leadership with letting them down on the issue by insisting that a candidate be settled by common consensus at a meeting of the NDA.

Although the JMM leaders refused to accept the possibility that they may consider parleying with Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav's RJD in case the BJP and other NDA constituents ignored or rejected its demand, the underlying threat was hard to miss. "We would not like to comment on that until after the BJP and the rest of the NDA responds to our demand within the next fort-

night," Mr Soren said. The JMM leaders also ducked pointed queries on whether it was their contention that the BJP and the rest of the NDA had gone back on their promise to the Morcha leadership on the issue of chief ministerial candidate for Vananchal.

Interestingly, Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav is understood to have already begun exploring the possibility of joining hands with the JMM. Mr Yadav, whose party had earlier flatly ruled out the possibility of dividing Bihar, was compelled politically later to back the legislation in the special session of the state assembly to discuss Jharkhand.

Speaking earlier in the day NDA leader Mr Nitish Kumar admitted that the BJP had not yet divorced itself from claims to the post. He also denied suggestions that anointing Mr Soren as chief minister of Vananchal was agreed by the Alliance prior to the assembly elections. However, he said that a choice would only be made by consensus among the NDA members.

The JMM's threat, aimed primarily at the BJP, acquires significance given its strength of 12 MLAs from the region. As things stand, the strength of the NDA including the JMM stands at 52 MLAs out of a total of 81. Among the other parties, the Congress has 11 MLAs, the RJD has nine, the Left parties have five and there are five independents besides.

*The Economic Time.*

25 AUG 2000



BJP SESSION OPENS; CALL FOR DISCUSSION ON TERRORISM

# Kashmir policy draws flak

By Neena Vyas

NAGPUR, AUG. 26. It is on the twin issues of 'swadeshi' economics and the Kashmir policy that the Bharatiya Janata Party's national executive committee, which met here today, heard some strong criticism of the Government policy and its handling of the issues. It was a battle for supremacy between the hardliners, whose views are close to those of the RSS, and others who are only too keen on following the Vajpayee line dictated by his Government's policies.

While the 'swadeshi' battle is already too familiar, it was on Kashmir, especially the killing of Amarnath pilgrims, that some members, including Ms. Sushma Swaraj, Mr. Chaman Lal Gupta and Mr. Sahib Singh Verma, raised their voice demanding a full internal discussion on what had gone wrong. The argument was that while they would defend the Government policy outside, the national executive must face facts squarely and discuss the growing violence and terrorism in Kashmir that the Government policy has been unable to check.

The national executive committee meeting here opened with the address by the outgoing president, Mr. Kushabhau Thakre, who made a passing reference to the RSS, which is headquartered here. He simply said the "Sangh" had always been "our teacher". It was through "self-reliance" that the country could move forward, not by depending on others. But he did not elaborate.

The RSS has already given an indication that it stood firm for 'swadeshi' economics and was against a number of policy initiatives taken by the Government. And on Kashmir there has been a clear signal that it would like to see a firmer approach. It has, through its various wings, demanded that Jammu and Kashmir be declared a disturbed State.

The two resolutions — one on economic policy and the other on the political situation are expected to be finalised after the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister arrive. And the party spokesperson, Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu, left no one in doubt that it was the Vajpayee line which would prevail. He refused to be drawn into any controversy over

the reported hawkish statements emanating from the RSS. "I am the BJP spokesperson, not the RSS spokesperson," he emphasised, adding if the press perceived any differences it should know now that the two were separate organisations.

Tomorrow the national council session will begin with an address by the new party president, Mr. Bangaru Laxman. He has already given enough hints about the direction of the party, away from its old ideological moorings. The party seems all set to take forward the process of dilution of its earlier ideology, the process which began in Bangalore a year and a half ago and was taken further in Chennai earlier this year.

In his speech, Mr. Thakre dwelt on various achievements of the Vajpayee Government — Pokhran-II, Kargil, international relations with the United States and Japan, and a new stability given by the Government to coalition politics. He admitted that the 1998 Vajpayee Government was caught in some inner problems because of the "selfishness" of some groups of the NDA, a direct

reference to the AIADMK and its leader, Ms. Jayalalitha.

## Ayodhya on the back burner

The core issues of the Bharatiya Janata Party — Ram Janmabhoomi, abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution and implementation of a uniform civil code — are no longer acceptable currency. The people have rejected these, Mr. Bangaru Laxman who will take charge as BJP president here tomorrow, has said.

Speaking informally to a group of reporters, Mr. Laxman pointed out that the BJP had committed itself to the manifesto of the National Democratic Alliance before the 1999 Lok Sabha polls. Also it arrived at the conclusion that the people were no longer interested in these issues ("*in muddon ke liye janta mein bhi ruchi to honi chahiye*"). The issues were no longer acceptable currency as often issues had a limited life ("*muddon ki currency khatam ho gayee*"). Finally, it was not these issues alone which led to the growth of the BJP in the 1990s.

Mr. Laxman was at pains to discount the party's aggressive Hindutva past and downplay the role of Mr. L. K. Advani's campaign declaring Hindutva the BJP's ideological mascot. He emphasised that the party grew rapidly after having reached its nadir of two Lok Sabha seats in 1984, because it took up issues concerning farmers, Adivasis, Dalits, fishermen and others. "Ayodhya was already an issue when the BJP took it up," he said.

Defending the Vajpayee Government's neglect of 'swadeshi' economics, he said since the days of the Jan Sangh, the party had strongly opposed the "licence, permit, quota raj" established under the Congress Governments.

Giving up or downplaying the core issues was a result of intense discussions within the party between the 12th and the 13th Lok Sabhas. "We discussed the issues threadbare before going for a common NDA agenda."

THE HINDU

27 AUG 2000

# CPM enemy number one: KPP chief

Arindam Sarkar  
Calcutta, August 26

NOTHING CAN stop the creation of a separate Kamtapur State, Atul Roy, the Kamtapuri People's Party president said today. "If needed, we will shed blood and launch an all-out war against those who come in the way of our demand for a homeland."

For the last seven years, the KPP has been spearheading a movement against the Left Front Government to fulfil its demand for a separate State comprising the north Bengal districts of Darjeeling, Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, Malda, North and South Dinajpur.

In a show of strength in view of Deputy Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's visit to Jalpaiguri and Siliguri today, the KPP took out a procession in Siliguri. They

raised statehood slogans and demanded that the Kamtapuri language be included in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

"We aren't Bengalis. We are Kamtapuris. We have a separate culture, language and identity. India is a federal State, where

Bengalis have been given their

own State, the Nagas have got Nagaland and the Manipuris Manipur. What stops them from giving us a separate State? What's the harm if the number of States increases from 25 to 52?" Roy told *The Hindustan Times* over the telephone from Jalpaiguri.

The movement for a separate Kamtapuri State started in 1969 under the Uttarakhand Dal banner. But, in the early nineties, because of intense factionalism,

the party was disbanded. In 1993, the movement got a fresh lease of life with the formation of KPP under Roy's leadership. Today, the KPP has two frontal organisations: the All Kamtapuri Students' Union and the outlawed Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation.

"Over 80 per cent of the north Bengal population that includes the Rajbongshis, the Muslims and the Deshis (sons of the soils) are sympathisers of the Kamtapuri movement. In the last 24 years of Left Front rule, we have suffered miserably. The Bhatias, refugees from East Bengal, have grabbed our land. Our people have no jobs. Culturally also, we have been swamped. We want the 1971 Indira Gandhi-Mujibur Rahman agreement to be immediately imple-

mented in letter and spirit. As per the accord, all those who came here before 1971 are bona fide Indian citizens. But those who came subsequently and stayed back are foreigners. They must be sent back. If this isn't done, Bhatia-Deshi clashes are inevitable," the firebrand KPP leader warned.

The CPI(M) had used every possible means to crush their agitation, the KPP chief thundered. "They are the Kamtapuris' enemy number one. The Left has used the police and paramilitary forces to put down our movement. The CPI(M) says ours is an organisation that has links with North-East insurgents. Their strategy is to project the KPP as anti-national. But such slander campaign will never succeed. It's this high-handedness that has forced our young supporters to take up arms. What else can you do if your voice is stifled?" Roy said.

**Kamtapur Cauldron - I**

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 AUG 2000

# CMC draws flak from own panel for malaria mess

TIRTHANKAR MITRA  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, Aug. 27. — Just as malaria claimed its eighth victim in the city, the Trinamul Congress-BJP board has been stung by sharp criticism of the corporation's handling of malaria. Strangely enough, the civic body has not drawn flak from the Opposition benches but from an expert committee formed by the CMC itself.

Both the civic laws and the corporation's vector control department has been the target of the nine-member committee's criticism. While the civic laws do not mention malaria as a "notifiable disease", the vector control department is not functioning properly, the expert committee report observes.

There are no posts of insect collectors and biologists in this department. Thus the importance of personnel essential for monitoring entomological factors, vector identifications and surveillance are overlooked.

Seeking to plug loopholes in the civic laws to combat malaria, the committee headed by Dr N.N. Roy Choudhury recommended that the laws should ensure collection of necessary information from the different bodies fighting malaria. The report calls for attention to the

lack of awareness and corruption leading to formation of man-made Anopheles breeding sites.

Thanks to the ignorance of the promoters, construction sites have contributed to the rise in malaria. Not much attention is being paid to the socio-economic compulsions and human behaviour to combat malaria, the report observes. This brings the civic body's anti-malaria advertisement campaigns to nought.

Despite preparing a report of malaria cases for 141 wards annually, the civic body does not have a comprehensive picture. For all the malaria cases are not reported to the civic body.

Aware of the lack of facilities of the corporation, the patients flock to private clinics, nursing homes and government hospitals. Their records as well as that of the NGOs working for malaria eradication are not available to the corporation.

Lack of coordination between the corporation and other bodies combating malaria, hampers the drive against the disease. This leads to the overlapping of activities with the Union health ministry's insect borne disease branch, Calcutta Metropolitan Urban Health Organisation and the state health department.

The overlapping leads to poor recording of the malaria cases. The divergent methods of recording adds to confusion and unshared responsibilities.

Medication of malaria involves coordination of divergent medical departments like nephrology, neurology, general medicine and gastroenterology. Unfortunately, the report observes, it is not followed at many government and private hospitals.

Malariologists trained during the Malaria Eradication Program in the '50s have led to the present spurt of the disease. These paramedical staff disappeared as the disease disappeared in the '60s.

Lack of consistency has been observed between diagnosis and treatment when the disease resurfaced. Even unqualified persons have been found to have treated patients prescribing inadequate doses leading to development of resistance.

Even medical colleges, the report observes do not have malaria clinics while the civic body has them in 41 out of 141 wards so far.

The existing state of affairs, the report states is owing to the misinterpretation of malaria drug policy leading to myths, administrative non-coordination, lack of academic exchanges and scientific will".

THE STATESMAN

7 7 200 7 (M)

# Vajpayee swears allegiance to Sangh

## War on rebels, peace with RSS

FROM KAY BENEDICT

**Nagpur, Aug. 27:** After getting the party to publicly sanction his views on policy as its own yesterday, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee set about bringing disgruntled leaders into line.

In his message to the BJP national council meeting today, Vajpayee asked new BJP chief Bangaru Laxman to "draw a *Lakshmanrekha*" to end indiscipline.

The Prime Minister's statement assumes significance in the wake of criticism of government and party policies by leaders like Sushma Swaraj and Uma Bharti, who resigned from the Lok Sabha last week and did not attend the national council.

Simultaneously with ramming his views through the party and signalling his determination to deal with dissidence with a strong hand, Vajpayee undertook a journey to the *samadhi* of former RSS chief Hedgewar, carrying the message that he remained a loyal servant of the Sangh.

At the *samadhi*, some distance away from the Sangh's headquarters, he told a group of senior *pracharaks*: "For 40 years I have been associated with the RSS. Today I'm Prime Minister. Tomorrow

if I'm not Prime Minister, I'll be a *swayamsevak*."

In the absence of the four top leaders of the Sangh — K.S. Sudarshan, Mohan Bhagwat, H.V. Shadri and Madan Das Devi, none of whom is in Nagpur — Vajpayee sought to silence wagging tongues with this visit. He spoke to 87-year-old Narayan Tarte, his guru when he joined the Sangh, and was offered a bouquet in return.

He said the perceived differences between the government and the RSS were a creation of the media in the first of the day's twin indications that Vajpayee is taking care to not sour relations with the Sangh. The other was the economic resolution moved at the council. While the resolution noted with appreciation the government's handling of the economy, there was a mild caution about the "designs of the WTO".

Yesterday, Swaraj had criticised the government's economic policies. On Kashmir, she went beyond mere criticism to hold the Prime Minister and home minister L.K. Advani, her mentor, responsible for failing to stop the Amarnath massacre.

Swaraj's outburst forms the backdrop to Vajpayee's exhortation to Bangaru Laxman to enforce discipline. The new BJP

president himself harped on this, saying that there was need to "evolve an explicit and unambiguous code of conduct" and spoke of "a clear *Lakshmanrekha*". He said he would put down "these tendencies (indiscipline) mercilessly. I wish to make it clear that indiscipline will not be tolerated".

"We should nip it in the bud so that treating this canker at a late stage does not become exceedingly difficult. In this important endeavour, I seek support and cooperation from all of you," he said.

Outgoing president Kushabhau Thakre also made it clear which side he was on when he took a dig at Swaraj who had regretted that the BJP was no longer the party it used to be. Thakre said the BJP was different today not because it had backtracked on its commitments, but since, despite being in power, it had not lost its moorings.

Firm as he was in making clear that he would not tolerate outbursts against his government from within the party, Vajpayee presented a contrasting face when he thanked the Opposition for cooperating during the monsoon session to pass important Bills. He said there was no "labour pain" before the birth of three states.

■ Bangaru woos Muslims, P 6

THE TELEGRAPH

28 AUG 2001

## KASHMIR DOMINATES RESOLUTION

# BJP claims credit for NDA Govt. stability

By Neena Vyas

**NAGPUR, AUG. 28.** The alchemy by which the BJP converted a fractured mandate in 1999 into a stable NDA Government led by Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, was the theme song of the political resolution adopted unanimously by the party's national council session here today. There was not even a hint of doubt of any kind, not even over its handling of the Kashmir situation despite some fireworks by Ms. Sushma Swaraj when Kashmir was discussed at the national executive committee two days earlier.

Winding up the session after the resolution was adopted, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, said "there had been no lowering of guard" in the Valley after the ceasefire offer by the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen. Mr. Arun Jaitley, Minister for Law, said the biggest success of India's Kashmir policy was that while Pakistan had not been able to internationalise the issue, India had successfully internationalised Pakistan's cross-border terrorism.

Mr. Advani gave figures to show how the Government identified and destroyed camps of militants and arrested the terrorists, and said even if there had been any shortcoming, it would be looked into. He cautioned party members not to make public criticism of the "family".

Moving the political resolution, Mr. Jana Krishnamoorthy, vice-

president, regretted omission of any reference to foreign affairs, saying lack of time had prevented the adoption of a separate resolution. Mr. Krishnamoorthy also spoke of the "alchemy" by which the BJP had produced stability through the NDA in spite of a fractured poll verdict in 1999. Imparting political stability was itself a major achievement as the country had passed through a period in which governments had been falling one after another.

**Minor Cabinet expansion likely: Page 13**

The resolution devoted considerable space to attacking Pakistan which had "adopted cross-border terrorism as an instrument of state policy".

### Amendment to allay fears

It was after several members raised issues relating to Kashmir that the political resolution was amended to include two points — that rejection of the autonomy resolution passed by the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly was a "step in the right direction" and that while the party resolved to strengthen the hands of the Government in its peace initiatives, the BJP remained "fully committed to Jammu and Kashmir being an integral part of India".

Some members wanted the party to demand the laying out of parameters of talks with the mil-

itants. Many senior leaders felt that Ms Swaraj's tone was quite "belligerent". As one senior leader remarked, it was not what she said about the Amarnath killings but the tone and tenor of a speech which was "almost hostile and accusatory".

### Achievements hailed

While Kashmir dominated the resolution, there was mention of insurgency in the north-east, and through an amendment naxalite activities were taken note of.

The resolution hailed the Government achievements — creation of three new States, constitutional amendments to give reservation in promotions and allow States which have more than 50 per cent reservation to retain these benefits. While taking note of the need to pass the Lok Pal Bill and the Women's Reservation Bill, the resolution praised the Government for adopting the Right to Information legislation.

Although yesterday Mr. Vajpayee praised the Opposition for its role in getting the Bills for creation of new States passed, the resolution charged it with playing a negative role. It deplored the Congress(I) demand for a judicial inquiry into the massacre of Amarnath pilgrims. The BJP also attacked the Left, predicting its early demise in West Bengal.

The economic resolution discussed yesterday was also adopted unanimously with minor changes.

29 AUG 2000

# Basu keen on nuclear power plant in State

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, August 28

CHIEF MINISTER Jyoti Basu is keen to have a nuclear power station in the State, but said that his Government will have to wait for the clearance from the expert committee that has been set up to make a feasibility study.

"Let them submit their report first. Then we will decide," Basu remarked while inaugurating the new administrative building of the West Bengal Renewable Energy Development Agency at Salt Lake.

Basu said that the proposal for setting up a nuclear plant in the State was initially mooted by the Congress Government.

"It had suggested installing the plant at Midnapore. But the Centre had then turned down the request on the ground that the State had enough coal deposits. Now that the restriction has been lifted, the concerned ministry should take the initiative in this regard," the Chief Minister added.

Basu hoped the Planning Commission would provide the necessary funds for setting up the nuclear plant once the project was cleared.

The Chief Minister also called upon scientists to explore all other avenues of non-conventional energy like solar energy, wind power, tidal power and hydroelectric power.

Later, Power Minister Mrinal Banerjee informed that at least nine renewable energy projects were coming up in the State. Together, they will have a generation capacity of 9450 KW. A wind-farm project was also being considered, he said.

The WBRDA has installed a 25 KW capacity photovoltaic module on the roof of the new administrative building to harness solar energy, director S P Gan Chowdhury said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

29 AUG 2000

# UNENDING VIOLENCE

CPI-M will face the consequences

THERE is little prospect of the current spate of violence in rural south Bengal ending before the next assembly elections. It is made more unlikely by Jyoti Basu's announcement not to hold the state-level all party meeting which he himself had proposed, to bring the violence to an end. What caused this change of heart? But it follows a pattern. This is the second time he has reversed himself in the wrong direction. The first was in May when he proposed to mollify the PWD Minister Kshiti Goswami who charged at a cabinet meeting that growing political violence was causing the law and order situation to deteriorate. Several reminders evoked the response that the time was not ripe. The other argument, that such meetings in the districts were already taking place proved futile. Both CPI-M and Trinamul are sceptical since they accuse each other of violating an agreed code. The CPI-M obviously feel that political violence and terror with full administrative backing which can be assumed, can regain lost ground as Garbeta's "liberation" from Trinamul by looting and killing has shown. They have even begun to believe that this Garbeta line, will ensure their sixth successive victory in the assembly elections - it envisages not only driving out opposition supporters from their villages but also preventing them from voting, Salt Lake style. Alimuddin's gameplan is to stop at nothing. Just as in 1981 Basu justified the burning alive of 18 Ananda Margis in Bijan Setu which ensured that the police did not proceed, now he and his party are defending the killing of Trinamul supporters for being "anti-socials". Killings in Suchpur were justified as dealing with "dacoits". No wonder public lynchings have increased from 64 in 1993 to 189 in 1999.

The tragedy of the West Bengal CPI-M is that leaders like Benoy Chowdhury, who once wielded a moderating influence are gone. It was Benoy who prevented the party's Burdwan unit from revenge killing of local Congress leaders who had murdered a local Marxist leader Mahadeb Banerjee. The Director-General of Police opts out of any role in what he calls the current "political match". Nothing was done to the cadres who stockpiled bombs in the Belda party office. To humour the goons, a conscientious intelligence officer was withdrawn from Midnapore. The DGP does not realise that such partisan acts in league with the CPI-M have adversely affected the morale of his force. There ought to be no surprise if one of these days there is a sudden outburst and party cadres are victims.

THE STATESMAN

29 AUG 2000

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51-3

# CMC chairman injured in scuffle

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE 27/8

CALCUTTA, Aug. 30. — The CMC chairman, Mr Anil Mukherjee, was injured this afternoon in a scuffle between CPI-M and Trinamul Congress councillors over a resolution to reorganise two borough committees. He was admitted to the SSKM hospital.

The resolution, backed by the Congress, was passed amid violent protests from Left Front councillors.

The mayor, Mr Subrata Mukherjee, described the attack on Mr Mukherjee as "barbaric". He said: "Today's incident revealed the true colour of the CPI-M."

But the Opposition leader, Mr Kanti Ganguly, held the Trinamul responsible for the trouble. "We have run the civic board for 15 years. But we had never seen such an incident."

The trouble began when the House approved the mayor-in-council's proposal to reorganise the committees of boroughs VII and VIII. Left councillors, opposing the proposal, rushed to Mr Mukherjee's table and prevented him from leaving his chair. Some Trinamul councillors went to the chairman's rescue and a scuffle ensued. Mr Mukherjee was injured after being pushed from behind.

Earlier, there were efforts to refrain the civic body from taking up the proposal. The joint secretary of the municipal affairs department, Mr RP Samaddar, wrote to the secretary this morning asking him to drop the discussion from the day's list of business. Mr

Samaddar said as the House passed a resolution to set up borough committees in its second meeting on 8 August, any change in the boroughs would be "unlawful and irregular". He cited sub-section (I) of section 11 of the CMC Act, 1980, to vindicate his point.

The urban development minister, Mr Ahok Bhattacharya, said he had conveyed the government's opinion on the issue to Mr Subrata Mukherjee. "I tried to restrain him. We want to co-operate with the CMC and all civic bodies...But now I'll have to seek legal opinion."

The mayor, however, said

there was no provision in the CMC Act 1980 stipulating that borough committees once framed could not be reorganised. Section 39(A) of the CMC Rules clearly state that any proposal passed by the CMC could be amended within two months. He said: "State government's intervention in the CMC is unfortunate. The CPI-M is deliberately doing this as they are yet to accept their defeat."

Mr Anil Mukherjee came to the CMC by a public transport and entered the office from behind as he had information that CPI-M cadres would not allow him to enter.

THE STATESMAN

31 AUG 7m



# PM unveils new package for small-scale sector

**The Times of India News Service**  
NEW DELHI: Announcing a package that promises to provide greater incentive to the small-scale industries sector, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Wednesday said the government had decided to raise the excise duty exemption limit from the present Rs 50 lakhs to Rs 1 crore.

Noting that his government was raising the exemption limit for the second time, the Prime Minister said as for requests concerning customs duties, the finance minister "will be announcing suitable measures in due course". Mr Vajpayee also said that some more measures would be announced by the small-scale industries ministry later. The Prime Minister's package came at the inaugural

function of the first-ever national conference of small-scale industries in the capital on Wednesday.

Despite the osteo-arthritical problem with his knees, the Prime Minister seemed to walk and climb the few steps leading to the podium easily. However, he read his speech seated in the chair.

Also present at the inauguration were Union home minister L.K. Advani, finance minister Yashwant Sinha, planning commission deputy chairman K.C. Pant and small-scale industries minister Vasundhara Raje. Mr Advani headed the Group of Ministers which recommended measures to strengthen the small-scale industries sector.

As part of the package, the Prime Minister announced the raising of the limit for composite

loans to Rs 25 lakhs from the present Rs 10 lakhs. He said entrepreneurs would now be able to secure term loans and working capital from the same agency.

Moreover, industry-related service and business enterprises with a maximum investment of Rs 10 lakhs will qualify for priority lending, he said. As for complaints of harassment owing to frequent inspections by multiple agencies, the PM said a group would be asked to give its recommendations within three months for streamlining inspections.

In addition, the Prime Minister said a capital subsidy of 12 per cent would be given for investment in technology in select sectors. An inter-ministerial committee to define the scope of tech-

nology upgradation and sectoral priorities will also be set up, he added.

Mr Vajpayee also announced to ensure effective policy-making and implementation, the government would undertake a fresh census—the last one was undertaken nearly 12 years ago—of the small-scale industries. The census will look into the incidence of industrial sickness and its causes.

He said to encourage quality management it had been decided to continue granting for the next six years Rs 75,000 to each unit that obtains ISO 9000 certification. Reiterating his government's commitment to strengthening the viability of the khadi sector, Mr Vajpayee said a new comprehensive package for this sector was being prepared.

## SOPS FOR SSI

- Excise duty exemption limit raised from Rs 50 lakhs to Rs 1 crore
- Composite loan amount raised to Rs 25 lakhs from Rs 10 lakhs
- Capital subsidy of 12% for investment in technology in select sectors

THE TIMES OF INDIA

31 AUG 2000

# Cong absent trick on Mamata

OUR BUREAU

Calcutta June 30: Holding the missing pieces in the civic board jigsaw in Calcutta, the Congress today made its first move as it decided to ask the newly-elected councillors not to be present at the voting to elect the new mayor.

Somen Mitra, former state Congress president who plays a pivotal role in fashioning the party's position, said the councillors would absent themselves if the Trinamul Congress-BJP combine or the CPM-led Left Front did not formally seek their support.

"They will have to ceremonially write to us soliciting support. Why, till the other day, one would call us someone's 'B' team and the other would refer to us as collaborators with communal forces. Now, let's see what they think of us," said Mitra to whom the new

councillors owe their allegiance.

Today's development was significant in that it contrasted with reports of the past 48 hours that the Congress councillors would be present in the council chamber where the election of the mayor would take place but would abstain from voting.

At meetings through the day, the Congress councillors informed the state party leadership that they were keen on maintaining their "independent identity" if Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul, now ahead of the Leftists in the race for the mayor's office, did not formally seek the Congress' support.

Echoing the party's sentiments, state president A.B.A. Ghani Khan Chowdhury said Mamata's "appeal" to individual Congress councillors by way of reports in a section of the media "just would not do. If someone needs us, let

her say so in writing".

After formulating the party's position in a meeting at his residence in Salt Lake, Khan Chowdhury tried to convey the same to party president Sonia Gandhi in Delhi who, at that point, was out of the capital.

Khan Chowdhury was expected to talk to her either tonight or tomorrow, after which he would leave for hometown Malda.

Alarmed at the Congress' move, Trinamul's bosses, especially Subrata Mukherjee, the mayor-in-waiting, trained their guns on Mitra who, they said, was standing between Trinamul and the CMC board. "We are worried about Somen and not Congress. Many in the Congress are in touch with us, wanting to join Trinamul. We are sure they will vote for us in the mayoral election, but can't say what Somen's men will

do," Mukherjee said.

If the 14 Congress members absent themselves, the contest will be too close for Trinamul's comfort. The winner will then be decided on the basis of division among the 127 councillors present. For majority, Trinamul will need 64 votes. It claims to have 65, including support from four Independents. The Left has 61.

Trinamul's concern arises from the fact that the CPM has not only not given up the fight, but has asked its best crisis manager, transport minister Subhash Chakraborty, to try and secure support from an additional 11 councillors.

On behalf of Trinamul, councillor Javed Khan is working on Congress members belonging to the minority community to get their support.

■ Another report on Page 10

THE TELEGRAPH

# Cong warms to Mamata, Ghani slams split move

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

9/8 10/5 5/1 7/7

CALCUTTA, June 30. — Mr ABA Ghani Khan Chowdhury today expressed "shock and surprise" at Trinamul's "un-ethical attempts" to split his party in the CMC, but signals from Delhi seemed to suggest the Congress may not stand in the way of Miss Mamata Banerjee dethroning the Left.

At Alimuddin Street though, Mr Anil Biswas claimed the Left Front has "more councillors than our rivals" — the reason why it had decided to contest the post of mayor.

The CPI-M state secretary declared that the press had misreported Mr Jyoti Basu's plea for Congress support in the CMC.

"Mr Basu has not sought Congress support," Mr Biswas said. "He has only said secular forces should play a befitting role in the formation of the board.

"In fact, when we contest the election for the mayor, we appeal to all democratic and secular forces to support our candidate."

The Left's mayoral candidate

will be announced soon, Mr Biswas said.

On the Trinamul complaint that the CPI-M was trying to get some of its councillors to switch sides, Mr Biswas said: "We do not believe in horse-trading, which is the Trinamul's prerogative."

The Left Front committee will

meet tomorrow to discuss its performance in the Calcutta and Salt Lake civic polls.

In Delhi, the Congress leadership appeared to be veering around to the idea of letting Trinamul form the board. Senior Congressmen were reported not unhappy with the idea of Calcutta civic affairs passing to non-Left hands — particularly since the election had shown their bete noire, the BJP, to be "politically irrelevant" in West Bengal.

The Congress spokesman



Mamata: a step closer

announced today decisions in a "local affair" would be taken by state unit leaders. And the PCC chief, Mr Khan Chowdhury, is learnt to have suggested to Mrs Sonia Gandhi that the Congress could, instead of supporting the Trinamul's mayoral candidate formally, abs-

tain from the vote, paving the way for Mr Subrata Mukherjee's victory.

In Calcutta, Mr Ghani Khan Chowdhury stressed that the Congress will not "under any circumstances" align with the Left to form the CMC board. Both the PCC chief and state unit working president, Mr Priya Ranjan Das Munshi, denied having received any feelers from the CPI-M.

Mr Das Munshi said the Congress had received no official request for support from the Trinamul either. But, "if

any such proposal is officially made to us, we would certainly examine it.

"Our response will be within the framework of our policy of not having any direct or indirect truck with communal forces like the BJP."

In any case, though, Mr Khan Chowdhury said, "none of our councillors will leave the party."

Miss Mamata Banerjee had yesterday called upon "anti-Left forces" to respect the people's verdict and help Trinamul form the board, but had refused to seek the Congress's support directly.

**CPI concern:** The CPI has taken "serious note" of its party candidate, Mr Gurudas Dasgupta's defeat in the Panskura bypoll, and the "inability of the Left Front to win a clear majority in the Calcutta Municipal Corporation", Mr AB Bardhan, party general secretary, said at the end of the CPI's three-day national executive meeting in New Delhi.

The CPI asked its Bihar unit to gherao all block offices on 9 August to press for the holding of rural polls in the state.

THE STATESMAN

1 JUL 2000

# Left clinches cliffhanger

HCA 87

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, July 2

THE LEFT Front today netted the decider in the Salt Lake tie-breaker, lifting its trophy: the Bidhannagar Municipality. But the cliffhanger of a match was marred by largescale violence that left two injured, including Minister of State for Communications Tapan Sikdar. The Trinamool Congress and BJP had voted were clearly on the offside, but the Left laughed away the charges, rubbing claims that the referee was partisan.

But CPI(M) candidate Gita Biswas won only by a slender margin, defeating her nearest rival Banani Sanyal of the BJP by 224 votes. In booth 3A of Salt Lake's Ward 16, where the repoll was held today, Biswas edged past Sanyal by a meagre 137 votes, sealing the fate of the Trinamool-BJP combine and ending the five-day-old suspense with both the Left and Trinamool-BJP tied at 11 seats each. The Left Front's tally is now 12 in the 23-ward civic body. Trinamool has won in the other 11 wards.

The repoll was necessitated by a technical snag in the memory chip embedded in the control unit of an electronic voting machine.

Only two and a half hours after polling started at 7 am at the Administrative Training Institute (ATI), the CPI(M) and BJP workers clashed. Police and paramilitary personnel had to lathi-charge to restore order. But it was a fragile peace that lasted a little over an hour. Security forces fired teargas shells and resorted to a second lathi-charge after another clash at about 10.45 am.

In the pitched battle, CPI(M)



**BULLET-BALLOT BATTLE: A securityman pulls out his gun to ward off troublemakers during the Salt Lake repoll on Sunday. Photo: Ashok Nath Dey**

cadres, who vastly outnumbered their rivals, lobbed country-made bombs and fired in the air from illegal weapons. Tapan Sikdar's personal security officer fired at the CPI(M) mob.

Order was restored after about half-an-hour. But the violence kept voters away from the booth. The CPI (M) cadres barricaded roads and prevented voters from venturing out of their houses. They also threatened and turned back many who had come out to vote.

At the end of the day, 75 per cent votes were polled. Trinamool and BJP leaders promptly accused the CPI (M) cadres of indulging in

proxy voting. Trinamool chief Mamata Banerjee arrived at the scene after receiving news of the violence to join senior leaders camping since morning, including Sikdar, Calcutta Mayor-hopeful Subrata Mukherjee and Trinamool MPs Dr Ranjit Panja, Sudip Bandyopadhyay and Bikram Sarkar.

She accused the police and election officers and staff of facilitating proxy voting by the CPI(M). "The police and other officers have been partisan. I will not spare them," she said. Terming the repoll as "disgraceful, scandalous and unfortunate", she said the results "are a moral victory for us since the whole process was rigged and all EC rules were thrown to the wind".

"Fair elections are possible in West Bengal only under President's rule. The next Assembly polls will be handled by

the Central Election Commission which will ensure free and fair polls," said Sudip Bandyopadhyay.

"Mamata is making irresponsible allegations. The Trinamool and BJP workers who had come from outside created all the trouble," countered CPI(M) leader Amitava Nandi.

CPI(M) State Secretary Anil Biswas heaved a sigh of relief. "We are happy that we've won... we could've lost the ward," he said.

Ecstatic CPI(M) workers erupted in joyous celebrations and took out a victory rally led by State Finance Minister Asim Dasgupta, painting the town red with *abir*.

### On Page 3

- Fascism at its worst: Mamata
- Wait and watch CMC mayoral polls: Anil Biswas
- Chairman-designate to focus on Added Areas

# LF fields Kanti against Subrata

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, July 4. — The Left Front has pitted Mr Kanti Ganguly against Mr Subrata Mukherjee in the 8 July CMC mayoral election.

Senior leaders of the party's Calcutta and South 24-Parganas units today met state party heavyweights at Alimuddin Street and chose Mr Kanti Ganguly as the mayoral candidate. The CPI's Mr Purnendu Sengupta, present CMC chairman, will run for the post again.

Though a prominent leader of the CPI-M South 24-Parganas unit and a member of the CMC mayor-in-council, it was Mr Ganguly's close ties with Mr Subhas Chakraborty that clinched the nomination for him.

The transport minister's camp is known for its wide connections, cutting across political lines. And the Left Front needs its

best crisis manager to do the spadework before the crucial mayoral poll.

Party liberals like Mr Chakraborty, Mr Samir Putatunda and Mr Rabin Deb could play a significant role in securing outside support — overt or covert — in the see-saw battle ahead.

Addressing a Press conference at Alimuddin Street, LF chairman Mr Sailen

■ CPM trying to buy its way out:  
Mamata, page 3

Dasgupta and CPI-M politburo member Mr Biman Bose said since the polls had given the LF and the Trinamul Congress-BJP combine the same numbers, the Left did not want to let the mayoral election go unopposed. But "we have not approached any other party for support," they claimed.

Mr Ganguly, known for his organisation-

al capability, was earlier criticised by some CPI-M Calcutta District Committee leaders for working with Mr Chakraborty on Operation Sunshine, the hawker eviction drive. But current political compulsions forced the CDC to accept his candidature.

Mr Ganguly was the chairman of the no-12 CMC borough committee between 1985 and 1995. Since 1995, he has been a member of the mayor-in-council. He contested the Lok Sabha polls from Jadavpur last time, but was defeated.

Mr Ganguly seemed very optimistic about a victory. "As a disciplined partyman; I love to shoulder any responsibility, however difficult that may be," he said.

He said that soon after his nomination was announced, he was congratulated by many, including some members of other parties. "I'll depend on conscience votes," Mr Ganguly said.

THE STATESMAN

THE STATESMAN

7 JUL 1995

# Buddha to stay away from Vajpayee's function

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, July 4

IN A deliberate bid to snub the BJP, Deputy Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharyya has decided to stay away from an official function on Shyama Prasad Mukherjee's birth centenary to be inaugurated by the Prime Minister at Netaji Indoor Stadium on July 6.

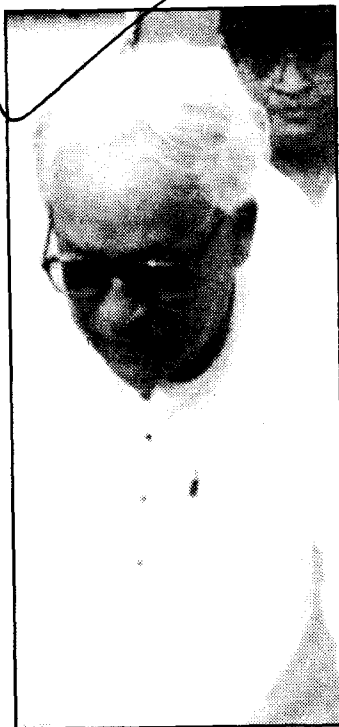
The function is being organised by the Union Human Resource Development Ministry's Department of Culture in collaboration with the Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Smarak Samiti.

Bhattacharyya told the Assembly today that he would receive the Prime Minister at the airport on behalf of the State Government, a task which he had been assigned, but "I am sorry to say that I cannot participate in the programme, though I got an invitation from the celebration committee".

He went on to clarify that although he looked upon Shyama Prasad Mukherjee as a "great politician", he had his own reasons for not attending the function. "My ideology and heritage of West Bengal prevents me from joining the programme. We will not join hands with communal forces under any circumstances," the minister clarified.

What prompted the Deputy Chief Minister to launch an anti-BJP tirade was BJP MLA Badal Bhattacharyya's earlier statement

in the House that Buddhadeb Bhattacharyya would share the platform with the Prime Minister on Shyama Prasad's birth centenary celebration, although the State Government was unwilling to



bring out a special issue of the official organ, Paschim Banga, on the occasion.

Around the time when the Deputy Chief Minister

was announcing his dissociation from the programme. Union Minister of State for Telecommunications Tapan Sikdar was telling reporters that the Department of Culture had confirmation on Buddhadeb Bhattacharyya's participation.

The Union Minister for Culture, Anant Kumar, will be among those present at the function, along with the State Governor, Viren J Shah, and Railways Minister Mamata Banerjee.

Asked for his comments on the State Government's refusal to publish a special issue of Paschim Banga on Shyama Prasad, Sikdar said, "This State Government is not run as a Government, but as an extension of the party. Nothing much can be expected of it." He added that Buddhadeb Bhattacharyya himself owed a lot to Shyama Prasad.

"There would be no West Bengal but for Shyama Prasad, who fought against the entire provinces of Bengal and Punjab being awarded to Pakistan."

Sikdar said the Prime Minister would release a book titled Was Shyama Prasad Mukherjee Communal at the Netaji Indoor Stadium function.

Vajpayee would touch down at the airport at 10.30 am and drive straight to the Raj Bhavan. He will be at the Netaji Indoor Stadium function for over an hour.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 JUL 2000

# Sunshine man in clouded contest

BY OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

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**Calcutta, July 4:** The ruling Left Front today nominated Kanti Ganguly as its mayoral candidate, raising the stakes in the battle for control of the Calcutta Municipal Corporation. A secret ballot to elect the mayor will be held on Saturday.

The Front also decided to put up the CPI's Purnendu Sengupta as its nominee for the post of CMC chairman. The decision was taken at an hour-long Left Front committee meeting this afternoon.

This was preceded by a short session of the CPM's Calcutta District Committee (CDC) which, too, had to recommend the two names under pressure from

9-1 57

the top leadership.

Sources say the district committee was upset after Alimuddin Street, party headquarters, chose Ganguly from South 24-Parganas district as Calcutta's mayoral candidate.

"It is true that Ganguly is from the party's South 24-Parganas district unit and not a CDC member. But we always have to go by the majority decision," said a CDC secretariat member.

Observers say CDC had to toe the Alimuddin Street line since it could not offer an alternative to Ganguly, who made a name for himself as a man of action by spearheading Operation Sunshine to clear Calcutta's streets of hawkers. Outgoing mayor Prasanta Chatterjee could have been its choice had he not lost the election.

Left Front chairman Sailen Dasgupta announced that the selection of the two was unanimous.

Giving enough indication that the Front was not confident of getting the two elected, Dasgupta said: "We are not sure of victory but have decided to contest the mayoral election as a matter of principle. We cannot simply allow the Trinamul Congress-BJP combine to go unopposed."

He was also categorical about the Front's stand on horse-trading. "We shall not encourage any manipulation to get our candidates elected," he added.

Against this backdrop, the CPM appears solely dependent on cross-voting at the mayoral election. But cross-voting is also a distant possibility with 14 Congress councillors still sticking to the

decision of staying away from the election.

The Front has only 61 councillors in its fold. On the other side, the Trinamul-BJP combine claimed to have 66 councillors with five Independents joining it.

Kanti Ganguly himself did not sound confident of victory. "The Front has chosen me to contest the election. But I am not definite about its outcome," he said.

State PWD minister and RSP leader Kshiti Goswami said: "The only option is left with the Independents who are expected to cross-vote for Front nominees despite their declared allegiance to the Trinamul Congress."

Trinamul leaders alleged that the CPM was trying to buy votes

THE TELEGRAPH

5 JUL 2000

# Mayor poll set for nail-biting finish

UDAY BASU & SUMIT SEN  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

ALCUTTA, July. 7. — The Calcutta Municipal Corporation mayor's election tomorrow is set for a nail-biting finish.

Ditherings in the Congress over whether to vote or abstain have injected a strong element of uncertainty.

The Congress — its strength now down to 13 from 15 — has been pitchforked into the king-maker's role. Two Congress councillors have switched sides to join the Trinamul. The PCC today deferred its decision till tomorrow on what role it would play.

The CPI-M's crisis managers, Mr Subhas Chakraborty, Mr Prasanta Sur, Mr Robin Deb

and Mr Samir Putatunda, have been put on the job to notch up the magic number.

A senior CPI-M leader said the Left Front would gain if Congress councillors abstained. All Trinamul councillors won't support Mr Sub-

rata Mukherjee. And Congress members, even if they choose to vote, are not unanimous on who should be

the mayor. The situation is fluid and anything might happen, he said.

Some Trinamul councillors, he said, were not happy about the way they had been cooped up at Nizam Palace.

But in another twist to the

day's drama, Mr Sultan Ahmed, PCC general secretary and Mr ABA Ghani Khan Chowdhury's close aide, showed up at Nizam Palace where Miss Mamata Banerjee was camping.

Mr Ahmed said he was only escorting Kazi Rajibul Islam, the Madhyamik topper, who wanted to meet the railway mi-

nister. "Mamata Banerjee is a city landmark, like the Victoria Memorial, the Indian Museum or the Kali temple", he said.

Answering reporters' questions, Mr Ahmed said: "It will be wrong to read politics into the visit. I'm merely perform-

ing a social duty."

Mr Ahmed and Miss Banerjee had a brief meeting, fanning further speculation about a tacit understanding between the Congress and Trinamul.

Later, Mr Ahmed said: "It would be unfair to paint Congress and Trinamul leaders as each other's enemies. Though we parted ways, our relations have not soured".

**Traffic restrictions:** More than 800 policemen will be on duty to in and around the Calcutta Municipal Corporation headquarters in SN Banerjee Road to prevent violence. SS Hogg Street, Charlie Chaplin Square, Bertram Street, Chandni Chowk and parts of SN Banerjee road will be closed to traffic from 2 p.m.

On page 3:

- Ifs and buts in a game of numbers
- Mamata displays Red tape

THE STATESMAN

8 JUL 2000



'Shyamaprasad above ideology'

# PM takes a dig at Buddha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, July 6. — Ideological differences should not stop a person from attending a function to honour a "great leader", Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said today, reacting to Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya's absence from Shyamaprasad Mookerjee's birth centenary celebrations.

The deputy chief minister said Shyamaprasad Mookerjee was a great leader but stayed away from the function for ideological differences, Mr Vajpayee said.

After inaugurating the year-long celebrations at Netaji Indoor Stadium, he said: "I met him (Mr Bhattacharya)

at the airport. He seemed to be a nice man, though I wouldn't know what people of Bengal think of him. But he wrote to me to say he and his party had differences with Mookerjee.

Promising help for the function, Mr Bhattacharya said he couldn't speak of his differ-

ences with Mookerjee in front of Mr Vajpayee.

Mr Vajpayee greeted the audience in Bengali: "*Banglar bhai o bonera, aapnader shobai ke janai amar pranbhora shubhechha.*" He said nothing should stop people from paying homage to stalwarts of the freedom movement. "Or else,

how do we pass on their message to the next generation."

The BJP had political differences with Communist leader EMS Namboodiripad. "But we acknowledge him as a great visionary."

Miss Mamata Banerjee blasted the CPI-M for the "criticism of the function in dirty language." She said: "They (the CPI-M) don't

hesitate to praise Marx and Lenin but shy away from doing so for great sons of our soil."

Mr Tapan Sikdar too criticised Mr Bhattacharya. The minister of state for culture, Mr Ananth Kumar, said Mookerjee's message would be disseminated in the country.

## DEPUTY CM REACTION

CALCUTTA, July 6. — Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya refused to comment on the remarks of Mr Vajpayee, Miss Mamata Banerjee and Mr Tapan Sikdar. Mr Bhattacharya, who saw Mr Vajpayee off, told reporters: "I won't react to Mr Vajpayee's statement by hearing your version. I will see newspapers tomorrow ... For my side of the story, you can see my letter (to Mr Ananth Kumar) yesterday." — SNS

■ More reports on page 4

THE STATESMAN

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## Trinamool claims support of four more Congress councillors

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, July 6

THE TRINAMOOL Congress claims to have surged ahead of the Left Front in the CMC mayoral election scheduled for July 8 with indications that at least four more Congress councillors are willing to join its camp.

Trinamool leader Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay even named the four Congress councilors who would be joining the Trinamool: Suman Singh, Rajkishore Gupta, Mumtaz Begum and Sushanta Ghosh. "Since Mamata Banerjee is busy today with the Prime Minister's programme,

they would announce their crossover to the Trinamool tomorrow," Chattopadhyay said.

He hinted that further defections from the Congress were on the cards, and names of councillors such as Manzoor Iqbal, Iqbal Ahmed and Paresh Pal are being bandied about in party circles. Banerjee, however, said she was not aware of any such development.

Such defections would only strengthen Trinamool's bid to win the mayoral polls and form the CMC board. With 67 councillors in its kitty, the Trinamool requires the support of only four more councillors to romp home.

The Congress, however, maintained that so far, only one councilor—Rajkishore Gupta—had crossed over to the Trinamool. But the fact is that Shasuzzaman Ansari, also from the Congress, had formally joined forces with Banerjee's party yesterday. "Thirteen councillors are still with us," claimed WBPC vice-president Saugata Roy, following a meeting between Congress councillors and State Congress chief A B A Ghani Khan Chowdhury this afternoon. He said they would demand termination of membership of the defectors for flouting the anti-defection law.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 JUL 2000

# Mamata magic puts Subrata in Mayor's seat

*'We are here to win hearts with good work'*

IT'S FINALLY over and Subrata Mukherjee is now Calcutta's first citizen. Relieved after days of nail-biting tension, he tells *Arindam Sarkar* that he now has miles to go and expectations to fulfil.

**Q: Now that you are the Mayor of Calcutta, how are you feeling?**  
**A: Great.** Calcutta is a city of great expectations. So, to be the first citizen of Calcutta is overwhelming. It is one of the world's oldest cities — one on which the world has its eyes set. This is also a city that is attracting World Bank and Asian Development Bank funds.



**On Page 3**

- At home in Hotel Hira
- Left Front to draw lessons from defeat
- Heat and grind of a secret ballot
- Ringside view
- Photographs

**Q: To what extent will Mamata involve herself in the running of the CMC?**  
**A: Completely.** Mamata will have a very significant role to play. Remember, capturing the CMC is only the first towards capturing the Writers' Buildings. She knows that the Assembly polls are drawing close and the CMC will play a major role in mobilising public opinion. She spent one-and-a-half-months in Calcutta despite being the Railway Minister. This was not for nothing.

**Q: So you expect Mamata to intervene in your work?**  
**A: Yes.** I want her to show me the way. In fact, she will be my shock absorber. Once the councillors know that Mamata herself clears all the decisions, they won't bother me.

**Q: Will English replace Bengali in your CMC. Will you try to rename Calcutta as Kolkata?**  
**A: No.** English has to stay. You simply can't expect the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to communicate in Bengali. As for changing the name of the city, the world knows Calcutta. At the same time, there is no harm calling the city Kolkata.

**Q: Where does the new Mayor want to start?**  
**A: Clean drinking water, pollution control, building flyovers to ease traffic movement, adequate parking facilities, dredging of**

**Q: As a Mayor of the new millennium, what's your vision of Calcutta?**  
**A: I have visited many cities the world over. At the outset, I concede that we can't reach**



Subrata Mukherjee moments after being elected Calcutta Mayor on Saturday. Also seen in the photograph is Trinamool's Anil Mukherjee, who was elected CMC chairman. Photo: Subhendu Ghosh

At 6.21 pm, the presiding officer formally announced the result and declared Subrata elected. He became the city's 35th Mayor. Of the 141 councillors, 128 were present. All 13 Congress councillors stayed away.

Even before the results were formally declared, Trinamool councillors gathered around Subrata and lifted him on their shoulders. While the Left Front members sulked and huddled in a corner, shouts of 'Subrata Mukherjee zindabad' and 'Trinamool Congress zindabad' rang out inside the council chamber.

"Yes, I was tense. But today's verdict proves that in the 2001 Assembly elections, we will present a dance on the streets outside. Mamata said she knew the Trinamool would capture the CMC. Last night, she met her councillors and urged them to stand united during the vote. Earlier in the day, Trinamool councillors visited the Kalighat temple and in the after-

noon came to the CMC in a convoy of cars. Subrata came in Mamata's Tata Sumo. "It's a lucky vehicle. She has never lost an election after she campaigned in this car. So, today she offered me the vehicle. I won," said Subrata.

Challenger Kanti Ganguly, however, put up a sporting face and gracefully accepted defeat. He walked up to Subrata's seat and congratulated him. "We hoped the Congress would play the crucial role. But they remained absent," Ganguly later told reporters.

"But the Congress had made its stand clear long ago. We wanted an anti-Left board. Under no circumstances could we have allowed our councillors to vote for the Left Front. So we decided to sit out," said WBPPC president ABA Ghani Khan Chowdhury. This helped the Trinamool.

"We have sent a clear signal to Mamata. We helped them when they needed us," said Congress leader Somen Mitra.

**Score: 66-62**

IT WAS Jyoti Basu's birthday today, but the gift went the Trinamool way when Subrata Mukherjee made it to the Mayor's post beating the CPI(M)'s Kanti Ganguly 66-62.

Congress councillors stayed away from the vote. In an atmosphere charged with tension, the election was conducted through secret ballot.

The Trinamool's victory was complete with Anil Kumar Mukherjee making it to the chairman's post. He defeated Purnendu Sengupta 67-61.

Senior Left Front councillor Archana Bhattacharyya — presiding officer for the poll — was in the chair at 3.30 pm. Voting began at 3.45 pm after some fracas over procedures and continued till 5.30 pm.

The councillors were called serially according to their ward numbers to exercise their franchise. That done, they milled around the counting table eager to know the results.

# Mamata flag flies atop mini-Writers'

## OUR BUREAU

Calcutta, July 8: Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress moved tonight from Calcutta's streets to its castle, capturing the mayor's crown in a suspense-soaked poll that cut short the Left's 15-year-old reign.

Mamata was quick to torn the election of her nominee Subrata Mukherjee as CMC mayor as a tactical triumph that takes her within striking distance of Writers' Buildings.

"We have taken over the smaller red building of the Calcutta Corporation. Now we will begin our journey towards the other red citadel — Writers' Buildings," Mamata told reporters after Mukherjee's victory.

Mukherjee echoed Mamata. "Watch us, we are going to take over Writers' Buildings. Mamata willing, we will sweep the Assembly elections next year," he gushed.

From the CMC headquarters, Mamata's dream-destination is almost round the corner. But

Mukherjee's scoreline after the poll and the narrow margin of four votes laid bare the pitfalls crowding the treacherous road to Writers'.

One ominous note was the revelation that a councillor of the Trinamul-BJP combine had cross-voted for Kanti Ganguly, the Left Front's candidate who lost to Mukherjee. However, there was no such desertion when Trinamul's Anil Mukherjee was elected chairman of the CMC.

But the overriding lesson of the election for Mamata is that without the support, either implicit or explicit, of the Congress she will not be able to storm the Red outpost, let alone its hub at the Writers'.

Thirteen Congress councillors made themselves absent from voting today, enabling Mukherjee to squeeze past Ganguly with 66 votes as against the Left nominee's 62 in the 141-member corporation.

Trinamul has heaved a sigh of relief at the Congress' magnanimity. But once the celebrations lose steam, a chilling message

must sink in: despite Trinamul's no-holds-barred attempts to persuade "individual" Congress councillors to back Mukherjee, only two responded. The Congress still had a 13-councillor cannon with which it could easily have blown Mamata's nominee off the contest.

The fact that many of the Con-

### Before poll

TMC & allies

67

Left Front

61

### After poll

TMC & allies

66

Left Front

62

gress councillors had won from minority-dominated areas has also made it clear to Trinamul that it will eventually have to do a dispassionate cost-benefit analysis of its alliance with the BJP.

Even though Mamata maintained that she would not comment on the stand of another po-

litical party, Trinamul leaders said they were "grateful" to the Congress. Mamata has convened a meeting of her party's councillors tomorrow.

The state Congress said it was happy that anti-Left forces formed the CMC board and pointed with glee to the cross-voting in the Mamata camp.

"The cross-voting shows that the 'B' team of the CPM also exists within the Trinamul-BJP combine," said PCC vice-president Sougata Roy, referring to Mamata's favourite definition of the Congress.

Roy said his party would closely watch the new mayor's "approach and attitude" towards the Congress and decide in future how far it could cooperate with him.

"The present mayor does not have a clear majority and will need our support in the event of a no-confidence motion by the Left Front six months later," said Roy.

But the first file Mukherjee signed is unlikely to be opposed by Roy's party. Soon after his corona-



Subrata Mukherjee after his victory. Picture by Amit Datta

tion, Mukherjee gifted corporation employees a customary holiday on Monday.

The Congress should have no problem with the other priority Mukherjee declared after banishing the Left from the CMC throne — to rid the city of malaria.

Ganguly, the driving force behind Operation Sunshine which evicted hawkers from the city streets, has pledged his support to the new mayor.

After the announcement of the results, Ganguly walked up to Mukherjee and presented him with a bouquet, a smile and a pat on the shoulder. "Go ahead, and work for the city, you will have my fullest cooperation," Ganguly said.

CPM state secretary and Politburo member Anil Biswas said that the Left Front government would cooperate with the Trinamul-BJP-run corporation in the interest of the city's development. "But I want to point out that one councillor belonging to the Trinamul-BJP combine has supported us," he added.

■ More reports on Page 8

THE TELEGRAPH

9 JUL 2000

# Left MLAs blast mayor's 'dual identity'

## STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, July 10. — Mr Subrata Mukherjee's detractors had a field day in the Assembly today.

Mr Rabin Deb (CPI-M) was the first to draw the Speaker's attention to "the beginning of a disgraceful chapter in Bengal politics."

He said: "Mr Mukherjee is a Trinamul leader in the CMC, but a Congress MLA in the Assembly. Another Congress MLA, Mr Pankaj Banerjee, is the chairman of Trinamul's policy making committee. This is not all. Violating all rules of democracy, the Trinamul Congress is engineering defection from other parties and offering lucrative posts to the turncoats."

Mr Deb was joined by other Left MLAs while Congress members tried to calm the situation.

Mr Abdul Mannan (Congress) congratulated Mr Mukherjee, saying he was the state's first MLA to become the mayor. To this, the Speaker, Mr HA Halim, said Mr Mannan should check his facts.

Mr Halim said: "Are you congratulating the same person whom you had charged with defection? And, I want to tell you that years ago Gobinda Dey and Nareish Chandra Mukherjee became mayor while being legislators."



Mr Subrata Mukherjee in CMC's mayoral chamber on Monday.  
— The Statesman

At this point Mr Saugata Roy (Congress) intervened: "We are happy that a fellow legislator has become the mayor. But we don't support the way defectors were made members of mayor-in-council. This has weakened the democratic process."

## SUBRATA VISITS CMC

CALCUTTA, July 10. — Mr Subrata Mukherjee today went to the Calcutta Municipal Corporation headquarters along with some of the mayor-in-council members.

He garlanded the statues of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Surendranath Banerjee and later held a brief meeting with the municipal commissioner, Mr Asim Barman. The new MIC members will take oath on Wednesday.

## Govt not worried

The state government is not worried with the Trinamul Congress chief, Miss Mamata Banerjee's plan to hold a rally on 21 July to mark the anniversary of the killing of 13 people in police firing at Dharmatala in 1993.

"What is there to worry about?" Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya said. When reminded of the ugly incidents of the past, he said many things had happened in the past and many will happen in the future.

— SNS

Discussions were held on demands for grants and motions for reduction relating to the departments of fisheries,

village and small scale industries and administration of justice. The grants were passed after a voice vote.

"You level charges without checking facts. You should at least go through the economic survey report," the fisheries minister, Mr Kiranmoy Nanda, told the Opposition while speaking on his department's performance. The comment angered Congress MLAs who forced the minister to stop his speech halfway. "How dare you call us ignorant", they shouted. After a while, the deputy Speaker intervened and asked Mr Nanda to finish his speech.

Mr Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay (Trinamul) supported the cut motion on small scale industries department. "The Left Front government has only made false promises while hundreds of SSI units have closed down."

The department's minister, Mr Pralay Talukdar, countered this by blaming the Centre's liberalisation policy for the crisis.

The state law minister, Mr Nisith Adhikary, opposed the cut motion, saying the state government had done a lot to improve the lower courts.

The issue of setting up a circuit bench in North Bengal also came up during for discussion. Mr Adhikary said the final decision could be taken only by the Chief Justice of India.

# Senior police team for Keshpur crisis meet

Kinsuk Basu  
Midnapore, July 11

THE MASSIVE scale of devastation at Mohisdah, Soroi and Dhondanga villages hits the eye. What were once their homes have now been reduced to rubble. The embers are still smouldering. Yesterday, hordes of CPI(M) supporters descended on these hamlets and spread destruction and terror.

Villagers, shell shocked and cringing in fear, huddle around what remains of their humble dwellings. The goons spared none—women, children and the old. Adjoining Kotawali celebrated ultra rath today. But there were no festivities in these villages. The sound of silence was stunning.

Early on Monday, an army of CPI(M) cadres set out of Mohisdah to capture the neighbouring villages. Trinamool men got wind of the CPI(M) wave and prepared to face the advance. They met and a full-scale battle ensued, the armies raining down bullets and bombs at each other. In the free-for-all, houses were set on fire and many beaten up mercilessly.

A police party intervened and lobbed teargas shells to break up the warring groups. When that did not work, they fired three rounds. Among those killed, was 12-year-old Tajibul Khan who comes from

a pro-Trinamool household.

Earlier, on July 8, a Trinamool supporter, Sheikh Salauddin disrupted a peace meeting convened by villagers of Angua, Angarpara, Gogram and Rameshwar Chak, when he threw bombs at the gathering. The CPI(M) was quick to retaliate and went on the rampage torching close to 150 houses. In a hail of bullets, three political activists fell—two of the Trinamool and one of the CPI(M).

The police say they can't do a thing about the violence, for they are sporadic and there is no pattern to the flare-ups. Hopelessly outnumbered and cut off from the remote villages, the administration is fighting a losing battle.

It's these problem that senior police officers will discuss at a high-level meeting tomorrow. Among those who will be at the strategy session will be the inspector-general of police, western range, D R Bhagat. He arrived here today. The director-general of police, Dipak Sanyal, too will be present. Superintendent of police, Gaurav Datta, and the additional district magistrate, D K Gautam, too will be present at the meeting. The SP and I-G are scheduled to visit the trouble-torn villages. At Mohisdah, Soroi and Dhodanga six police camps have been set up.

Another report on Page 5

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 JUL 2000

# 4 die in Kespur killing field

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

MIDNAPORE, July 12. — Four people died in fresh clashes in Kespur today. Hours later DGP Mr Dipak Sanyal said in Midnapore town that politician-criminal nexus was to blame for the continuing violence.

Over 500 suspected CPI(M)-backed goons gunned down two Trinamul Congress supporters, Mr Gauri De (65) and Mr Bhombol Panja (42), after looting several houses at two villages in Kespur, police said.

Six people have been admitted to hospital with injuries, and the condition of three is reportedly serious. Two CPI-M supporters were killed in the Trinamul counter-attack.

The goons, dressed in black and faces covered in white bandannas, came in trucks. They went on the rampage at Senkulasol and Saridiha, which voted overwhelmingly for the Trinamul in the Lok Sabha by-poll. The goons looted over 60 houses, the operation lasting about three-and-a-half hours.

The DGP, who reached Midnapore town in the evening,

said the situation would continue to be volatile till Assembly election. Parties were trying to "increase their area of influence", a process he said had started with the Panskura by-poll. He said policemen should lathicharge and even fire if the situation so demanded. He also told his men to raid party offices if they had information about hidden arms.

But he would not visit Kespur. "Am I a doctor that I have to visit the patient?" He will meet leaders tomorrow.

**Bodies found at Kharagpur:** Two bodies with multiple injuries were found at Sobhanipur in Kharagpur today. None of them could be identified.

**'Hired goons':** Over 400 hired goons were seen on trucks in Garbeta, which too voted largely for the Trinamul in the by-poll. A white utility vehicle (WB-34/5256), owned by Mr Susanta Ghosh, minister of state for transport, was seen accompanying the trucks, alleged a Trinamul leader. The CPI-M denied this.

■ Another report on page 4

THE STATESMAN

# Top cops meet as Keshpur burns

H-1  
18/7

Kinsuk Basu  
Midnapore, July 12

THE POLICE can do little to "eradicate" violence from Keshpur and its adjoining areas. "They can merely make an effort to control the situation," director-general of police Dipak Sanyal conceded here today. The top policeman's statement came even as reports of sporadic clashes and more houses being razed poured in from the interiors.

Deputy Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee had dispatched Sanyal to the strife-torn district in the hope that the visit would help put things right. But the director-general made it clear that with the Assembly polls drawing close, he had no prescription for peace.

Sanyal arrived here this evening and held a series of meetings with senior officers of his department, including I-G (law and order), Prasun Mukherjee, I-G (Western Ranger) J R Bhagat and SP Midnapore, Gaurav Dutta. Tomorrow, he will sit with representatives of all political parties.

The director-general is unlikely to visit Keshpur tomorrow, for he believes it is "pointless" to study the geography of the place. Out in Keshpur, villagers insist it would have made sense had Sanyal come over and seen their plight.

Sporadic violence continued in

Keshpur and its neighbourhood today. More than 400 armed CPI(M) cadres from Anandapur, Ghatra and Taltala raided two Trinamool strongholds—Saksola and Saludia—and fired at random, wounding four Trinamool supporters. The raiders torched seven houses. Police reinforcements have been rushed to the area. Late night reports said that of the four, 30-year-old Bhombal Panja succumbed to his injuries.

## Mamata help sought

PCC GENERAL secretary Manas Bhuniya today met Mamata Banerjee in New Delhi and urged her to ensure Central intervention in Midnapore. **HTC, Calcutta**

● Page 5: Jharkhandis sharpen arrows to take on Red brigade

Earlier, in Daribuda village, in the Sutanata police station area, CPI(M) cadres carrying sophisticated weapons raided five pro-Trinamool families and razed their houses. Frustrated with the delay in police action, nearly 150 Trinamool workers rushed to the village and rescued the besieged villagers.

The police, however, brushed aside the incident, calling it a "got-up game". Clashes continued in

Sabong, even as senior police officers remained busy at the D-G's briefing.

In another flare-up early today, Trinamool supporters attacked CPI(M) workers at Kaliduha Chara. But, the police intervened and prevented the situation from spinning out of control. The attack was in retaliation to the one by CPI(M) supporters at nearby Baroda yesterday, where the rampaging Red brigade gutted three houses. Later in the evening, the cadres abducted 15 Trinamool workers from Kaliduha Chara. They were however rescued later. At Sitaldara, CPI(M) cadres dug up the main road to Mahesdowar to stop police from entering the village.

Reacting to these incidents, Sanyal said, if needed, the police would raid party offices, provided there is specific information on hoarding of arms.

**Assembly discusses Keshpur:** Both Opposition and the Left Front members today expressed concern over the violence in Keshpur.

Congress deputy leader in the Assembly Saugata Roy said: "Five people have been killed in two days. This is serious."

BJP MLA Badal Bhattacharya urged the Government to call an all party meeting and resolve the tension through political persuasion. CPI(M) MLA Mili Hira blamed the Trinamool and the BJP for the violence.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

13 JUL 2000



# LF retains Bidhannagar civic body

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, July 12

THE LEFT Front maintained its tenuous hold over the Bidhannagar municipality when its nominee Dilip Kumar Gupta was elected the chairman of the civic body for the second consecutive term today. Gupta polled 12 votes, just one more than the Trinamool Congress nominee Anupam Dutta.

The outcome of the keenly-contested election, that took more than two hours to complete, was announced at 6.15 pm. It was greeted by loud cheers and slogan-shouting by ecstatic CPI(M) supporters, who had waited outside the new 'Poura Bhawan' for more than five hours. Minutes after the election results were formally announced, Finance Minister Asim Dasgupta arrived on the scene to congratulate Gupta and other Left Front councillors.

Today's proceedings commenced with all 23 newly-elected councillors taking oath on a specially-erected dais at the entrance of the multistoreyed 'Poura Bhawan'. Bidhannagar sub-divisional magistrate Debashish Basu administered the oath to the councillors. But the ceremony started on a jarring note with many 'guests' seated in the open being drenched by a down-pour. They vociferously protested the seating arrangements. The proceedings commenced only after the protests died down. The oath-taking concluded in an hours' time at 3.10 pm. All the councillors trooped into the new board room for their first meeting in which the election of the chairman was the only business on the agenda.

Related reports, photos on Page 5

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

13 JUL 2000

# Keshpur too hot for district police: D-G

HT Correspondent  
Midnapore, July 13

HT 1  
4/7

THE SITUATION in Keshpur is far too grave for the district administration to handle, director-general of police Dipak Sanyal virtually conceded today.

After the police force—already stretched—was burdened with by-poll duty, troublemakers cashed in on the lax vigil. They smuggled in illegal arms and notorious criminals to spread terror. These factors had caught the district administration flat-footed, he explained. The D-G, however, brushed aside a suggestion that the army be deployed in the district.

(PTI quoted Sanyal as saying that the police had failed to control the situation because of "political pressure".)

Sanyal's admission came as fresh flare-ups were reported from remote villages. Five persons—four Trinamool supporters among them—were seriously wounded when CPI(M) cadres attacked a

9-11-2003

procession around 10.30 am. Sunil Das, a Trinamool supporter was killed. The incident took place at Ramnagar village.

Followers of both parties threw bombs at each other—all this, despite the presence of policemen.

hours from 1.30 pm in protest.

Sanyal today met representatives of all political parties soon after returning from Solidiah. While leaders poured out their hearts to the State police chief, he told them to keep their supporters in check.

Later, he reviewed the situation with his senior officers and put J K Rawat, inspector-general (Western Range) in charge of Keshpur. He instructed SP Gourab Dutt to post officers in specific zones. They, in turn, would coordinate with the local police stations.

## North Dinajpur

**clash:** At least three persons—a Trinamool supporter and two CPI(M) cadres—were killed in a clash at Maharajpur village in North Dinajpur district yesterday, a UNI report

said. CPI(M) men dragged out a Trinamool gram panchayat member from his house and hacked him to death. In retaliation, the Trinamool men killed two CPI(M) men, police said.

Related report on Page 5



A villager blocks the convoy of DGP Dipak Sanyal at Solidiah village in Midnapore on Thursday. Photo: Subhendu Ghosh

The officer-in-charge of Belda police station—Sitankar Das—received splinter injuries on his forehead. Only after reinforcements arrived did things cool down. Later, Trinamool supporters blocked Tarak Chowk for four

THE HINDUSTAN TIME.

14 JUL 2003

# Furore in Assembly over violence in Midnapore

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, July 14

TRINAMOOL AND BJP legislators today created pandemonium inside the State Assembly and brought House proceedings to a complete halt. Later, they walked out and held a dharna in the lobby to protest against the deteriorating law and order situation in Keshpur, Garbeta, Pingla and Sabong in Midnapore.

The legislators alleged that ministers were instigating violence in these places where Muslims, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes were being killed and their property destroyed every day. They also demanded that Article 355 be imposed and the Centre intervene as the State Government had failed to bring the situation under control.

"We demand the arrest of Minister of State for Transport Sushanta Ghosh. He is involved and abetting violence in Keshpur and Garbeta by supplying arms to the CPI(M) cadres," said Trinamool Policy-Making Body

chairman and MLA Pankaj Banerjee.

He said that it is only possible to end the CPI(M)'s Goonda Raj by declaring certain parts of the State Disturbed Areas. He demanded the removal of Director-General of Police Dipak Sanyal as the police have failed completely. "Deputy Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee is an incompetent administrator. He should immediately step down," he said. "In fact, a section of the police along with the CPI(M) leaders and cadres is perpetrating violence. It is a sign of sheer desperation."

Hitting out at the State Government, Trinamool leader and MLA Shobhandeb Chattopadhyay said that sitting inside the Writers' Buildings, the ministers were instigating violence. "They are unleashing a reign of terror in an orchestrated manner. We will submit a detailed report of the atrocities inflicted on the common people of Midnapore to Governor Viren J Shah and Home Secretary Sourin Roy," he said.

Meanwhile, Trinamool MLA Dilip Das alleged that the CPI(M) was also spreading terror in north Bengal. "Our Gram Panchayat member Paresh Sarkar of Gangarampur Thana was killed a few days back. We believe that Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare Minati Ghosh is involved. We want the police to arrest her," he demanded.

Badal Bhattacharya of the BJP expressed surprise over the fact that despite so much violence and repeated requests to the State Government, an all-party meeting over the deteriorating law and order situation was not being held. "The political violence in Midnapore is continuing for the last five months, but neither Chief Minister Jyoti Basu nor his deputy, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, is calling a meeting to bring peace. I just want to request them that they should raid all party offices in Midnapore because I am convinced that arms and ammunitions are hoarded in the CPI(M) party office," Bhattacharya alleged.

Related reports on Page 5

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 JUL 2000

# Mamata launches battle for Writers' Buildings

A.S.  
ms. 22/8  
HST

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, July 21

THE BATTLE for Writers' Buildings has begun in right earnest. Spurred on by the Trinamool Congress' victories in Panskura and the Calcutta Municipal Corporation polls, Mamata Banerjee today launched her party's campaign for the Assembly elections in the State due early next year.

Speaking at the annual Martyr's Day rally organised by the Trinamool in memory of 13 Youth Congress workers who were killed in police firing in 1993, Banerjee peppered her speech with rhetoric and soundbites that sent the huge gathering roaring for more.

The next time she addresses a rally it would be after having wrested Writers' Buildings, she promised. "We will capture Writers' in the Assembly polls. I know that Jyoti Basu and his cadres will make a desperate attempt to stop us from coming to power but we are ready for the fight. I want to tell Basu that the Assembly polls will be held under the Election Commission of

India, so he will not get away with rigging this time," she said amidst applause from lakhs of people who paralysed the city for more than four hours.

Significantly, among those present at the rally were State Congress president A B A Ghani Khan Chowdhury's key aide and Congress MLA Paresh Pal and State Transport Minister Subhas Chakrabarty's lieutenant Sujit Bose. Their presence

#### ON PAGE 3

- Mahajot takes shape at rally
- Mamata meet illegal: Basu
- Permission not sought: Police
- Anil Biswas condemns Mamata's remarks against CM

gave out clear signals that a broad anti-Left alliance was emerging in Bengal.

"I come here with the blessings of Barkatda. And I want to say that we are with Mamata Banerjee to fight the CPI(M)," said Pal. Equally forthright was Sujit Bose: "All of us who are disillusioned with the CPI(M)'s misrule have

found a platform. We will help Mamata to capture Writers' Buildings."

Banerjee declared that in the first week of August, she would hold a meeting with her party leaders and chalk out the strategy for the Assembly elections. "You have given the Left Front 24 years, I want only four. I will show you how to develop Bengal," she told the crowd.

The Trinamool leader accused the CPI(M) of spreading terror in the districts. "Two hundred of our workers have been killed in different districts of Bengal. Both *mantri* and *santri* are threatening our workers and sympathisers," she said.

"A Government that resorts to violence to muzzle the voice of the people has no right to rule. Basu is so desperate, that now he is threatening to arrest me. I want to tell him that if by arresting me he can bring back peace in Bengal and stop the upsurge against the Left Front misrule, he is welcome to do so," she said amidst loud applause. "All those who want to fight the Left are with us, so there is no need to fear the red flag any more."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 JUL 2000

# House uproar over Kespur violence

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

9-88  
WB

CALCUTTA, July 24. — Violence in Midnapore continued to dominate discussions in the Assembly today with MLAs loyal to the Trinamul-BJP combine walking out with black robes draped over their usual starched white kurta-pyjamas.

The walk-out followed demands for Mr Sushanta Ghosh's arrest and the deputy chief minister, Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya's resignation.

Not satisfied with donning black robes themselves, some Trinamul members led by Mr Sanjay Bakshi rushed towards Mr Ghosh, minister of state for transport, trying to make him wear a black robe.

The Trinamul has been accusing Mr Ghosh of instigating violence against its workers in the Panskura-Garbata-Pingla-Sabong belt of the Panskura Lok Sabha constituency.

The House seemed about to turn violent today, but the situation was brought under control after the some Left mem-

Trinamul-BJP members walked out, in protest against the violence in Kespur.

The drama began with Mr Pankaj Banerjee, Trinamul leader, pleading that the House take up the continuing violence in Midnapore. He said that a section of the police and CPI-M cadres were carrying out a sustained campaign of terror against villagers who revolted against "CPI-M oppression" and voted for the Trinamul.

"The police have failed to maintain order and there is no security for ordinary people."

Mr Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay, another Trinamul leader, referred to comments that the PWD minister is reported to have made, expressing unhappiness with Mr Bhattacharya's attitude.

As Mr Kshiti Goswami's colleagues in the Left Front stood up to say that Mr Chattopadhyay was lying, MLAs belonging to the Trinamul-BJP combine donned the black robes they had brought along in their pockets.

Mr Chattopadhyay went to

the well of the House and hung black flags on two bulbs; and Mr Bakshi rushed towards the minister of state for transport, intent on making him wear the black robe as well. He was prevented from doing so, with LF MLAs led by Mr Rabin Deb rushing in between him and Mr Ghosh.

Outside — at the Assembly lobby — Trinamul MLAs lashed out at the chief minister, who they said didn't know the "simple rules" of the state. They were referring to Mr Jyoti Basu's comments questioning the legality of the Trinamul meeting at Chowringhee Square on 21 July.

"Every party, including the LF constituents, has held several meetings there," they said. "How come only Trinamul rallies are declared illegal?"

Referring to reports that Left MPs would meet the President demanding Miss Mamata Banerjee be censured for making trouble in the state, Trinamul MLAs said they would instead go to the people to ask whether she was guilty.

THE STATESMAN

25 JUL 2000

# Buddha blames police in Kespur

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, July 25. — Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya told the Assembly today that police needed to pull up their socks in Kespur. Their effort to contain the spiral of violence had been inadequate, the police minister conceded to startled members.

The deputy chief minister was replying to questions on Kespur from Congress members, Mr Gyan Singh Sohanpal and Mr Satyaranjan Bapuli. The MLAs wanted to know the number of clashes in Kespur last year, the number of people killed, their political affiliations, and the reason for the clashes.

Eleven people were killed and 60 injured in 72 political clashes last year, Mr Bhattacharya replied. Seven of the dead belonged to the Trinamul, four to the CPI-M.

Thirty-one people have died in 66 clashes till 15 July this year, the deputy chief minister said. Twenty of them owed allegiance to the Trinamul, 11 to the CPI-M.

Police have been ordered to raid offices of political parties suspected to be sheltering criminals or storing arms, the minister said. There were no reports of police raids on party offices, however.

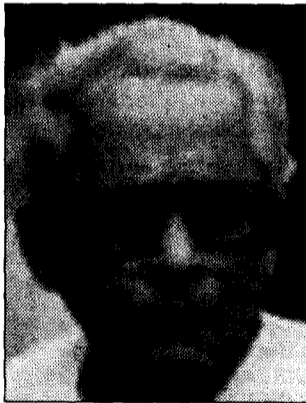
Some of the clashes had taken place after bargadars were illegally driven out, Mr Bhattacharya said. The government would make every effort to reinstate them at the plots given to them earlier, he said.

Amid a lot of shouting from the Treasury benches, Mr Badal Bhattacharya, BJP, asked: "Has any first information report been filed

against Mr Sushanta Ghosh, minister of state for transport, in connection with the Kespur clashes?"

When the minister replied in the negative, Mr Saugata Roy, Congress, demanded to know if the government had taken any political initiative to bring down the level of violence.

Mr Bhattacharya replied that talks between parties at the block level had begun to yield results.



Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya

**Bangla, Kolkata:** Mr Bhattacharya said the chief secretary had on 28 December last year made a request to the Union home ministry on renaming the state Bangla. On changing the name of the city to Kolkata, he said the principal secretary of the Union home ministry had been informed of the Hindi spelling of 'Kolkata' in March this year.

**Rural budget:** The panchayat and rural development department budget was passed in the second half of today's session. Opposing the motion, Mr Sovandeb Chattopadhyay, Trinamul Congress, said charges of defalcation had been raised against panchayat

members. Despite an active panchayat system, more people lived below the poverty line in West Bengal than anywhere else in India, he said.

Mr Surjya Kanta Mishra, minister for rural development and panchayat affairs, told the House that nine gram panchayat members have been arrested on charges of corruption. Eight have been suspended so far.

He claimed the government was vigilant in weeding out corruption from the panchayat system.

THE STATESMAN

26 JUL 2000

# Trinamool wants Central rule, to petition Governor

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, July 25

THE TRINAMOOL Congress today demanded imposition of Article 356 in West Bengal in view of the deteriorating law and order situation in the State. Trinamool's Policy-Making Body chairman Pankaj Banerjee said that a party delegation would soon meet Governor Viren J Shah and demand President's Rule in the State. "The Left Front Government has deprived the people of their fundamental right," he said.

year too the Trinamool had planned to hold a public meeting in the district on August 9. In 1998 and 1999, the meetings were held in Midnapore; this time the venue was Chompaitola, on the Garbeta-Keshpur border in Midnapore district. "But we have information that after receiving directives from the CPI(M) top brass in Alimuddin Street, Deputy Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has asked the district administration to prevent Trinamool supporters to enter the district from the neighbouring areas," Banerjee alleged.

"The Constitution of India gives right to the people to move around freely and this is a fundamental right of every citizen. But by trying to stop the people from coming to our meeting, the ruling party is vio-

lating this right. In fact, the people of Bengal are living in constant fear of the ruling party. This is not a healthy sign, so we demand central intervention," Banerjee added.

Banerjee alleged that recently, CPI(M) Rajya Saha MP Biplab Dasgupta during his visit to

leader, though they have made repeated requests to the Governor and the Centre for imposition of President's Rule, the situation has now reached a stage where peace can never return to the State unless the Centre takes matters in its hands.

"Since law and order is a State subject, the Centre has certain limitations. But the Constitution clearly states that if the situation deteriorates beyond a point, President's Rule can be imposed. And we feel that the situation in Bengal has reached such a stage," he said.

"However, we want to make one thing very clear: despite attempts by the State Government to disrupt our meeting, we will go ahead with it. We would also request the people not to succumb to terror tactics. We are ready for all eventualities," Banerjee said.

He also rubbished the CPI(M)'s claim that Mumtaz Begum, the CMC Congress councilor, had not joined the Trinamool.

Introducing her to the media today, Banerjee said: "Mumtaz Begum had joined us on July 21. She has personally met Mamata Banerjee and has told her that she can serve the people better by working in the Trinamool. Of course, CPI(M)-hired miscreants are creating trouble at her home so she is now living with her relatives. But she would soon return home," he said.

## Anil blasts Trinamool



STATE  
CPI(M) secretary Anil Biswas today came down

Trinamool Congress for demanding that Article 356 of the Constitution be invoked in West Bengal. Reacting to the demand, Biswas said: "Let people judge who all are trying to stifle democratic rights in the State. I find Pankaj Banerjee is unhappy that the law and order is a State subject. Do they want to scrap the State List altogether?" HT, Calcutta

Midnapore had asked the police to shoot trouble-makers. "This indicates the high-handedness of the CPI(M) leaders. The decision to shoot is taken by the DM and the SP of the district, depending on situation. Dasgupta's directive is an extra-constitutional move," he said.

According to the Trinamool

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 JUL 2000

# 11 Trinamul supporters killed in Birbhum clash



Bodies of slain Trinamul men lie in front of the Bolpur sub-divisional hospital morgue on Thursday. — The Statesman

SATYA SAIN  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SUCHPUR (BIRBHUM), July 27. — This village, under Nanoor PS, became a bloody mirror-image of Kespur today when 11 persons were killed in an early morning clash between Trinamul and CPI-M supporters. The dead were Trinamul supporters — all fairly young.

Ten of the victims died on the spot; another died soon after being taken to hospital. The bodies have been sent to the Bolpur sub-divisional hospital for post-mortem. Twenty-one persons have been arrested. Mr Suryakanta Mishra, state land and land reforms minister, has left for Suchpur to find out what led to the massacre.

Miss Mamata Banerjee, in Delhi till late in the evening, had decided to airdash to Calcutta on her way to the village, Trinamul sources said. Mr Pankaj Banerjee, party spokesman, said Miss Banerjee had been informed of the killings and decided at once to meet the families of the victims. Mr Subrata Mukherjee, Trinamul acting

## 12-hour bandh

CALCUTTA, July 27. — The Youth Congress has called a 12-hour Bangla bandh on 31 July in protest against the killings. The PCC will support the bandh call. — SNS

■ More reports on pages 3, 4

chairman, confirmed that Miss Banerjee would visit Suchpur tomorrow and announce the next course of action at a meeting in the village. Trouble began early in morning when a group of Trinamul supporters gathered outside Suchpur to take possession of a disputed land. They were challenged by CPI-M activists, who till recently, had forcibly farmed the land.

Eyewitness reports said a nearly 2,000-strong mob of CPI-M supporters with choppers, tangis and bombs soon encircled the Trinamul men, killing them like rats. It was a ghastly sight till long after the incident, with mutilated, blood-smearing bodies littering the paddy fields. A police camp

has been set up in the area and additional forces have been deployed. Mr JR Bhagat, IG, western zone, visited Suchpur. The DM, Mr SKR Thade and the SP, Mr M Harising Verma, too are camping in the village. Both of them confirmed that the victims were all Trinamul supporters.

Mr Dipak Sanyal, director-general of police, however, described the killings as a sequel to disputes over sowing the winter paddy crop. "It was basically the result of an old dispute over control of land," Mr S Roy, state home secretary, later said. The government might deploy EFR and RAF personnel to preempt further trouble, officials said.

Gloom descended on neighbouring Sehala, Baichara, Nabasta, Purandarpur and Khujutipara when news of the massacre spread. Harmoor and Dhanyasara, which accounted for the maximum number of deaths, looked almost haunted. Men in these villages had all fled, leaving women and children behind.

Mir Julfikar Ali, a resident of

■ See CLASH: page 4

## CLASH:

(Continued from page 1)

nearby Nabasta, said he had woken up to loud bangs of bombs going off, but did not dare to venture out. Apela Bibi, his neighbour, said her husband had gone out early in the day, but had not returned. She said she was not sure if the man was still alive.

Today's victims were identified as:

Sarman Mete (32), Seikh Saficool (35), Harai Seikh (30), Asraf Ali (35), all of Harmoor village; Sabur Seikh (25), Nijam Seikh (40), Ali Husain (27), Sarul Seikh (32), all of Dhanyasara village; Raj Seikh (32) of Takhora village and Seikh Sasik (35) of Purandarpur village. The eleventh victim could not be identified till late at night.

THE STATESMAN

28 JUL 2000



# 11 butchered in Birbhum bloodbath

**Arindam Sarkar**  
Bolgpur, July 27

**A** GANG of 60 armed men attacked Soochpur village, 20 km from here, early today. The villagers resisted and in the clash that followed 11 people died, many were injured. Six persons are missing.

The attackers armed with axes, spears, swords and bombs came around 5 am. By the time the villagers regrouped and hit back, many houses had been razed. Around 7.40 am, a police force from Nanoor reached the spot and found the bodies scattered on a field. They had wounds inflicted by sharp weapons. One of the victims had been bludgeoned to death.

"Soochpur, which has a population of 700, wears a deserted look. The men have fled. Only women and children remain. But they are traumatised and aren't saying anything. The bodies have been brought to the sub-divisional hospital for post-mortem examination. The area is

still tense. We have posted three pickets in the village. So far 21 people have been arrested. Two platoons of Eastern Frontier Rifles and Rapid Action Force have been deployed in the disturbed area. Four bodies have been identified so far," Birbhum district magistrate Sanjay Kumar Thare said.

Hours after reports of the clash reached Calcutta a team of Left Front MLAs, led by Land Reforms Minister Surya Kanta Mishra, rushed to the village. Mamata Banerjee and other Trinamool Congress leaders are reaching here later tonight. They will leave for the village early tomorrow.

The Left Front blamed a land dispute for the clash, but the Trinamool insisted all the 11 killed were their men. They said the CPI(M) had orchestrated the attack to retain their loosening grip over the region. The area has been witnessing land-related clashes over the past few days, district administration sources said. Soochpur and adjoining Sehala and

Baitara were the trouble spots. Big landowners, divested of their lands under the Left Front's agrarian reforms, have launched an offensive to recover their lost acres, the sources said.

## Youth Congress calls bandh on Monday

THE STATE Youth Congress has called a 12-hour Bangla bandh on Monday in protest against the Birbhum killings. WBPC president A B A Ghani Khan Chowdhury has expressed full support for the bandh.

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Local MLA Ananda Das, who was in Mishra's team, named Babu Mian, a local jotedar (landlord), as the man behind today's violence.

Mian, who was not around at Soochpur when violence was raging, has reportedly been trying to regain control of a four-

bigha plot in the Noanagar Kodda gram panchayat. He has put together an army of goons from neighbouring districts. His aim: to terrorise the pattadars (title holders) into vacating the land.

"This has been going on in the districts for quite some time now. We have information that men from Murshidabad and Burdwan participated in today's bloodbath. Of the 11 killed today, six were outsiders," Das said.

"This is a dangerous game. Mamata Banerjee is playing. It is part of her plan to destabilise the Left Front Government. In her effort to gain control over rural Bengal, she has sided with the jotedars, who have now united under the banner of her party. She is trying to drive home the point that law and order in the State has worsened. She has done it in Hooghly, Bankura, Midnapore and South 24-Parganas. Birbhum seems to be the new flashpoint," he said.

Trinamool district president Sushobhan Banerjee rubbished Das's claims. "They are only fighting to keep intact their grip over the district. We have almost marginalised them here and the Trinamool is on the upswing. My party supporters were herded into a field and hacked to death."

Surya Kanta Mishra rejected the Trinamool charge: "This is a jotedar versus cultivator conflict. The dispossessed landholders are with the Trinamool and they are the ones killing the poor farmers. The fact that so many cultivators died today proves that they resisted the outsiders. There is no substance in the Trinamool claims that its supporters had been killed."

**House row:** There was an uproar in the Assembly today over the Nanoor incident. Opposition members crowded around the Speaker's podium demanding an immediate discussion. "The Red terror in Midnapore has spread to Birbhum," one of them said. Left MLAs immediately answered back, insisting Trinamool-backed jotedars had unleashed a campaign to regain their lost land.

## Trinamool demand for central team

THE TRINAMOOL Congress today got the NDA constituents to urge Prime Minister A B Vajpayee to send a delegation to West Bengal to study "political violence unleashed by the CPI(M)".

Led by Trinamool Congress leaders, Minister of State for External Affairs Ajit Panja and Sudip Bandyopadhyay, TDP leader K Yerran Naidu, Shiv Sena leader Ananth Geethe, MDMK chief Vaiko, Janata Dal(U) leader Raghunath Jha and BJP MP Kirti Somaiya called on the Prime Minister to urge him to "accept" the NDA MPs' demand for Central "intervention".

They said it was the need of the hour to stop Marxist violence in the State and not to curb movements of Railway Minister Mamata Banerjee as demanded by the Left MPs.

HTC, New Delhi

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 JUL 2000

# Congress split over Bangla bandh call

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, July 28

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**W**ITH TRINAMOOL Congress chief Mamata Banerjee refusing to support Monday's Bangla bandh called by the Congress in protest against the Birbhum killings, the PCC leadership has been put in a tight spot.

The party remains divided over the issue, with a section of Congressmen distinctly unhappy over the way the bandh was hurriedly called without even a discussion in the party. They say that the high command should immediately step in and withdraw the bandh call, as it has done at least once in the recent past.

WBPCCC vice-president Saugata Roy is annoyed with the behaviour of some of his colleagues over the bandh issue. He wondered at the rationale behind the strike called by the

Youth Congress and subsequently endorsed by the State Congress chief, ABA Ghani Khan Chowdhury. He felt that the issue justifiably belongs to the Trinamool and not the Congress. "All those killed in Naoor were Trinamool supporters. Why should the Congress take the initiative and go for a Bangla bandh?" he said.

Roy felt that a whole lot of factors needed to be taken into consideration before calling a statewide bandh, because it affects the common people the most.

Several Congress MLAs like Tapas Roy and Nirmal Ghosh echoed Roy's stand and said that the bandh would only lead to further loss of political credibility for the Congress. "We have been put in a no-win situation," said Ghosh.

The man at the centre of the controversy is State Youth Congress president Paresh Pal, who reported got a go-ahead from Ghani Khan over

the telephone from Delhi. Some Congress leaders squarely blamed him for putting the party in a difficult situation.

"He (Pal) has done it in the past and needs to be restrained. He should not be allowed to take steps that can land the party in embarrassment," said a Congress leader opposing the bandh.

But Saugata Roy clarified that he would not place the issue before the high command. "I hope Pal will reconsider his stand and so will the WBPCCC," he remarked. Since the WBPCCC president is expected back in Calcutta tonight, he hoped that the issue would be discussed afresh. Ghani Khan loyalists were visibly embarrassed at the controversy over the bandh. Congress Chief Whip Abdul Mannan, who is all for the bandh and even took the initiative to declare the Congress decision in the Assembly yesterday, evaded all questions on the issue.

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# MLAs turn violent as Governor refuses to meet Opp. members

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, July 28

OPPOSITION LEGISLATORS kicked up a ruckus outside the Raj Bhavan today when Governor Viren Shah refused to grant them an appointment.

Some Congress MLAs tried to scale the Raj Bhavan gate and stoned buses on the road.

The Trinamool Congress, the BJP and the Congress legislators marched to the Governor's residence after walking out from the Assembly to meet Shah.

Some turned violent when they found the main gates locked from inside, apparently under instructions from the Governor, who had refused to meet them.

While Trinamool sympathiser and Congress MLA Dilip Das tried to scale the Raj Bhavan gate, his colleague Asok Deb hurled stones at passing buses, damaging a few. Later, they staged a sit-in demonstration outside the gate, demanding to meet Shah.

The Governor then agreed to meet the legislators, apparently

on some police officers' requests. They feared more trouble if the Opposition MLAs were denied a meeting with the Governor.

More protests and rallies disrupted life in the city when roads were blocked, protest rallies taken out, and political parties demonstrated at various parts of the city.

The Trinamool Chhatra Parishad demonstrated outside

## Raj Bhavan Siege

the Writers' Buildings this afternoon to protest the Sookhpur killings. In the clash that followed with the police and the RAF, Trinamool student leader Sonali Guha and four others were injured.

Guha was admitted to M R Bangur Hospital with head injury. The other four were admitted to the Calcutta Medical College and Hospital.

Over 50 protestors, including 31 women, were arrested. The Trinamool Congress took out rallies and blocked roads at

Tollygunge and Rabindra Sarani.

The Pradesh Chhatra Parishad today, workers, too, protested on. Led though for a different reason.

by Sajal Ghosh, Chhatra Parishad workers demonstrated in front of the Indian Airlines office to protest the recent air crash in Patna. They demanded that all old planes be replaced.

They carried the demand further and asked for the resignation of the Left front Government. The police, however, disrupted traffic for an hour at Chittaranjan Avenue.

In another protest today, members of the Postal Transport Association blocked the Jagannath Ghat Road and Strand Road crossing at 11.30 am to protest police atrocities on truck drivers. The blockade ended at 12.40 pm.

Hawkers' unions, backed by the CITU, today organised a rally to protest the Calcutta Municipal Corporation's eviction drive. They took out several rallies across the city, all of which ended at the corporation headoffice.

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29 JUL 2000

# Somnath contradicts Mishra statement

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

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SANTINIKETAN, July 30. — Mr Somnath Chatterjee today contradicted the panchayat and land reforms minister and his party colleague, Mr Suryakanta Mishra's version of the Suchpur incident in which 11 Trinamul supporters were killed on Thursday.

The CPI-M MP visited the affected area yesterday and before leaving for Calcutta called a Press conference today.

Mr Chatterjee said those killed in Suchpur were not peasants, nor were they unarmed. Some of them were dacoits with criminal records. They came from outside simply to raid a CPI-M stronghold.

These are in direct contrast to what Mr Mishra had said in the Assembly on Friday after he visited Suchpur. The minister stated that the victims were peasants from nearby villages and they had no crim-

inal records. Central Intelligence report corroborates Mr Mishra's assessment of the situation.

Mr Chatterjee said Mr Mishra might not have the full view of the situation as he had made a hurried tour of the area.

Mr Chatterjee then turned his focus on the Trinamul Congress and its chief, Miss Mamata Banerjee's "nefarious" activities.

He said Miss Banerjee was bent on spreading communal virus in the state.

"The Suchpur incident is certainly deplorable, but Miss Banerjee's attempt to give it a communal colour is equally nefarious. It's just a coincidence that the area is dominated by Muslims," he said.

"Her sole objective is to destabilise West Bengal, the land issue is simply an excuse. But she may be rest assured that her bid to take over Writers' Buildings by violent means won't succeed," he asserted.

Dubbing the Vajpayee government as a

bundle of contradictions, Mr Chatterjee said it was under siege by its own allies like the Trinamul and other smaller parties. But it had to tolerate them for its survival, he said.

Referring to the Trinamul's donations to the kin of Suchpur victims, the CPI-M leader wondered from where the funds had come. "The party is only two years old."

The deputy chief minister, Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya today said he had sent a report to the Centre on the Suchpur killings, adds UNI from Calcutta.

"It is the same statement I made in the Assembly," he said when asked by the reporters on Mr LK Advani's statement seeking a report from the state government.

"In general reports are sent to the Centre. It's a matter of mutual understanding but there is no hard and fast rule. The Centre can ask for a report, but law and order is strictly a state subject," he said.

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Party alleges Trinamul-BJP hand in violence

# CPM warns Centre against meddling

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 30. — The CPI-M today warned the Centre against interference in West Bengal and said it would be fought tooth and nail.

The CPI-M statement came amid reports that the Centre might seek a report from the state on law and order after the recent killings.

In Hyderabad the BJP general secretary, Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, said the Union home ministry had asked the West Bengal government to submit a report on law and order.

The CPI-M has no problem with the Centre seeking a report from the state, the party general secretary, Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet, and the politburo member, Mr Prakash Karat, said while briefing reporters on the deliberations of the two-day politburo meeting that concluded yesterday.

The politburo tried to turn the tables on the NDA coalition by accusing the Trinamul Congress and the BJP of launching a violent campaign in the state.

About 800 supporters of Left parties had been killed since the BJP came to power at the Centre and 65 of them in Midnapore, it said. "It is not certainly because of intra-party feud as claimed by the home minister, Mr LK Advani," Mr Surjeet said.

Landlords and vested rural interests were rallying behind the two parties with the hope to roll back the "progressive land reforms," Mr Karat said. Incidents of violence and killings were directly linked to this, he said.

The Trinamul Congress and the BJP have let loose a violent campaign to undo the distribution of surplus land and regis-

tration of share-croppers, Mr Surjeet alleged. Even the Congress, which is losing its mass base, is trying to join the anti-CPI-M bandwagon, he said.

The politburo statement emphasised that it would not allow roll-back of land reforms carried out in the state over the past two decades.

The politburo favoured greater powers to Jammu and Kashmir within the ambit of Article 370. Devolution of powers to states is of immediate relevance since central governments have failed to restructure Centre-state relations.

The 11th Finance Commission has done injustice to states whose rights are being ignored time and again, the politburo said.

Mr Karat said sections of the society were feeling the harmful effects of liberalisation and the "surrender to the World Trade Organisation." There has been a drastic fall in prices of milk products, tea, rubber and coconut because of large-scale imports and entry of MNCs in the retail sector, he pointed out.

**'LF desperate':** Mr Venkaiah Naidu said the NDA would send a team of MPs to West Bengal to study the situation. The Left Front is desperate after losing the Calcutta Municipal Corporation and resorting to physical elimination of Trinamul Congress workers. Their frustration is increasing for fear of losing power, he told reporters.

Mr Naidu said the new BJP president would take charge on 27 August at the national council meeting at Kanpur. He was optimistic that the election would be through consensus.

28/7  
Governor can't interact with media, says Anil

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, July 30. — The CPI-M appears to be on a collision course with the Governor Mr Viren J Shah, on law and order.

Alimuddin Street has taken exception to Mr Shah issuing a press statement on violence at Suchpur in Birbhum in which 11 people, identified as Trinamul Congress supporters, were killed.

Mr Anil Biswas, state CPI-M secretary, today said the Governor could only interact with the council of ministers or the state administration but not with the media.

(Mr Pranab Mukherjee, CWC member, said the Governor of any state can interact with the media if he deems it fit. It is within his constitutional rights, Mr Mukherjee said.)

The Governor cannot take initiative for an all-party meeting. He can do so in the event of imposition of President's Rule, Mr Biswas said.

Mr Shah, in his press statement on Friday, urged political parties and people's representatives to help restore peace at Suchpur. They should initiate measures to prevent similar incidents in other parts of the state, the Governor said. Condemning the Suchpur killings, Mr Shah said

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"my government" would take steps to ensure peace.

On Friday, a delegation of Trinamul and Congress MLAs met the Governor. The issue of an all-party meeting came up then, according to some delegation members.

Though the Governor did not make any official statement on the need for an all-party meeting, the state CPI-M leadership apparently chose to react on the basis of the delegation members' claim. The CPI-M apparently did not like Mr Shah issuing a statement without the prior knowledge of the state government. Mr Shah's statement came when Mr Jyoti Basu and senior party leaders were in Delhi to attend a party meeting.

The Governor cannot call an all-party meeting, Mr Biman Bose, CPI-M politburo member, said. If necessary, the state government can do so, he said. Mr Anil Biswas said that his party was not considering calling a meeting on law and order.

Observers feel the CPI-M reacted sharply since it is under pressure now.

# Bandh is on, says defiant Paresh Pal

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, July 30

STATE YOUTH Congress president Paresh Pal today refused to give in to pressure from PCC chief A B A Ghani Khan Chowdhury and insisted that he would go ahead with tomorrow's 12-hour bandh.

Pal had given the bandh call to protest against the July 27 Nanoor carnage. Chowdhury, now in New Delhi, said that the PCC would not back the bandh call and that Pal should immediately backtrack.

"I have already directed the PCC office-bearers to issue a letter to Pal to call off the bandh. The PCC

does not support it and Pal, being the head of a party wing, must obey. If he doesn't fall in line, he will face disciplinary action," Chowdhury told *The Hindustan Times* over the telephone from New Delhi.

In the city, an adamant Pal said there was a definite reason behind the bandh call. Innocent people were dying everyday in Bengal. All those who were with the cause would make the bandh a success.

"It is the lack of unity in the party here and also its failure to make an issue out of a genuine cause that has reduced the Congress to such a pitiable position in the State. It is a call of the people against lawless-

ness in the State and the Youth Congress would do everything to make it a success," Pal said.

PCC general secretary Sultan Ahmed, who has been asked by Chowdhury to issue Pal a letter to call off the bandh, said: "He can't act on his own. He should obey the party president's directive. I have already sent him a letter. But I haven't been able to contact him."

Abdul Mannan, a Chowdhury aide, and party MLA Shankar Singh are equally piqued with Pal's attitude.

"It is a normal practice that all senior leaders sit together before declaring a bandh. He is flouting party discipline by calling a bandh

without consulting seniors. He is disobeying the PCC president. We tried desperately to convince him, but he won't budge. This is nothing but foolishness," Mannan said.

"I do not know how Pal can act on his own. Such decisions are taken only by the PCC. The Chhatra Parishad and the Seva Dal have backed out, but Pal is unnecessarily creating trouble. Only Chowdhury has the authority to decide on bandhs. I think Pal is playing to the gallery. If he thinks he can make a success of the bandh without PCC support, he is living in a fool's paradise, said Pranab Mukherjee reacting to Pal's action.

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