

# Plans finalised for PM's Japan visit

By K.K. Katyal

NEW DELHI, NOV. 16. Quietly and without much fanfare, India and Japan have almost finalised plans for the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee's visit to Tokyo in the second week of February next year — earlier than was expected during the recent top-level contacts between the two sides. Apart from its obvious significance in the bilateral context, the visit is seen as a major step to bring India closer to East Asia and the Asia-Pacific region.

This will be the first trip to Japan at the prime ministerial-level after eight years, the last being the visit in 1992 by the then Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao. The Japanese Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, was here in August. This will be the second Asia trip by Mr. Vajpayee — who is scheduled to go to South East Asia — Vietnam and one or two other countries — earlier in the new year.

The Prime Minister's Tokyo 'yatra' will re-confirm the end of the diplomatic chill that had developed because of Japan's excessively sharp — unusually sharp, according to New Delhi — reaction to India's nuclear tests. Mr. Mori's India visit had provided the first indication. As has been

the case of late, the two countries, it is clear, would not let their differences on nuclear non-proliferation come in the way of establishing future-oriented relationship, within the framework of "global partnership". Certainly, there will be a major push to cooperation on information technology — on which Japan had repeatedly shown keenness. As was noted during discussions with a Japanese economic delegation — which came here in October as a follow-up to Mr. Mori's visit — Japan with its strength in hardware and India with its expertise in software, could be mutually compatible.

New Delhi also expects an increase in Japanese investment in traditional areas, such as infrastructure and food processing, apart from the new items like information technology. During the Mori visit, Japan announced its decision to continue commitment of soft credits for two out of the 17 schemes, which were affected by its stoppage of lending or "economic measures" in the wake of the nuclear tests. Whether any of the remaining 15 schemes get committed concessional loans would have to be seen. There had been a decline in Japanese investment in India in

the recent past — partly because of recession and the consequent industrial slow-down in Japan, the perception there of political instability in India and the negative signals from India about the poor state of infrastructure and the attitude of the lower bureaucracy, especially in the States. New Delhi is conscious of these hurdles and has given necessary assurances.

The coming trip is considered important because of the promise it holds of reducing, if not ending, India's political and psychological isolation from the Asia-Pacific region in general and East Asia, in particular. Thanks to the play of power politics in the region, India had been kept out of Asia-Pacific Economic Council (APEC) and ASEM, the structured dialogue between Europe and Asia.

In the first case, there will be no occasion for a review of the ban on India in the next eight years, in the second case, for another two years. As a result, bilateral contacts with the countries of East Asia acquire added importance. And there will be a strong case for greater attention and a higher profile to the "look East" policy. India's contacts with ASEAN as a dialogue partner, its membership of the Asean Region Forum (ARF),

as also the recent top-level contacts with Singapore, Indonesia, Cambodia and China would need to be built upon and expanded — for higher economic and political dividends.

The East Asia region is on the threshold of a major transformation, what with the drastic far-reaching repercussions of the inter-Korean dialogue. Though beset with daunting challenges, the moves of the two Koreas for reconciliation (and an end to the 50-year-long confrontation) and, ultimately, for re-unification could not but upset the existing balance. India and others in South Asia are certain to be affected.

The old equations had already been disturbed — as was evident from the United States dialogue with North Korea (the visit to Pyongyang of the U.S. Secretary of State, Ms. Madeline Albright), the talks between Japan and North Korea, the seeming "understanding" shown by Russia, North Korea and China of the presence of American troops in the region. The prime ministerial visit to Japan, as such, is not to be seen strictly as a bilateral affair but the starting point of deeper relationship with the Asia-Pacific region.

THE HINDU

17 NOV 2000

# PM fine after knee surgery, says Ranawat

## STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

MUMBAI, Oct. 10. — The Prime Minister has responded well to surgery, but how far the operation was successful will be clear only after a few days, said Dr Chittaranjan S Ranawat who conducted surgery for replacement of Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's left knee joint.

Mr Vajpayee may be able to walk within 5-15 days — may be "more but not less" — Dr Ranawat told reporters after the operation this morning at Breach Candy Hospital here.

The President, Mr KR Narayanan, called Mr Brajesh Mishra, PM's principal secretary, at noon to enquire about Mr Vajpayee's health. (The Prime Minister later returned the President's call, who was the first person he rang after the operation, adds PTI. He also called the Vice-President.)

Assisted by two orthopaedic surgeons and one assistant surgeon, the New York-based Dr Ranawat began the surgery on Mr Vajpayee at 10.10 a.m. and completed it at 11.15 a.m.

(Dr Ranawat conducted the same operation on another VVIP today, also at Breach Candy Hospital. The Attorney-General, Mr Soli Sorabjee, was successfully operated on for a right knee joint replacement, agencies reported.)

Mr Vajpayee has been shifted to the special recovery room no 707 after noon. He will stay there for two to three days "at least", before he is shifted to

Raj Bhavan for the remainder of his recovery period.

The Prime Minister was to be put on physiotherapy from today, starting with compression boots that would be placed on the knee cap "for intermittent compression." This would keep the inclination of the leg correct, he said.

The Prime Minister will get out of bed tomorrow and walk a few steps. This will continue for two more days and he will use a cane. Dr Ranawat said use of the cane for a longer period would be beneficial since it would work as a third leg.

No sedatives have been administered to Mr Vajpayee, except regional blocks that arrest pain at its origin. He was given spinal anaesthesia before the operation and epidural anaesthesia after the operation.

Mr Vajpayee will be on a liquid diet for two to three days and will not take anything orally. His diet is being taken care of in the hospital.

Dr Ranawat said Mr Vajpayee's right knee too was not good. The damage to the second knee was a little worse than "moderate", but he had not advised surgery. "It was not that bad that he needed both knee joints to be replaced at the same time," he said. Simultaneous surgery on both knees is usually performed on patients between 45 and 65 years, he said.

■ See PM: page 8



A JOB WELL DONE: A smiling Dr Ranawat after the surgery. With him is Mr L K Advani. — AP/PTI

## No need for alternative arrangement, feels BJP

### STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Oct. 10. — The BJP today found no fault with the Prime Minister not appointing a deputy in his absence from New Delhi and criticised the Congress for trying to make it an issue.

The Congress had expressed concern over the absence of an alternative arrangement during Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's stay in Mumbai.

The senior BJP vice-president, Mr Jana Krishnamurthy, told *The Statesman* that the Congress should understand the ground reality and not indulge in an academic approach in matters of governance.

The operation was for only an hour and even during that Mr Vajpayee was fully awake. Hence there was no need for an arrangement as demanded by the Congress, Mr Krishnamurthy said.

The Congress spokesman, Mr Ajit Jogi, said absence of an alternative arrangement was a matter of concern given threats from across the border.

He said previous Congress governments had not created such situations.

Mr Jogi evaded a question on whether it was constitutionally mandatory for the Prime Minister to make an alternative arrangement.

Asked whether his statement implied that the Prime Minister lacked confidence in any of his colleagues to take over in his absence, Mr Jogi said: "We have simply expressed our apprehensions. It is for you to reach your conclusions."

Mr Krishnamurthy said Mr Vajpayee had not made alternative arrangements when he was on foreign visits or holidaying in Manali.

"At that time, the Congress did not make an issue," another BJP leader said.

SETTING ASIDE PROTOCOL, PRESIDENT RECEIVES PM

# Vajpayee back in Delhi

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, OCT. 22. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, returned here this evening from Mumbai where he underwent a knee-joint replacement surgery on October 10.

Setting aside protocol, the President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, and the Vice-President, Mr. Krishan Kant, were at the airport to receive the Prime Minister who thanked them for the gesture. The Central Ministers were requested not to come to the airport.

The Prime Minister proceeded straight to his 7, Race Course Road residence. He was accompanied from Mumbai by the Union Minister for Information Technology, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, and PMO officials.

A spokesman for the PMO said Mr. Vajpayee was not seeing visitors on Sunday. He would continue to work from his residence from tomorrow, he said.

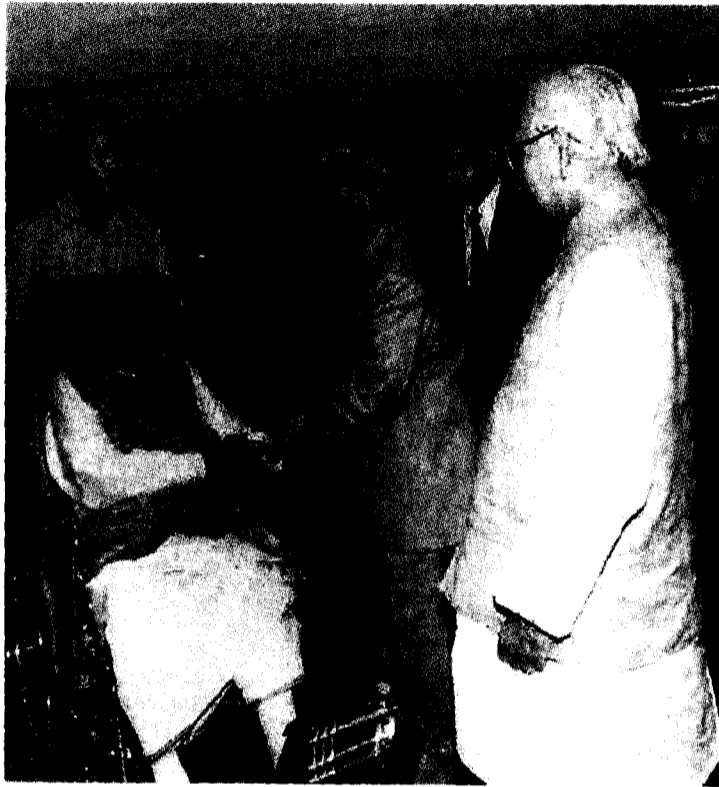
The Prime Minister had started perusing files at Mumbai's Breach Candy hospital itself and was attending to official work while recuperating after the surgery there.

## From Mumbai with love

By Arunkumar Bhatt

MUMBAI, OCT. 22. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, left the Breach Candy Hospital here for New Delhi today with the hope that he would be able to move about and work normally in the next few days. He was lavish in praise of his doctors and the staff who took care of him during his 13-day hospitalisation for replacement of a knee joint.

"It was my desire to return home before Deepavali and it has been fulfilled," a wheelchair-bound Mr. Vajpayee told report-



The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, being received by the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, at Palam in New Delhi on Sunday while the Vice-President, Mr. Krishan Kant, looks on.— PTI

ers before leaving for the Chhatrapati Shivaji airport. His special airforce aircraft took off at 3.37 p.m.

Mr. Vajpayee said he had an old acquaintance with hospitals, having stayed there before but now he hoped he would not be required to be hospitalised again. The staff of the hospital believed it was their duty to serve patients, he said. Twice he expressed his thanks to the doctors and nurses, especially, Dr. C.S. Ranawat, Dr. Laud and Dr. S.E. Udwardia.

Earlier, Mr. K. M. Gharda, chairman of the Breach Candy

Hospital and other directors called on Mr. Vajpayee in his room to wish him well.

The Prime Minister was wheeled into a special enclosure erected for the media in the hospital compound. The enclosure was bedecked with BJP posters proclaiming, "Atalji, we love you" and "unshakable trust of the Mumbaiites: Atalji is developing the country." The party had displayed laminated pictures of Mr. Vajpayee being sworn in by the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, and the Prime Minister amidst soldiers on the Kargil front.

The October 10 surgery had become a big media event, not without BJP connivance. Even in the media enclosure, the Union Information Technology Minister, was elaborately describing the impending arrival of the Prime Minister and the photo opportunity available. In fact, once Mr. Mahajan asked police officers not to come in the way of the photographers and threatened to send them home if they did.

A number of "get well" banners and arches lined the route to the airport and hundreds thronged the roadside.

The Prime Minister also mentioned a special thanks to the print and electronic media which had kept the people informed of his progress and brought about a lot of goodwill to him.

## 'I'll repay debt to media'

PTI reports:

In a 10-minute address to reporters, Mr. Vajpayee hinted at speedy implementation of the recommendations of the Manisana wage board for journalists and non-journalists. "I am indebted to the media and want to repay it soon," he said. "The media has always expressed good wishes to me and I am thankful to it," Mr. Vajpayee said.

The Union Labour Minister, Mr. Satyanarain Jatiya, had last week stated in Jaipur that the recommendations of the wage board would be modified and placed before the Cabinet before the winter session of Parliament, slated to begin on November 20. The Labour Ministry would complete incorporating certain modifications in the final report before Deepavali and send it to the concerned ministries, including law and justice and information and broadcasting, for their opinion.

THE HINDU

23 OCT 2000

# PM briefed on Kashmir, Pak to raise issue at UN

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Aug 31. — The Prime Minister visited the Operations Room at Army Headquarters today, as part of preparations for his US visit, where senior officials briefed him on the situation in J&K.

The Prime Minister's principal secretary and national security adviser, Mr Brijesh Mishra, too was present. The Army top brass reportedly provided him with details on militant activities in the state, the kind of support being extended by Pakistan and the extent of shelling across the LoC.

The Kashmir issue is expected to figure prominently in Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's meetings with President Bill Clinton and other US leaders. His seeking a first-hand account of the situation would point to his desire to be fully updated for those meetings.

(General Pervez Musharraf will highlight Pakistan's dis-

pute with India over Kashmir at the UN General Assembly's millennium summit, says Reuters from Islamabad. A foreign ministry spokesman said Gen. Musharraf would raise the Kashmir issue in his statement at the world leaders' gathering in New York on 6 September.

(Gen. Musharraf will meet at least 12 other heads of states or governments on the summit's sidelines but has no one-on-one meeting scheduled with Mr Bill Clinton or Mr Vajpayee.)

Earlier it had appeared that Mr Vajpayee would have been more than happy to take to the USA evidence of forward movement in the process of talks with militants. But the desire was frustrated after Hizbul Mujahideen backed off from its unconditional ceasefire offer.

Mr Vajpayee is likely to tell US leaders that the formal dialogue process with Pakistan can't be revived till there's clear evidence of Islamabad reducing support to those

spreading violence in J&K, and the rest of the country.

That doesn't mean India will shut its door on militant outfits ready for talks. There may have been no formal moves after Hizbul withdrew its ceasefire, but some contacts continue. This time, the government appears to be playing things on a low key till the basics are firmly settled.

Mr Vajpayee will reportedly project that position to the USA so that it puts additional pressure on Islamabad to create an atmosphere in which the bilateral talks process could be extricated from the rubble that buried it at Kargil.

**PM okay:** A senior orthopaedist, treating Mr Vajpayee, today said there's "nothing abnormal" about the Prime Minister's health and he should be able to leave for the USA on Thursday, says PTI. Mr Vajpayee has been complaining of pain in the knee. "He's suffering from osteoarthritis," the AIIMS director, Dr PK Dave, said.

THE STATESMAN

. 1 SEP 2000

# PMO sets new precedents for PM trip

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Sept. 5:** Preparing for Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's high-profile visit to the United States, the officials at the Prime Minister's Office and the ministry of external affairs have set new precedents.

The government has done away with the usual practice of briefing the media on the eve of Prime Minister's visit. The practice has it that a senior official, mostly the foreign secretary, addresses the press before the Prime Minister's visit. With Mr Vajpayee slated to leave for his US visit early on Thursday, no such briefing has taken place.

Principal secretary to the Prime Minister, Mr

Brajesh Mishra, on Tuesday was scheduled to address the foreign media in New Delhi but the meeting was cancelled at the last minute. Mr Mishra's pre-occupation with Mr Vajpayee's visit was cited to be the reason for the cancellation.

As per the programme, Mr Mishra was to spend around an hour at the Foreign Correspondents' Club talking about the Prime Minister's US visit and addressing queries.

With foreign secretary Lalit Mansingh already in the United States, it was expected that Mr Mishra, who is handling Mr Vajpayee's tour, will talk to the media about various aspects of the visit and India's expectations from the US leadership. So far, New Delhi has put forth its

point of view only through a series of television interviews given by external affairs minister Jaswant Singh before he left for New York.

In the absence of top officials, it was left to the MEA spokesperson to speak about the US visit who said that India's concerns over Pakistan-sponsored cross-border terrorism, nuclear issues, and initiatives to bolster bilateral economic cooperation, particularly in the information technology and energy sectors, will figure high on the agenda during Mr Vajpayee's meeting with US President Bill Clinton.

The Prime Minister's schedule during the visit was released on Tuesday. As a number of changes were made in Mr Vajpayee's itinerary, the schedule was not released earlier.

THE ASIAN AGE

- 6 SEP 2001

# My right to be swayamsevak cannot be taken away, says PM

By Dileep Padgaonkar

NEW YORK: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee had to do some tight-rope walking here on Saturday when he was called upon to respond to a demand from an influential Hindu saint that his government must respect the sentiments of the majority and give the go-ahead to construct a Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Addressing a large gathering of people of Indian origin on Staten Island, Mr Vajpayee sought to deftly turn the tables on Swami Satyamitrananda by reminding him that the people of India had not given the BJP a majority in Parliament.

Should it obtain a two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha it would be his endeavour to fulfil India's dreams.

There was no direct promise to build the Ram temple but the context in which that statement was made is bound to raise the hackles of the BJP's allies and give the opposition a pretext to pummel the government.

The Staten Island get-together was organised by several organisations who are part of, or are close to, the sangh parivar. Leading the group was the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) which has gained in influence in North America in recent years. Relations between the VHP and the Vajpayee government have experienced some strains and stresses over the past few months on a host of issues, including attacks on Christians and the construction of the Ram temple.

Mr Vajpayee had to make sure that he did not alienate the BJP's core constituency. At the same time he could not be seen to be wholly identified with it given the susceptibilities of his NDA allies.

The core constituency was present in full regalia: 108 saints were at hand to mark the 108th anniversary of Swami Vivekananda's stir-

ring speech at the World Parliament of Religions held in Chicago. Indeed, Staten Island was awash with patriotic fervour of a distinctly saffron hue. The organisers had made sure that all the hard-line speeches were made before the arrival of the Prime Minister. Apart from his ambivalent response to the demand for constructing the Ram temple, Mr Vajpayee resorted to a clever play on words yet again when he spoke of his association with the RSS. If he ceased to be in government, he said, he would become a *swayamsevak* once again. But he added that he would be the nation's *swayamsevak*.

Belying concern about his health, Mr Vajpayee, delivering an impromptu speech in chaste Hindi,

was at his eloquent best, not least when he spoke of how the atmosphere had changed for the better after Pokhran II and how Indo-US relations were on an upswing.

But not all the beauty of his prose or all the felicity of his delivery could detract attention from the fact that he found himself in a rather tight spot.

Whether his semantic skills and diplomatic finesse will convince those who are critical of the sangh parivar within and outside his government is a moot point. Mr Vajpayee will have some explaining to do when he next meets the press. His aides were busy telling media persons that the Prime Minister's statements in Staten Island must be seen in perspective. While he was aware of the nature of his audience, he had said nothing which he has not been saying before.

On Saturday evening, however, such thoughts were not on the minds of the thousands who had turned up to listen to a man who inspires a great deal of affection.

► See Edit: Talking About Talks, Page 10



**VAJPAYEE  
YATRA**

## HARD TALK

- PM does tight-rope walking on temple issue
- Justifies Pokhran test
- Says Indo-US ties are on an upswing

# Vajpayee pledges he will continue as a swayamsevak

## No one can take away my right to remain a swayamsevak, he says in New York

BY SUMAN GUHA MAZUMDER

**New York, Sept. 10:** From a small canopied dais on the South Beach opening into the Atlantic Ocean, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee declared that he may not remain a Prime Minister some day, but no one could take away his "right to remain a swayamsevak."

"Today I am the Prime Minister, tomorrow I won't be. There are plenty of such examples in Delhi. But nobody can take away my right to remain a swayamsevak," Mr Vajpayee said amid thunderous applause by an estimated 5,000 people had gathered at Staten Island here.

The occasion was the first and the only public reception of the Prime Minister in the United States since he was announced by the Indian American community with support from the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

"Today I have come here not as the Prime Minister, but as the servant of India," Mr Vajpayee said in Hindi. The Prime Minister, who spoke briefly while seated, was flanked by external affairs minister Jaswant Singh and Mr Mukund Modi, chairman of the reception committee. Indian ambassador to the US Naresh Chandra and Bawa Jain, secretary general of the Millennium Peace Summit, were also on the dais.

About 100 sadhus and swamis in saffron and white robes packed another dais next to Mr Vajpayee to listen to him. The religious leaders present were members of the 103-member strong Indian delegation to the Millennium Peace Summit that ended in the United Nations last week. Among those present was VHP general secretary Ashok Singhal, who addressed the gathering briefly before Mr Vajpayee

arrived for the reception. As the dusk slowly set in on the shore of the Atlantic and strains of national song *Vande Mataram* rang in the air there were ecstatic cries of *Bharat mata ki jai* and *Jai shree Ram*.

A group of 17 women, their hands holding earthen lamps, sang a song as they gave a ceremonial welcome to the Prime Minister who came from Waldorf-Astoria hotel in Manhattan in a 12-car motorcade to attend the event in South Beach. Security was extremely tight with police helicopters occasionally hovering about the beach and policeman standing with binoculars behind the Prime Minister's dais to watch

out for any suspicious movement in the crowd. US Secret Service agents were also present.

After two days of diplomatic activities and bilateral engagements since his arrival in New York on September 7, the Prime Minister looked somewhat relaxed as he sat through the reception. Unlike as in the last two days, Mr Vajpayee did not read any prepared statement and his brief address was marked by humour and anecdotes.

"You people did not invite me to the peace summit, perhaps wondering what a politician has got to do with peace," Mr Vajpayee said in a light vein.

Then he changed his tone. "But there is a very deep connection between politicians and peace," Mr Vajpayee said. Without naming Pakistan he described how he started the Lahore peace process with enthusiasm and came to face Kargil conflict in the end.

The Prime Minister made several references to the strength and successes of Indian Americans, especially those in the information technology industry and how the doors of the world were opening one by one for India and Indians. "The country is taking major steps today towards self-reliance," he said. "If people in the country give us support, we will fulfil our dreams."

Much before Mr Vajpayee's arrival, the sprawling ball park on the edge of the Atlantic had turned into a fairground of sorts with people scattered all over the

place. Many sat on grass chatting with friends, sipping coke distributed free by the organisers, while the more religious-minded listened with rapt attention to the brief lectures by the assortment of swamis and sadhus. The reception was followed by a sit-down dinner however Mr Vajpayee and his entourage, however, left, after his address. From Sunday, till September 13, when he is scheduled to go to Washington, Mr Vajpayee has no officially declared engagement. Sources said that the Prime Minister may undergo check-ups for his nagging knee problem on Monday. He may also have a meeting with a select group of members from the American Association of Physicians of Indian Origin, one of the most powerful Indian American professional organisations in this country with over 3,000 doctor members. (IANS)



PM IN US

# Vajpayee ill, cuts short Nagpur visit

SUDESH K VERMA  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NAGPUR, Aug. 27. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee could not spend even one full day at the three-day BJP convention here because of pains in knee joints. It seems that he has not fully recovered from the peptic ulcer for which he was operated upon twice, a BJP leader said.

In a statement issued today, Mr Pramod Mahajan said: "The Prime Minister had been experiencing pain in both his knee joints for past few days due to exacerbation of his osteo arthritis." He had been advised rest after the Parliament session. He however, chose to attend the BJP national convention and installation of the new president, Mr Bangaru Laxman. Since last night the pain had aggravated causing him severe discomfort. He agreed to return to Delhi on doctor's request.

Mr Vajpayee left the meeting venue around 1.30 p.m., after delivering a 10-minute speech. After that he rushed straight to the airport. The idea of a short speech was suggested to him by Mr Mahajan. However, the Prime Minister was composed and used the wits he is famous for. Before this, he took rest for half-an-hour in his special room behind the venue while Mr Laxman was delivering his presidential speech.

A member of the Prime Minister's entourage said there

was nothing serious and it was just exhaustion due to the hectic Parliament session and his busy schedule. Even in Nagpur today, he had a hectic schedule. He went to visit the RSS headquarters at Resham Bagh — the *Diksha Bhoomi*. The weather was quite hot and it must have added to his pain.

His departure from Delhi for the meeting yesterday was



Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee

delayed because of his illness. "I felt I will not be able to come here but my love for Nagpur forced me to come", Mr Vajpayee told the national council meeting, after Mr Laxman's speech.

His schedule in Nagpur included a public meeting this evening and the valedictory address at the council meeting. Now Mr Laxman and Mr LK Advani are to hold the fort in his absence.

Mr Vajpayee's health has been a topic of speculation in the BJP and government circle. A BJP leader ruled out that he was suffering from cancer and said the ailment might be due to the peptic ulcer which is not completely cured.

After returning from Nagpur, the Prime Minister spent a restful day at his Race Course Road house, SNS adds from Delhi.

He told reporters at Delhi airport this afternoon that there was no change in the schedule for his USA visit next month. He said he was "all right, and feeling fine." No official engagements had been scheduled here for today and tomorrow, since he had planned to be in Nagpur, an official said.

In Nagpur, Mr Bangaru Laxman cautioned partymen against machinations of the Opposition and asserted that there was need to rework party's relationship with Muslims to fill the space vacated by the Congress and other parties. "The BJP has not yet become the preferred party of governance in the eyes of the people," he said, reports PTI.

**Yashwantspeak:** The Union finance minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha, in an attempt to silence the critics including the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch, said the Centre did not use the funds received by disinvestment to cover up budget deficits, adds UNI.

■ More reports on page 8

THE STATESMAN

28 AUG 2000



# Big hearts meet in a small home

HT Correspondent  
Calcutta, July 6

9 PM 11/1 7/7

THIS WAS the shot all shutterbugs were waiting to click—a Prime Minister touching a mother's feet.

As the clock struck 5.32 pm, a convoy of cars sped into the narrow lane off Harish Chatterjee Street, where Mamata Banerjee's humble dwelling stands.

A posse of policemen had scanned every inch of the neighbourhood and ensured things were in order for the date of the day. Last-minute security checks over, they stood taut and alert.

The buzz of excitement was on the rooftops as crowds jostled for a glimpse of the Prime Minister. And, there were hundreds of them.

As the Prime Minister emerged from his white bullet-proof Tata Sierra, Mamata's mother Gayatri Banerjee welcomed him with a beige *angavastram* made of Murshidabad silk. The SPG men stood guard. A hush descended on the locality as the Prime Minister bent down to touch the feet of Mamata's mother.

But as mother and daughter escorted Vajpayee to their tiled-roof house, conch-shells were blown, shattering the calm.

In a 10 foot by 10 foot room, the country's most powerful man settled down on a chair, as Mamata stood nearby.

Though there was quite a spread of Bengali delicacies ready for the Prime Minister, he preferred to limit himself to a glass of sherbet and a cup of tea.

As the Prime Minister sat chatting with Gayatri and Mamata, his granddaughter and son-in-law Ranjan Bhattacharya were in the adjacent room with Ananth Kumar, Union Minister for Tourism and Culture. In this four foot by eight foot room, Mamata meets her personal guests and sleeps when she is in the city.

Twenty minutes later, Vajpayee stepped out of



the house and said he wished the people of West Bengal the very best. Reporters gathered outside Mamata's house urged him to take a couple of questions. Initially, he refused and looked at Mamata. She smiled back, as if coaxing him to answer only two. This time, he agreed. But there was a rider.

"This is a personal visit. I wouldn't like to talk politics."

Asked about the four PSUs in the State facing closure, he said: "This we will discuss later."

When this correspondent asked him if he would take steps to check the worsening law and order in the State, the Prime Minister said: "I won't answer that one."

The quota of questions over, Vajpayee got into his car, but not before Mamata told him: "Let the CMC board be formed. I will return to Delhi."

And, there were presents for the Prime Minister too — two pots of rosogollas, a dhoti and kurta, Hindi and English translations of the Gitanjali and a collection of Tagore's short stories in Hindi. Mamata accompanied the Prime Minister to the airport to bid him goodbye.

"*Ghar chhota hai, lekin Mamata ka dil bahut bada hain* (Her house is small, but her heart is very big)," a moved Vajpayee said before leaving.

But away from the media glare, Gayatri Banerjee was still dazed. "I could not believe that such a big man would visit our house. We are poor people and our house is so small for the Prime Minister of India," she said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

By Malabika Bhattacharya

# Communists intolerant, says PM KD-1

By Malabika Bhattacharya

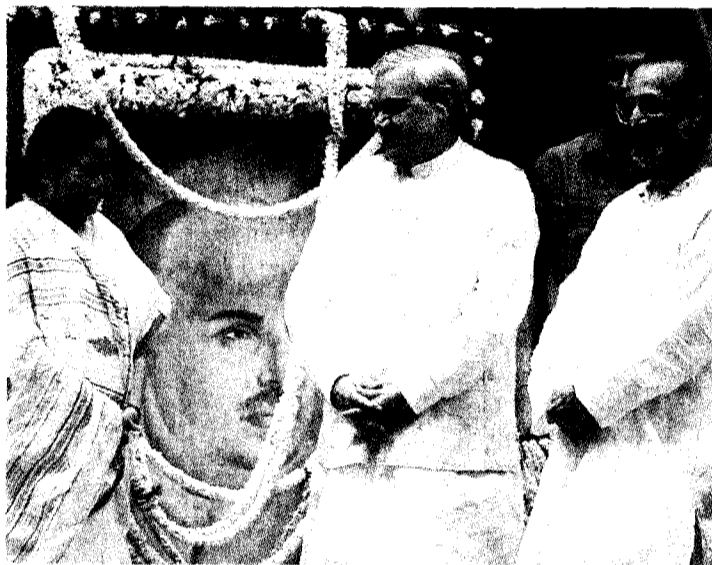
**CALCUTTA, JULY 6.** The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, today chided the ruling communists in West Bengal for staying away from the birth centenary function of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee, an early architect of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh.

Though the Deputy Chief Minister, Mr. Buddhadev Bhattacharya and the Governor, Mr. Viren J. Shah, received Mr. Vajpayee at the airport in the morning, the Prime Minister expressed his mind at the function in caustic terms after accusing the communists of intolerance.

Mr. Vajpayee, who inaugurated the function, spoke mostly on the need for tolerance in the era of coalition politics.

Mr. Bhattacharya later reacted to Mr. Vajpayee's speech dubbing his criticisms "hollow" as the BJP itself could be faulted on that count. "Do they have religious tolerance? Or else why would there be a Babri Mosque demolition?"

Mr. Vajpayee said that the communists should realise that in a multi-party system, ideological



**The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, with the Railway Minister, Ms Mamata Banerjee, and the West Bengal Governor, Mr. Viren J. Shah, at the birth centenary celebrations of Shyama Prasad Mukherjee in Calcutta.**

differences were normal. "But, that does not mean one should not pay respect to great men like Shyama Prasad Mukherjee."

To prove how magnanimous the BJP was, Mr. Vajpayee said

that his party had paid tributes to E.M.S. Namboodiripad, the communist leader, without hesitation.

Mr. Bhattacharya, he said, had explained why the communists had decided to stay away from the

function. The Deputy Chief Minister had told him that he could not attend the function because of sharp ideological differences with Shyama Prasad Mukherjee. "I would not like to criticise him in your presence," Mr. Bhattacharya had said.

Taking off from the issue of the communists' absence in the function, Mr. Vajpayee said that political parties especially those in the Opposition should realise that coalition politics had become the order of the day and parties should come together at least in some areas in the nation's interest. "We have entered the era of coalition politics. We should forget our differences at some point and work together for the country's benefit," Mr. Vajpayee said.

Mr. Vajpayee said the concept of coalition could be traced to the time when Shyama Prasad Mukherjee joined the coalition government of Fazlul Haque in Bengal. "The Ganatantrik Morcha he (Shyama Prasad Mukherjee) formed then has now taken the shape of the NDA."

**PM visits Mamata's house: Page 14**

THE HINDU

57 JUL 2000

# Take it or leave it, Farooq has to decide

## Vajpayee refuses to budge on J&K issue

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 5 JULY

**T**HE PRIME Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, hardened his position vis-à-vis the National Conference (NC) on Wednesday, saying that it was for Mr Farooq Abdullah to decide whether he wanted to remain part of the NDA or pull out of it following the Cabinet's rejection of the autonomy resolution on Tuesday.

Mr Vajpayee, while speaking to reporters in Chennai, said the Cabinet's decision ruling out a return to the pre-1953 position was final and irrevocable, and that he had conveyed that categorically to the Jammu and Kashmir chief minister when the latter called on him on Tuesday afternoon.

The Prime Minister's stance definitely looks harder compared to the position he had taken just after Mr Abdullah got the State Assembly to pass the resolution. In what appeared to be an effort to conceal his disappointment and anger at the chief minister's decision to go ahead with voting on the resolution despite an assurance to the contrary, Mr Vajpayee had denied that the passage of the resolution amounted to a "breach of trust" and that it will vitiate the Centre's ties with the Abdullah regime.

On Wednesday, however, he went to the extent of leaving the choice of quitting the NDA to the NC president in the wake of the Union Cabinet's scrapping his autonomy demand. This shows that the government is position-

autonomy issue well.

The Prime Minister, in fact, declared on Wednesday, his readiness for a debate if "any member raised the issue." On Tuesday, the Cabinet had taken note of the intention of the Opposition. The feeling was that the government should not have any difficulty in dealing with the offensive that the Opposition might launch.

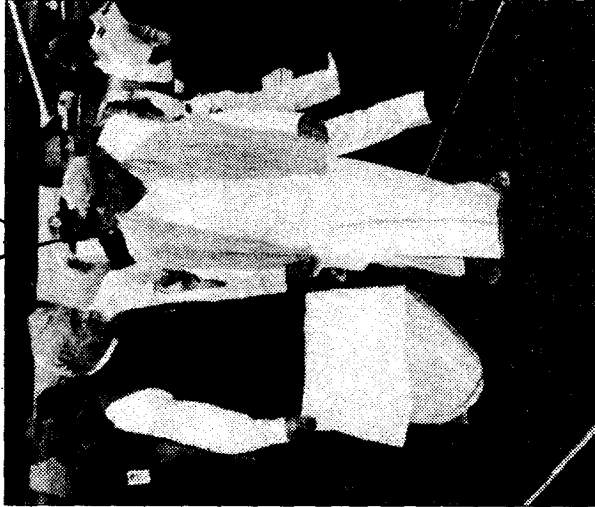
The confidence comes from the pro-autonomy observations and assurances held out by the erstwhile Congress and United Front governments. For, it was former Congress prime minister Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao who had

declared that "sky is the limit for autonomy" to Jammu and Kashmir. His successor Mr H.D. Deve Gowda too had promised maximum autonomy.

By recalling the positions taken by these two Prime Ministers, the government hopes to take the wind out of the Opposition's sails.

The parallel tough-talking against the National Conference is expected to blunt the assertion that the NDA cannot escape the blame for what one of its own ally the NC had done by demanding a reversal to the pre-1953 position.

Reacting to the Cabinet decision, the Congress had criticised the government on Tuesday, for handling of the autonomy resolution saying that it exposed the several contradictions within first its own constituent had got the "completely unsustainable and untenable" resolution moved and then the government said it could be discussed by Parliament only to opt for its rejection by the Cabinet later.



**TOUGH TALK: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee with Tamil Nadu chief minister M. Karunanidhi in Chennai**

PTI

ing itself for a debate in Parliament and is equipping its arsenal to deal with Opposition attacks that it did not handle the

Congress and Opposition Congress prime minister Mr P.V. Narasimha Rao who had

# President pinches, short and sharp

FROM DIPTOSH MAJUMDAR

**New Delhi, July 12: Living up to his reputation, President K.R. Narayanan today made the Centre shuffle in discomfiture by raising questions on the attacks on Christians and the impact of liberalisation.**

In his inaugural address at the Governors' conference, Narayanan spoke at length on "disharmonious tendencies in Indian society (read Christian-bashing)" and his concerns about the "fruits of development reaching the

poor" — a swipe at the fast-track liberalisation which, he believes, is leaving millions in the lurch.

However, both Rashtrapati Bhavan and South Block sought to play down the contents of Narayanan's discourse.

Like his past speeches, Narayanan's inaugural address was short but loaded with immunes. The President spoke about the fissiparous tendencies, which the BJP interpreted as a reference to the acts of sedition being carried out by ISI agents in India.

But "disharmony" in society

as referred to by the President could only mean communal enmity, a problem that is threatening to snowball in several states in the north and in Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

In the audience this morning at Vigyan Bhavan, where the President delivered his speech, were Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, his colleagues in charge of home affairs and defence, L.K. Advani and George Fernandes, and other Cabinet members.

This is the fourth time that the President has spoken out against

the government's policies. Earlier this year, he had provoked BJP hardliners with his three speeches aimed at the arms of the government — the executive, legislature and judiciary. He had accused all three of not doing enough for the nation.

Since then, Narayanan had remained quiet, but it appears that he used the Governors' meet to criticise the government's efforts to brush off the attacks on Christians and underplay poverty levels by insisting that liberalisation would benefit all.

Narayanan said that economically and technologically the country was well poised and would generate much growth. He pointed out how during his recent trip to China he had heard people talk of India's economic potential and how he himself believed in it.

The President used the word "caution" when he issued the warning against divisive and disharmonious tendencies.

He has long been a critic of the Centre's policy vis-à-vis the minorities and weaker sections, but this particular statement was also

an alert against the recent spate of violence against Christians.

Narayanan, who had earlier suggested that liberalisation should have a human face, today said economic development ought to be planned in such a way that the poorer sections benefit from it. He has made it clear in earlier speeches that the government should be extra careful about opening up the industrial sector.

Narayanan's detractors have been writing off his criticisms as outbursts from a Nehruvian socialist while others have found in-

trinsic similarity between what the President has been saying and what the RSS or even the Left parties have been harping on.

The President's agenda, which the government felt went beyond the constitutional authority of Rashtrapati Bhavan, had a flip side as well.

The speech prompted Governors with past Sangh parivar leanings to push through the BJP's theory that the ISI was behind the recent blasts in churches.

■ **Picture on Page 6**

THE TIMES OF INDIA

## Text of PM's statement

**NEW DELHI, JULY 28.** The following is the text of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's statement in Parliament today, clarifying his Government's position on the former Law Minister, Mr. Ram Jethmalani's controversial statement.

"Certain statements have been made by Mr. Ram Jethmalani, former Union Minister for Law, Justice and Company Affairs, with regard to the Chief Justice of India and the Attorney-General of India. I have gone through those statements. My Government does not share the views of Mr. Jethmalani with regard to the subject matter on which he has spoken. We completely disagree with his perception of the facts. The Government believes in promoting a harmonious relationship between the different wings of State. Without going into the question of the correctness of any possible view involved on the issues on which Mr. Jethmalani corresponded with the Honourable Chief Justice of India, I was of the opinion that even the difference of opinion between the Chief Justice and the Law Minister should not create any imbalance in the harmonious relationship. Thus, in order to ensure that this harmonious relationship is not only maintained but strengthened, I exercised my prerogative and asked Mr. Jethmalani to resign. I have gone into the text of his statements issued yesterday, 27th July, against the Chief Justice of India and the Attorney-General of India. I reiterate that my Government completely disagrees with his perception." — UNI

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THE HINDU

29 JUL 2000

# PM: Jethmalani's conduct improper

29/7  
Leak to be investigated

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 28

PRIME MINISTER Atal Behari Vajpayee today strongly stated in both the Houses of Parliament that his Government had unambiguously disassociated itself from sacked Law Minister Ram Jethmalani's observations on the Chief Justice of India and the Attorney General. The PM said a committee of the Chief Vigilance Officer, Legal Affairs (Legislative Department) would investigate how the confidential documents had been leaked and who was responsible for it.

The PM said he agreed with the members that the former Minister's conduct had not been proper.

Mr Vajpayee said he had sought Mr Jethmalani's resignation "to maintain a harmonious relationship between the judiciary and the executive". "I have gone into the text of his (Jethmalani's) statements yesterday, 27th July, against the Chief Justice of India and the Attorney General of India. I reiterate that my Government completely disagrees with his perception," Mr Vajpayee said.

The Opposition, however, wanted Mr Jethmalani's prosecution for violating the oath of secrecy. The Congress walked out from the Lok Sabha when the party leaders were not allowed to ask questions.

Party deputy leader Madhavrao Scindia said the Opposition had a right to seek clarifications on the violations of the Official Secrets Act by Mr Jethmalani. RJD leader Raghu-vansh Prasad Singh Yadav and RPI leader Ramdas Athavale followed the Congress in the walk-out.

In the RS, the Opposition raised queries whether the Attorney-General serving the Government

could be permitted to tender advice to private companies.

Before the Prime Minister's response, Law Minister Arun Jaitley told the House that there were precedents during the Congress and United Front Governments when law officers of the Government had been permitted to take up private work. The Congress members including former Law Minister H. R. Bhardwaj disagreed and demanded that the Attorney-General be asked to appear before the House to explain his conduct.

## PMSPEAK

- My Government does not share the views of Shri Jethmalani.
- Difference of opinion between the Chief Justice and the Law Minister should not create any imbalance in the harmonious relationship between the judiciary and the executive.
- I exercised my prerogative and asked Shri Jethmalani to resign.

Mr Kapil Sibal (Congress) asked how the Attorney-General could advise the Hinduja on their Andhra Pradesh power project when the Government was conducting investigations against them in the Bofors case.

Responding to issues raised on the Bofors probe, the Prime Minister said there was no let-up in the investigations although it was a complicated affair. The Hinduja had changed their citizenship. The Government was trying to get their statement. If there was delay, it was due to administrative reasons, he stated.

The PM disclosed that the Attorney-General, in his advice on the MS Shoes case, did not give opinion for the prosecution of Mr Jethmalani. In fact his opinion was "in favour of Jethmalani."

"However the Attorney-General did want further investigations into the leakage of the Minister's papers and their reproduction by MS Shoes in the case against the Government.

Mr Vajpayee said his friend Mr Jethmalani had not learnt the art of keeping silent. He had been told several times to keep quiet on issues which did not come under his jurisdiction, but without the desired effect.

## Prosecute me and I'll teach you law, says Jethmalani

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 28

MR RAM Jethmalani delivered a sharp riposte to the Government today for its decision to hold a vigilance inquiry into the leakage of Law Ministry documents annexed to the statement he had intended to make in the Rajya Sabha.

"What do you hold an inquiry for when I have already said that I have copies of the documents. If this amounts to theft or a breach of the Official Secrets Act, please prosecute me, for at least then I will have a chance to teach you the law," Mr Jethmalani said.

He dismissed the proposed probe as a symptom of the Government's "mental" fatigue, a manifestation of the "colonial concept" of secrecy it insisted on practising after having introduced in Parliament a bill for freedom of information.

"These are the tactics of moral cowards who are willing to wound but are afraid to strike," thundered Mr Jethmalani.

He maintained that Ministers were free to express views on matters pending a final decision of the Cabinet. Moreover, nothing could be out of the Law Ministry's domain as all laws were drafted by this Ministry.

About the petitions he examined as Law Minister in a particular case involving the CJI's family members, Mr Jethmalani said the matter cannot be wished away. At the same time, he clarified that he never said whether the allegations were right or wrong.

"But the fact that no action is taken on complaints against judges is a matter of great public concern. I have always advocated that the Judiciary should seek harmony with the people and not the Government," he opined.