

Jalpaiguri braces for Kamtapuri challenge

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JALPAIGURI, Aug. 31. — Jalpaiguri district administration officials perceive distinct communal overtones in the latest strategy of the Kamtapur Peoples Party in their agitation for a separate state.

In what is being considered a shift in the party's stance, the KPP supporters are becoming increasingly strident for the ouster of Bengalis from its strongholds in the plains of North Bengal, particularly in and around Kumargramduar in the Alipurduar sub-division of Jalpaiguri district.

The KPP president, Mr Atul Roy, also seems to endorse the party supporters' line of action in Kumargramduar.

In a recent interview with **The Statesman**, Mr Roy categorically stated that the Kamtapuris would shortly launch an all-out agitation to stake their claims over the land, water and forest resources of North Bengal.

Describing the Bengalis as outsiders, Mr Roy added that the views postulated by the deputy chief minister, Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya, defied historical facts regarding the origin of the Kamtapuri people and their language.

According to Mr Bhattacharya, the Kamtapuris are nothing but a part of the

Seven arrested for Ulfa link

MALDA, Aug. 31. — Seven persons, suspected to have links with the Ulfa, were arrested from Bamongram under Kaliachak thana area yesterday. Out of them five are residents of Dhubri in Assam.

Local police authorities are in touch with their counterparts in Dhubri and have sought more information on five youths belonging to that region, the additional SP, Mr N. Kaushik, said.

The police suspect that those arrested were planning either a major dacoity or some subversive activity in this district after having arrived from Assam. — SNS

Bengali diaspora and what they claim to be a separate language is "needed a Bengali dialect spoken in north Bengal and also in certain parts of Bangladesh."

But even as the war of words between the ruling CPI-M and the KPP rages Jalpaiguri district administration officials have toned up security measures in view of the KPP's latest ploy.

The divisional commissioner of the Jalpaiguri division, Mr

AK Jain, said: "The state government is pulling out all stops to meet the challenges posed by these secessionist forces in view of the geo-strategic location of north Bengal."

Intelligence network in the international border areas with Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh has been considerably strengthened recently, Mr Jain added.

Added to this, the state government's decision to sanction four battalions of Rapid Action Force personnel might subsequently be raised by another three to prevent the inter-party clashes between the KPP and the CPI-M supporters.

Expecting the newly sanctioned RAF battalions to be stationed in North Bengal shortly, the divisional commissioner said strict vigil is kept over the KPP supporters' movements especially in the sensitive border areas of the region.

Detonators seized: A huge quantity of Detonators was seized from two persons belonging to Bihar at the Mohitnagar Customs check post near here last night. The men were arrested under the Explosives Substance Act.

According to the district magistrate, Mr Subrata Gupta, 2,450 pieces of Detonators were found in two bags being carried by the men.

They were on their way to Assam.

THE STATESMAN

SEP 2000

Gorkha council sore with Bengal govt.

By Nirmalya Banerjee
The Times of India News Service

DARJEELING: Twelve years after the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was formed, official circles in Darjeeling and Calcutta differ sharply on how much of the accord still remains to be implemented.

Senior officials in Calcutta say all the government departments promised to be transferred to the council have been handed over. DGHC functionaries in Darjeeling, however, assert that this is not the case. According to DGHC officials, two departments have not been transferred: land and transport, including development of transport. According to the accord, land was to be the first department on which the council should have had executive powers. The powers promised cover allotment and use of any land other than reserved forests.

Control over the land department is important for the DGHC as without it the council has no power to sanction "pattas" to landless people nor any jurisdiction over the tea gardens in the Darjeeling hills. "Look at the Bodoland autonomous council. When it was functioning, the tea gardens were under its jurisdiction," is what DGHC councillors are fond of repeating.

"The government orders necessary to bring the administrative set-up of these two departments under the DGHC have not yet been issued," says a senior DGHC official. A senior land department official of the state government in Darjeeling agrees with what the DGHC asserts.

Submission of utilization certifi-

icates for funds allotted to the DGHC is another irritant in the relations between the government and the council. While officials in Calcutta say all the utilization certificates have not been submitted, DGHC principal secretary Prashant dismisses this as a "cock and bull story". According to him, "All the utilization certificates are up to date till July 31, 2000."

Even if there are some adverse audit reports on DGHC accounts, Mr Prashant dismisses them as minor ones. "Which government department does not have comments from the audit," he asks. Council officials say "there is a primitive desire to paint the DGHC black". They want the special central assistance from Delhi — now routed through the state government — to come directly to the DGHC. The entire amount of the SCA sanctioned in recent years has not reached the council. Officials suspect that some funds may have been diverted. "The hill area sub-plan is prepared by the DGHC. It goes to the Planning Commission directly. Why should the money not come to the council directly?" they ask.

Council officials say allotments from the state plan for some of the transferred departments has been ridiculously low. "For tourism we have got Rs 25 lakh. Last year this was Rs 15 lakh, though Darjeeling is the most important tourist destination in West Bengal," an official says. "With this, we cannot even maintain the existing facilities. For sports, the plan allotment from the state government in the past 12 years has been zero."

Muslims see rhetoric, not 'ideological shift'

By Hasan Suroor

NEW DELHI, AUG. 31. Ironically while the more conservative Muslims are tempted to be flattered, if not taken in by the BJP's new "pro-Muslim" "line", the liberal opinion is not impressed in the least, saying the friendly noises at Nagpur were essentially an exercise at "image building".

No doubt, the new BJP president, Mr. Bangaru Laxman's rather evocative phrase, calling Muslims "the blood of our blood and the flesh of our flesh", is seen as a pleasant departure from the party's normal perception of the community, but nothing more should be read into it, according to serious analysts.

Prof. Irfan Habib, noted Left-wing historian, was extremely doubtful whether Mr. Laxman's statement would lead to any significant shift in the BJP's approach to Muslims. He recalled that this was not the first time the BJP had spoken in a manner not generally associated with it. Some time ago, it declared that it was committed to "Gandhian socialism", but in the event its policies turned out to be neither Gandhian nor socialist.

Mr. Laxman's remarks, he said, seemed to be an attempt to assure the Western world on the eve of the Prime Minister's visit to the U.S. that it was not "anti-minorities". It could also be an attempt to impress the Muslims on the eve of the Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh. "Probably, the party thinks that if it doesn't sound so determinedly anti-Muslim it could persuade some Muslims to vote for it".

In Aligarh, he pointed out, there had been no palpable impact of the BJP chief's remark, and he doubted whether it would swing the Muslim opinion in favour of the BJP overnight. Words, he said, must be matched by action on the ground if the BJP wanted to really reach out to the Muslims.

Another eminent Muslim scholar, Prof. Mushirul

Hasan, strongly cautioned against interpreting the Nagpur "rhetoric" as an "ideological shift" in the BJP. Mr. Laxman's statement, he pointed out, was clearly driven by electoral compulsions and was a conscious attempt to project a "softer" image of itself, both among the minorities and within the National Democratic Alliance. "The BJP wants to project itself as a liberal party in order to broaden its appeal to its NDA allies", he said.

The proof of the pudding, Prof. Hasan remarked, was in the eating. It would be interesting to watch whether Mr. Laxman's "BJP-Muslim bhai bhai" line would be translated into action. "Would it be reflected in the Sangh Parivar's approach to school curriculum for instance or in the policies of recruitment to the police and in other sensitive areas?" he wondered.

However, he acknowledged that Mr. Laxman's statement was significant that, for the first time the BJP seemed to recognise the social and economic backwardness of the Muslims. At the same time it "repudiated" the BJP's "bogey" of minorityism.

Mr. Javed Habib, a former student leader of the Aligarh Muslim University who now heads Bharti Majlis, described the Nagpur "development" as significant or "pleasantly strange". He was particularly impressed with the BJP's formulation that the Muslims had been victims of the Congress's "vote bank" politics, and thought that this provided a basis for a maturer political approach towards Muslims. But first the BJP should talk to the RSS and its other Sangh Parivar members who continued to be hostile to the minorities, he said.

The Muslim on the street, meanwhile, is still debating what to make of Mr. Laxman's speech and it would take some concrete action on the ground by the BJP to convince the community of its new credentials.

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Religion & Secularism

1 SEP 2000

Call us nationalist, not Hindu: Bangaru

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 1. — Mr Bangaru Laxman has appealed to the foreign media to stop referring to the BJP as a "Hindu nationalist or a right-wing party". The descriptions were erroneous and misrepresented the BJP in the international arena, the BJP chief told a gathering organised by the foreign correspondents' club. "These labels create pre-conceived notions about our party in your audiences."

According to Mr Laxman, the BJP was "nationalist" — not a Hindu organisation. It did not belong to one religious community; nor was it a "prisoner of any dogma". The BJP "was wedded to India's first principle", Mr Laxman said.

"We are a nationalist party, and we are proud of this fact. Our vision embraces every reli-

CONGRESS DEMAND

NEW DELHI, Sept. 1. — The Congress today demanded an assurance from the Prime Minister that India would not commit itself to any new agreement with the USA over which there was no political consensus in the country. Signing of the CTBT particularly, was a matter on which Mr AB Vajpayee should take the nation and Opposition parties into confidence before leaving for the USA. — SNS

gious, linguistic and ethnic community in our vast and diverse nation." The terms "right-wing and left-wing". Mr Laxman said, had no meaning or relevance in today's political and economic environment.

Attack on Cong: The BJP today said the Congress had panicked after a Dalit was elected its party chief, and the new president had called for winning over the minorities.

Party spokesman, Mr M Venkaiah Naidu, lampooned the Congress culture that was projecting Mrs Priyanka Vadra's new-born son as the party's new torch-bearer. Contrast this with Mr Laxman's election, he said — and the BJP, where sincere and efficient workers could rise to the highest party posts.

The Congress had reacted with "panic" to Mr Laxman's call to Muslims and Dalits to join the BJP, Mr Naidu said.

The Congress feared losing these two vote banks, whose condition it had failed to improve even after so many years in power.

THE STATESMAN

Muslim leaders wary of biting Bangaru Laxman's bait

By Sakina Yusuf Khan

NEW DELHI: Bangaru Laxman's overtures to the Muslim community appear to be running into a wall of suspicion and scepticism. The new BJP president has promised that his party would make "all-out efforts" to woo the Muslims. Leaders of the community are not biting. A sampler of some reactions:

□ "Yeh statement Advani se dilwa dein, dugduggi toh unke hi haath mein hai, baki to naachne wale hain (Why don't they get Union home minister L.K. Advani to say this? He calls the shots, the others just dance to his tune)—Ahmed Bukhari, Naib Imam of Jama Masjid

□ "Sops and crumbs—a token Muslim on every delegation, some measly funds for Urdu academics—won't do"—Saiyid Hamid, former vice-chancellor, AMU

□ "I had written to Kushabhau Thakre that the BJP and Muslims cannot wish each other away, there's a need to understand each

other. He didn't consider it worth an acknowledgement. If they've had a change of heart, I don't know"—Tahir Mahmood, former chairman, Minorities Commission.

The message is clear: Muslims are not ready to bite the bait unless it's meaty enough. As a first step, they would want the BJP to start a proper dialogue with the community's leadership to figure out what the party is ready to offer. "If they are willing to do something about the community's educational backwardness and give it its due share in governance and resources, there would be no problems," says Mr Mahmood.

While these leaders do not doubt Mr Laxman's sincerity, they are wondering how much he can actually deliver, given the compulsions of being a part of the Sangh Parivar. Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray has already voiced his ire. Clearly, Mr Laxman will have his work cut out.

"The community is disenchanted with the Congress, but it is looking for something substantial—a review of the position of Urdu and reservations for Muslims. If the BJP comes even halfway up to our expectations, they stand to gain," explains Mr Hamid.

People like Tahir Mahmood see no point in a perpetual confrontation between the country's leading party and the second largest community. But others like Ahmed Bukhari are harder to convince: "A party which dreams of setting up a Hindu 'rastra' cannot be a well-wisher of Muslims," he pronounces.

Dubbing Bangaru Laxman a "puppet president", he says the announcement is merely for the benefit of the international community, with an eye on Prime Minister Vajpayee's U.S. trip. "There's not a single Muslim minister of cabinet rank. And the Places of Worship Bill in U.P. amounts to rubbing salt into past wounds," he adds.

MLAs queer Cong's Jharkhand pitch

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 3. — The Congress is believed to have decided against bidding for power in the new state of Jharkhand with the help of the RJD and JMM, giving in to the demand of partymen from the region that the party should go in for a direct fight with the BJP.

"We can't announce this officially now. But seeing the mood of the party leaders from Jharkhand, the leadership would not like to forcibly enter the race to form government in the new state. The final decision on the matter has been left to Mrs Sonia Gandhi," a senior party leader said.

The Congress is afraid that 10 MLAs from Jharkhand, all ministers now in the Rabri Devi government, may defect once it announces the decision to reject the offer to form a coalition with Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav and Mr Shibu Soren.

This, though the combined strength of the Congress, RJD and JMM is 33, which is 8 short of a simple majority in a

House of 81 members whereas the NDA's strength is 40, just one short of majority.

Most Congress MLAs spoke out against a tie-up with the RJD at a special meeting convened by the AICC here yesterday. Sources close to Mrs Mohsina Kidwai, the AICC General Secretary in charge of Bihar, said the party is likely to go along with the majority view of leaders from the Chhotanagpur area. Congress leaders from the region also want their own PCC to be formed right away.

Mr Thomas Hansda, Regional Congress Committee chief, Mr Niel Tirkey, minister of state in the Rabri Devi government, Mr Vinay Srivastava, general secretary of RCC, Mr Satyendra Jaiswal, Mr JP Chowdhary and Mr Ghulfam Mujibi, present at the meeting, were against a tie-up.

Let there be a direct fight between the Congress and the BJP, the Congressmen decided. Their party should not be used as a launching pad for Mr Laloo Yadav and Mr Shibu Soren, they argued.

There were some like Mr Chandan Bagchi, acting president of the BPCC, and Mr Sarfaraz Ahmed, who favoured an alliance with Mr Laloo Yadav in Jharkhand. But this view did not find favour with most participants.

Mr Thomas Hansda is in the race with three others for the chief's post in the proposed JPCC: Mr Indra Nath Bhagat, Mr Pradip Balmuchu and Mr Bhukhla Bhagat. Mr Bhukhla Bhagat's detractors have, however, said he had once fought Assembly elections as a Jan Sangh nominee.

According to Mr Ghulfam Mujibi, Mrs Mohsina Kidwai assured the assembled leaders that she would "convey the feelings of the Jharkhand leaders to the party president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi".

"When our ministers in Bihar from Jharkhand are ready to sit in the Opposition in the interim assembly of Jharkhand, we should act in a restrained manner in the race to power," a party leader remarked.

Mr Bagun Sumbrai, the veteran tribal leader of Singhbhum

who is now a Cabinet minister, was most vocal in opposing the move to align with the RJD in Jharkhand.

All Congress MLAs from Jharkhand would automatically cease to be ministers of Bihar when the state Assembly is formally segregated from the parent House by October next.

Samata claim: The acting president of the Samata Party, Mrs Jaya Jaitley, said in Jamshedpur today that the NDA would form the government in Jharkhand and that there were no differences between the constituents over the leadership issue.

The BJP with 32 members would be the single largest party in the interim Jharkhand Assembly and is likely to lead the new government.

PCC expulsion: The Bihar PCC president, Mr Chandan Bagchi, has expelled eight leaders for anti-party activities, UNI reports from Patna. The decision was taken following green signal from the disciplinary committee chairman, the state general secretary said here today.

THE STATESMAN

Uttaranchal may have two capitals

BY PURNIMA S. TRIPATHI

New Delhi, Sept. 4: There is confusion about the capital of newly-created Uttaranchal state, with the result that the state might end up having two capitals. The Kaushik Committee, which defined the contours of the state, had recommended Garsain, a little-known place in the Garhwal region.

The place, however, has no infrastructure to speak of so it

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Nainital, Dehra Dun likely to share honour

is virtually impossible to base the government there. "It is impossible to even construct a proper building in that place by November," a UP government official said.

Besides, the place is absolutely inaccessible at the moment, with the road connection in an extremely bad condition. "It takes seven hours to reach the place by

road from Dehra Dun. You obviously cannot have your capital tucked so far away from civilisation," UP government officials said.

They said the choice was narrowing down to Nainital and Dehra Dun. But the pressure from the Garhwal and Kumaon regions for the two places respectively is such that the state might end up

having both as capitals — Dehra Dun as the winter capital and Nainital as the summer capital.

Both the places have the requisite infrastructure to house a government. "Nainital has already served as the summer capital of Uttar Pradesh, we already have a Raj Bhavan there. There are other buildings too

which can be used for running the government without any alteration or modification. Similarly in Dehra Dun too. The city has adequate infrastructure to house the government," senior UP government officials said.

Senior UP government officials said as a consequence of a mini-secretariat in Dehra Dun and Nainital, 11 government departments were already functioning out of

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Uttaranchal's 2 capitals

■ Continued from Page 1

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Dehra Dun and nine from Nainital. "There will be no problem in running the government from these two places," said officials. They said the chief minister can keep shuttling between the two places.

The capital is not the only issue where there is ambiguity. The chief ministerial candidate has already emerged as a topic for much speculation in the region. With the BJP all set to form the government, guesses are being made about the party's chief whip in the Lok Sabha, Maj. Gen. B.C. Khanduri (Retd), or another heavyweight from the Garhwal region, Mr Manvendra Shah, being made the first chief minister of the hill state. According to sources in the BJP, Mr Shah's candidature is being promoted by Ms Vijayaraje Scindia, who is believed to have contacted Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in this connection. Mr Shah is the scion of the erstwhile royal family of Garhwal and is also related to the Scindia family. Maj. Gen. Khanduri, however, is learnt to be the choice of Union home minister L.K. Advani and Dr Murli Manohar Joshi. The local party leaders, however, are known to have expressed their apprehension about his "military" style of functioning and feel this might not go down well with party supporters, and the people at large, if he becomes chief minister. Another name which is doing the rounds is that of Mr Nityanand Swami, the UP Legislative Council chairman. The points going in his favour are his non-controversial political career, clean and respectable image and good rapport with the locals. Since he is also a member of the Legislative Council, it takes care of the problem that the new chief minister should be a member of the state legislature, a criteria which neither Mr Shah nor Maj. Gen. Khanduri meet.

THE ASIAN AGE

5 SEP 2000

Maharashtra norm angers Muslims

By Arunkumar Bhatt

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MUMBAI, SEPT. 5. The Maharashtra Government has decided to take harsh steps — including denial of rationed foodgrains for the third child — to control the growing population but not without attracting wrath of a section of Muslims, including a Minister of State, Mr. Mohammad Naseem Khan.

AD-1
The approved size of a family is four — parents and two children. Any family having a fifth member would not be entitled to get benefits such as housing, land for housing, agricultural land, free studentships, vocational loans and even health care for the third birth, from May 1, 2001.

In all, these include about 60 benefits pertaining to various welfare schemes of the State, according to the Chief Secretary, Mr. Arun Bongirwar. The State Government is in no mood to exclude those living below the poverty line or in the tribal belt. The Family Welfare Secretary, Mr. S.K. Shrivastava, said the health care for mother and infant under the integrated child development scheme would not be available for the third birth.

Shortly after taking over, the Chief Minister, Mr. Vilasrao Deshmukh, made it known to everybody concerned that family planning and birth control topped his priority list. His Cabinet decided on March 8 last not to give benefits of any scheme to families which overgrew.

This prompted different Ministries to issue their own GRs (Government Resolutions) to exclude 'third child' families from their list of beneficiaries. So far finance, agriculture, cooperation and civil supplies have issued the GRs and others are expected to follow suit shortly. Some years ago, the State Legislature had passed a Bill debarring parents having three children from contesting local self-Government elections. The Bill is awaiting the Governor's approval. The Deshmukh Government has now initiated a move to obtain the approval of the Governor, Dr. P.C. Alexander, so that this law can come into effect from May 1 next.

But the move is meeting stiff resistance from Mr. Naseem Khan, the Minister of State for Civil Supplies. He has informed the Chief Minister that the decision would hit the Muslims hard and hurt their religious feelings. Several Muslim organisations have also strongly protested against the Government's decision. The All India Jamiatul Ulema, the Raza Academy and the Sunni Tableegi Jamaat have condemned the move as 'undemocratic' and compared it to the family planning measure of the Indira Gandhi Government during Emergency.

Mr. Mohammed Saeed Noori of the Raza Academy said that the Muslims abided by the Islamic Shariat laws and these steps were violative of the same, amounting to interference in Muslim religious affairs.

THE HINDU

6 SEP 2000

A Capital question for new state: Dehra Dun or Gairsain

Harish Chandola
Joshimath, September 15

THE HILL people are for the first time coming to know their collective problems in the process of setting up a State of their own. Problems like where their State capital should be established. What is the revenue or income of their State? Will that be sufficient to pay the salaries of Government servants it will inherit? Where will money for schools, roads, hospitals, water supply, etc, come from? What amount of assistance can they ask from the Centre, and what may they possibly get?

Countless questions with which they were earlier unacquainted, because Ministers and bureaucrats dealt with them the way they liked. The hills were administered from far-away Lucknow, from where the hill people were hardly ever told about their collective problems and never asked to participate in solving them.

The first problem is where to establish the administrative headquarters. They want it in their midst, so that they can take part in managing their affairs.

The Ministers and bureaucrats want the headquarters in a comfortable city, where they will be least bothered by the masses. They prefer to have it in a powerful, expensive, intimidating, large city on the periphery of the hills, dom-

inated by people that have grown fat with hill profits - the choice being Dehra Dun.

The initial cost to build the required infrastructure at Dehra Dun has been estimated at only Rs 11.5 crore.

On the other hand, in support of the capital in the hills, the all-powerful women's organisation, the

large, comfortable building to house the State interim Assembly, secretariat, ministerial homes and also rail and air connections. It has excellent schools and colleges, good medical facilities, hotels, restaurants and entertainment.

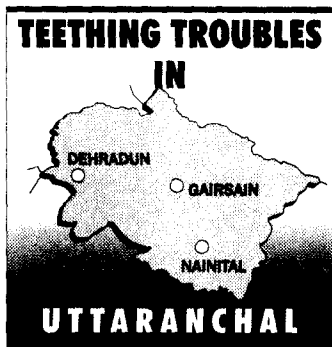
The people, however, want Gairsain, because it is right in the heart of the hills, midway between the two hill regions, Kumaon and Garhwal. It has fresh air, good climate, great scenic beauty, abundant space for a State capital and plenty of Ramganga water.

The general people fear that in a large city like Dehra Dun, the Government leaders and officials will remain as inaccessible as they were in Lucknow. If they go to Dehra Dun for official intervention, they will not even be able to find out whether the leaders are there or have gone to Delhi or elsewhere.

On the other hand, if the headquarters are in Gairsain, the people will know their whereabouts, because it will take them hours of travel to get out of the hills unlike in Dehra Dun where all the communication facilities are present. The people want their leaders to remain in the hills to solve their problems.

Dehra Dun has all the facilities whereas the hills have hardly any. It is time some of them reach the hills too. Creating the capital in the hills will ensure that.

(To be continued)



Uttarakhand Mahila Manch, has called a massive rally at Gairsain, on September 24.

The manch wants the Centre to declare this tiny town as the state headquarters. The Kaushik Committee of the U.P. Government had earlier recommended it in 1994.

So, an undeclared struggle has broken out between U.P. bureaucrats, supported by a rich lobby and the hill people over the proposed interim capital. The bureaucrats argue that Dehra Dun has a

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 SEP 2000

Jharkhand debate over status of 'outsiders'

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Ranchi, Sept. 17: The creation of the Jharkhand state has sparked off an intense debate over the status to be accorded to "outsiders and settlers" in the new state with tribal leaders and certain NGOs demanding that the 1932 land survey be accepted as the territorial boundary to resolve the issue.

Various tribal pressure groups have demanded a fresh census based on the 1932 survey to single out the tribals from what they call "outsiders". They have sought immediate restoration of tribal lands "looted by non-tribals" and granting of "perpetual right" over their land to tribals with at least 60 per cent reservation for them.

However, this has evoked strong reaction from the RSS, and has been termed as an "attempt to exclude non-tribals from having a decisive say in running the new state". The RSS said it might be forced to raise its old demand to "deny" tribal status to all those who make such demands excepting those "belonging to the Christian faith".

Tribal activism to forge unity

among various tribal groups here has gained momentum ever since the Jharkhand Bill was passed by Parliament in August, paving the way for creation of the new state.

Some tribal leaders even made inflammatory speeches fuelling ethnic tension. Though there are differences among tribal groups regarding demarcation of tribals from non-tribals, most leaders are in favour of 1932 as the base year.

Two hitherto unknown groups, the Jharkhand Arakshan Raksha Manch (a pressure group for reservation) and the Jharkhand Dishum Akhra, through local media advertisements, demanded exclusion of all "outsiders" from reservation benefits and advocated 85 per cent reservation for "original tribals".

Analysts see the advertisements as a "subtle" move to preclude the Oraon tribe from being listed as Schedule Tribes since the Oraons are known to have migrated to the Jharkhand region from Rohtas hundreds of years ago. The organisations said the Oraon tribe in Assam is listed as "backward tribe" and not as Scheduled Tribes to justify their demand.

Further aggravating the issue, five tribal Congress ministers from the Jharkhand region have warned "outsiders" against usurping the rights of "original settlers" of the region. However, they said, all Indians would be allowed to "earn a living and own lands in Jharkhand".

At a joint press meet, the five ministers in the Rabri Devi government - Pradip Balmuchu, Niel Tirkey, Deo Kumar Dhan, Manoj Kumar Yadav and Sawna Lakra — said so long as the "outsiders" do not "impinge upon the rights of the original settlers", they would be allowed to settle in Jharkhand and even "indulge" in politics.

Regarding the party's decision to give the ticket to K.K. Tewary from north Bihar to contest the last Lok Sabha elections from Ranchi, the ministers said though they have no "grudge" against an "upper class" candidate, they would have preferred an "original Brahmin" to contest the polls.

The ministers also demanded that all important party posts be reserved for tribals in the new state.

THE TELEGRAPH

18 SEP 2000

Uttaranchal faces uncertain future

Harish Chandola

Joshimath, September 17

HT-13
18/9

THE HILLS have a fairly high level of literacy. Most of the people look for Government jobs. The number of agriculturists is dwindling, because it is no longer profitable. Crafts are vanishing.

Labour is imported from Nepal and masons, carpenters and other skilled workers come from Bihar.

Liquor consumption is on the rise. UP excise minister Narayan Ram Das, a hill man and chief minister hopeful, proudly says that Uttaranchal's main revenue will come from liquor sales.

BJP leaders who are running for the CM's post, are confident that funds for the new state will come from the Centre. The Centre has been supporting all states. Why will it deny this one?

The Centre will provide just enough to sup-

port the ministers and bureaucrats and keep the hill people in a state of abject dependency. Otherwise, the people will be forced to amend the existing structure and devise their own. This might just upset the power equations and send alarm bells ringing in ruling circles.

To cut costs, the hill people may say they do not need an army of peons and police constables too. Since the state will have no funds to build a Raj Bhavan and afford a governor, it may want to do without one. The people will thus find ways of living within their means.

The Centre may consider such thinking outrageous and accuse them of ignoring the Constitution, which insists on a governor, as well as peons. To prevent the people from changing the present structure, it will offer them funds for a Raj Bhawan and ministerial bungalows, cars and salaries of personal assistants, peons and policemen. It will not care if hospitals have no doctors and medicines and schools are without teachers. These are not

constitutional requirements.

For a minister a big bugalow and a retinue are expressions of power. It does not matter if this power comes by making the state dependent on central funds. To retain power, the minister has to make the people dependent on him by doling out promises and occasional funds.

Such funds are unlikely to create a welfare society but set up a coterie and a system of dependency. The burden of this dependency will ultimately fall on the main working force—the women—who will have to work harder to keep society going.

Women comprise the most hard-working labour force in the hills. The other element that will seek a change in this system of dependency will be the youth. Unemployment in hills is already high. Soon, it may rise higher. They will then be forced to do something to change the system that gives them no opportunities.

In the hills this situation is likely to come soon in the near future.

Concluded

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

18 SEP 2000

Congress divided over formation of government in Jharkhand State

Ranchi, September 17

THE CONGRESS is apparently divided on the issue of government formation in Jharkhand State with several members insisting on staying away from the race and others urging the party high command to form the government in alliance with the like-minded non-BJP parties.

At a press conference here yesterday, out of the five party ministers, three were for the Congress striving to form the government in Jharkhand while the remaining left the matter to the party high command.

Congress legislator and ministers in the Rabri Devi government Niyel Tirkey, Deo Kumar Dhan and Sawna Lakra favoured Congress for making an attempt to form the government in the new state so as to keep the communal forces at bay. While, Pradeep Balmuchu and Manoj Yadav left the matter to the party high command.

The AICC general secretary Mohsina Kidwai at a separate press conference remained non-committal on the issue saying it was too early to comment on the matter.

Senior party leader and former union minister Subodh Kant Sahay addressing a press conference here few days back had said it would be beneficial for the party if it keeps itself away from the race and

decides to sit in the opposition.

In the numerical game, the Congress was far behind, he said adding that it would not be advisable for the party to travel with the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in the new state.

AICC delegates J P Choudhary and Roshan Lal Bhatia also expressed similar views. However, the Jharkhand Regional Congress Committee, now a state unit, had suggested making an attempt to form the government with other like-minded forces.

In Jharkhand's electoral canvass, the Congress has 11 legislators followed by its ally, the RJD with nine while the National Democratic Alliance has a total strength of 52 with 32 legislators from the BJP, five from the Samata Party, three from the Janata Dal (United), 12 from the JMM. The remaining seats in the proposed 81-member Jharkhand assembly are held by the CPI three, the CPI (M-L) one, the MCC one, and four independents.

(UNI)

Cong ministers disown statement

THE CONGRESS ministers, who had been alleged to have issued statements demanding ouster of non-Jharkhandis' from the party posts in the proposed new state today issued a denial saying no such statement had been issued. Addressing a press conference here, Congress ministers Deo Kumar Dhan and Sawna Lakra, who had been criticised even by their own party leaders for making statements allegedly on ethnic lines said they had been misunderstood.

"We are not against anyone staying in Jharkhand, but would certainly oppose those who do not honour local sentiments, we want that due representation should be given in the political arena to those who are the inhabitants of Jharkhand". Mr Dhan said that he believed in peaceful co-existence of all sections of society and had never said that those who were from outside Jharkhand should leave the new state. "What I meant was that they who do not have any base in the area should not be allowed to run the party affairs in Jharkhand," he added. However, they could not define as to who should be called or what should be the cut-off year to certify original inhabitants of Jharkhand.

UNI, Ranchi

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Pro-Vidharba Congressmen remain steadfast

By Mahesh Vijapurkar

*9. Revision
MBS*

MUMBAI, SEPT. 10. Those Congressmen who support the demand for a separate Vidharba State by splitting the Marathi-speaking areas in Maharashtra continue to remain steadfast, though the issue was not discussed in Saturday's MPCC(I) meeting convened by its chief, Mr. Govindrao Adik.

But unlike the Agriculture Minister, Mr. Ranjit Deshmukh, and others of his ilk, they have declined to make their stand public "because everyone knows we are with the notion of a separate Vidharba." On Saturday, some of them — office-bearers of the MPCC(I), Ministers, ZP chiefs and district party presidents — however did not press Mr. Adik for a

discussion. Those who oppose a new state, like Mr. S.B. Chavan have gone public.

These partymen appear to have taken the view that now that Mr. Deshmukh has strongly come out in the open and has begun canvassing support from the AICC(I), they have little to do. If they too go public, they fear that the party bosses might take them as being adversely positioned against the norms of "discipline we are expected to follow," sources told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Deshmukh insists "I have always been a strong pro-Vidharba person" has the signatures of elected representatives on a petition to Ms. Sonia Gandhi on the issue, but awaits an appointment with her. On the other hand, the

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11/9*

antagonists to statehood for the region are expected to get a hearing from her on Monday. Dr. Srikanth Jichkar is preparing to tell her how misplaced the demand for a new State was.

Notwithstanding the threats of forming a separate block of pro-Vidharba MLAs in the forthcoming session of the Legislature at Nagpur several weeks from now, the common understanding is that any move would be only after Ms. Sonia Gandhi makes up her mind.

If not on the issue, Mr. Adik has certainly briefed the bosses about Mr. Deshmukh's stance in which he has delivered broadsides against the Chief Minister, Mr. Vilasrao Deshmukh.

THE HINDU

11 SEP 2000

US panel to probe attack on minorities in India

DESIKAN THIRUNARAYANAPURAM
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON, Sept. 15. — The day after the Prime Minister ends his state visit to Washington, a Congress-appointed commission on religious freedom will hold an inquiry on attacks on minorities in India and Pakistan.

The list of witnesses includes some of the bitterest critics of New Delhi, signalling a spirited session of India-bashing.

The US Commission on International Religious Freedom, which was mandated by a law passed by Congress in 1998, has also urged President Clinton to take up the attacks on Christians in India during talks with Mr Vajpayee today.

According to a statement from the commission, witnesses at the hearing, to be held in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing room on 18 September, will include:

- Ainsley Embree, professor emeritus at Columbia University,
- Ghulam Nabi Fai, Kashmir American Council, and a critic of India

- Mumtaz Ali Khan, an expert on Muslims in India,
- John Dayal, a representative of Indian Christians,
- Mumtaz Ahmad, professor at Hampton University, Hampton, Virginia,
- Mohan Shahani, a Pakistani human rights lawyer,
- James Channan, a Roman Catholic priest in Pakistan,
- Mujeeb Rahman, a representative of the Ahmadiyyas,
- Marshall Bouton, executive vice president of the Asia Society,
- Sumit Ganguly, professor at the University of Texas, and
- Robert Oakley, former US ambassador to Pakistan.

By way of "background" on the issues to be investigated, the commission said since the BJP's rise to power in 1998, "assaults on India's religious minorities by self-proclaimed Hindu

■ See PANEL: page 8

PANEL:

(Continued from page 1)

nationalists have substantially increased in a number of states". Christian converts have been intimidated, churches and schools burned, nuns raped, priests and missionaries murdered, and Muslims continue to be targets of vandalism and assault, the commission said.

In Pakistan, large numbers of Sunni Muslims, Ahmadiyyas and Christians "have been harassed, detained, and imprisoned on account of their religion under laws that prohibit blasphemy".

The Commission will hear testimony "on these situations as well as options for US policy towards India and Pakistan", the statement said.

In his letter to Mr Bill Clinton, sent on 6 September, the chairman of the commission, Elliott Abrams, urged the President to raise at the meeting with Mr Vajpayee "the need for his government to take more effective steps to protect religious freedom and the lives and security of persons of religious minorities in India".

The Commission chairman asked the President to "impress on the Prime Minister that promotion of religious freedom is indispensable to healthy relations between India and the USA".

On Thursday, when Mr Vajpayee arrived to deliver his address before the US Congress, a group of Indian-American Christians protested and prayed on the lawns of Capitol Hill.

THE STATESMAN

16 SEP 2000

Kamtapuris face new challenger

SUDIPTA CHANDA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, Sept. 16. — Facing opposition from all political parties of this region for raising the statehood demand and their alleged terror tactics, the Kamtapuri organisations have come across a new adversary in the Bengali Tiger Force (BTF), an organisation, which till now had confined its activities to lower Assam.

The BTF has come up with posters at a number of places in Jalpaiguri and Cooch Behar districts within the past one month directing the pro-Kamtapur organisations to "drop" the statehood demand.

Cautioning the Kamtapuri organisations to remain prepared for the eventualities if they continued with their movement, the BTF has announced that "any move to divide West Bengal will be stopped at all costs."

Handwritten BTF posters in Bengali threatening the Kamtapuri organisations

with dire consequences, "unless they backed off from the statehood demand" have reportedly come up at Haldibari and Chak Chaka in Cooch Behar districts and at Samuktala and Barobisa areas in Jalpaiguri districts since 26 August.

Established in 1993, the BTF was apparently known for resisting atrocities by Bodo militants and the Ulfa on other communities in the Gossaingaon, Dhubri and Kokrajhar districts of Assam. The recent warnings issued against the pro-Kamtapur parties and leaders have established the BTF's presence in this state for the first time.

Admitting that the posters and letters have added a new dimension to the political scene here, police of the two districts, however, refrained from commenting any further on the matter.

Claiming responsibility for the messages in the posters, the BTF has also warned the Kamtapuri leaders not to collect funds by extortion. It has also issued threats to the

KPP's Cooch Behar district leadership.

The situation has taken a turn for the worse after a school boy was allegedly kidnapped by BTF activists from Barobisa bordering Assam recently. Angered with the incident, a section of Barobisa's residents roughed up a few persons who had come from Gossaingain, Assam. The two incidents have turned people living on either sides of the border resentful towards each other.

Though police, with the help of Assam police have arrested five people from Tamarhat of Assam in connection with the kidnapping, the boy is yet to be traced.

The development comes at a time when most political and social organisations are contemplating taking up a peace exercise to promote harmony among the different communities and ethnic groups in this region. "A clash between the Kamtapuri organisations and the BTF at this juncture could spoil all the effort," political observers fear.

THE STATESMAN

17 SEP 2000

Availability of funds will be big problem for Uttaranchal

Harish Chandola
Joshimath, September 16

WHAT IS the revenue and expenditure of the 13 districts that, in a couple of months, will form a separate hill state? Ask hopefuls expecting to become the new state's CM and they will not be able to answer. Neither will senior officials. This vital information is indeed necessary for constituting the new state.

For this, the UP Government has asked district administrations send figures of their income and expenditure. According to the details so far sent, in the last financial year ending March, the expenditure of 11 districts (figures of Chamoli and Rudraprayag districts had not been received), was Rs 4,197.69 crore, and their revenue Rs 2,425.25 crore. Lucknow believed these figures were exaggerated.

The UP Government estimate is that the expenditure on the 13 districts was about Rs. 3,000 crore and income from them less than Rs. 1,000 crore. It has now asked district administrations for accurate figures.

Figures from Udham Singh Nagar district were startling. While expenditure in the outgoing financial year was Rs 456.61 crore, its income was less than a fourth of that, at Rs 108.50 crore.

Accurate figures, if ever available, will not drastically change the above ratio, of the income of the districts being a third, or hopefully, a half, of the expenditure on them.

From where will the new state meet this massive deficit?

In Delhi one runs into economists and propagandists, whose names suggest their hill origin but who might have hardly spent any time in the land of their ancestors, giving out optimistic and imaginative statistics of incomes the new state will derive from electricity generated from its vast water resources and mineral deposits.

The flow of all its catchments is estimated at 51 million hectare-meters annually, of which half can be available for use. Of it only about 8.5 hectare-meters is being utilised. The hill state expects to produce about 4,600 megawatt from its 16 large hydro-electricity projects. It may be able to generate

an equal amount or even more from the rest, to sell it to next-door power-starved states and make money. But that will need was capital investment, unavailable to the new state. Among 16 projects is the controversial Tehri dam, expected to produce 600 megawatt of electricity. Over 30 years ago, it was estimated to cost Rs 100 crore. Far from complete, it will not cost well over Rs. 1,000 crore, and hopefully last 50 years. Can the new state afford such gambles? The hills are believed to hide rich, large mineral deposits. But no proper survey of them is available. At the moment, there is a total ban on mining in the hills for environmental reasons. To take even a spade-full of sand from a riverbed is a crime.

A survey of what and how much minerals and clays the hills contain will cost much money. There were years when the UP Mineral Development Corporation spent zero amounts on exploration in the hills. For years the state Directorate of Geology and Mining did not publish reports of its activities in the hills.

(To Be Concluded)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 SEP 2000

Jharkhand brings Laloo, rivals together

Saroj Nagi
New Delhi, September 27

"THERE IS calm before the storm." RJD leader Laloo Prasad Yadav took recourse to this truism to signal the first faint stirrings of a possible realignment of forces.

Until a few months back, such a scenario would have been unimaginable: RJD chief Laloo Prasad Yadav and his bete noire JD(U) leader Sharad Yadav and Samata leader Nitish Kumar sharing the same dais. Undoubtedly, the setting today did not involve party politics or politicking. Chief Minister Rabri Devi had invited Union Ministers, MPs and political leaders from Bihar for a meeting in the Capital to discuss the state's claim for additional resources following the creation of Jharkhand.

After the four-hour session, Agriculture Minister Nitish Kumar told newsmen that there was "no politics" involved in the conclave. Mr Laloo Prasad too asserted that "no political message should be read into it".

On the face of it this was true since it concerned the larger interest of the truncated state, involved MPs across the political spectrum and united parties in seeking a package for Bihar.

But in an informal interaction with correspondents, the RJD leader admitted that he was

keen to see his erstwhile colleagues come together. Although he laughed off the query whether he had raised the issue with them, he made it a point to state that "we have after been part of the same family."

Mr Laloo Prasad's desire may or may not be shared by the leaders who were once of the same family. But the fact that the RJD chief spoke of it indicated of the scenario he was keen to build on.

Even otherwise, there were two incipient political signals in the Delhi meeting. One, JD (U) leader Ram Vilas Paswan, who has been toying with the idea of floating his own outfit, was not part of the conclave. Unlike ministers like George Fernandes, Yashwant Sinha, C P Thakur and Shahnawaz Hussain who wrote to express their support for such a meeting, there was no word from the dalit leader.

Secondly, with the Delhi meeting, the RJD had taken charge of the campaign that Mr Nitish Kumar had initiated in August for a better deal for the state and managed to quash reports of a revolt brewing in his party.

Meanwhile, ministers, MPs and leaders, cutting across party lines, today called for a Rs 1.5 crore financial package from the Centre to help offset the losses following the creation of Jharkhand. Bihar would also lose about Rs

3,707 crore annually as taxes from the Jharkhand region.

Sinking their political differences to gather in Delhi at the invitation of Bihar Chief Minister Rabri Devi, the conclave decided that a joint delegation will meet Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee after 45 days after fine-tuning the projects and schemes they need investments for.

They would also meet the Planning Commission Deputy Chairman in this regard. A cell has already been set up in Yojana Bhavan to chalk out plans for the state's economic development. Keen to signal their unity on the issue of Bihar's development in order to exert pressure on the Centre, Agriculture Minister and Samata leader Nitish Kumar told newsmen that a team of MPs will be constituted to identify projects in infrastructure like power, railways, roads, agriculture, irrigation and airways.

Over the next fortnight or so, department-wise and scheme-wise projects would be prepared with the help of officials, RJD leader Laloo Prasad Yadav said.

Stating that a massive infrastructure fund was needed to bridge the gap between Bihar and other states, the meeting called for writing off central loans, reviving industrial units, providing central excise benefits as in Assam and liberalised credit and lending norms for industry.



MEETING OF MINDS: (From left) Nitish Kumar, Digvijay Singh, Rabri Devi, Laloo Prasad Yadav and Sharad Yadav during a meeting of Bihar MPs in the Capital on Wednesday to discuss the fallout from the creation of Jharkhand. Photo: Ajay Aggarwal

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 SEP 2000

Lok Sabha passes Chhattisgarh Bill

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE 1/8

NEW DELHI, July 31. — The Lok Sabha today passed by voice vote the Madhya Pradesh Reorganisation Bill 2000 which provides for the creation of Chhattisgarh.

The Bill's passage in the Lower House is considered to be the first step towards the creation of the three new states — Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand.

The Prime Minister was present along with his ministers in the nearly-full treasury benches to ensure smooth passage of the Bill which was placed by the Union home minister, Mr LK Advani, at the end of a four-hour discussion on the subject.

All the 14 amendments, including those of Mr Raghuvans Prasad Singh who moved as many as 11 amendments to the Bill, were rejected by the House. In the absence of any opposition to the Bill, Mr Advani said he was amenable to bring in any fresh amendment even after the creation of the new state.

Under Clause 86 of the Bill, the President has the power to take decisions to overcome "any difficulty arising in giving

effect to the provisions of the Act".

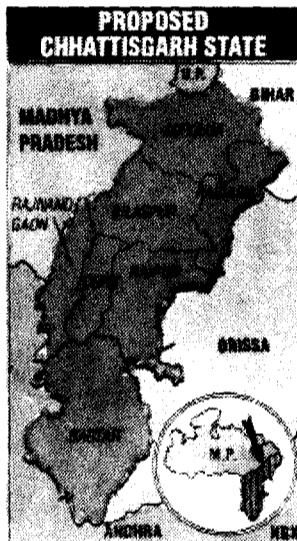
Some members, including Mr Shyama Charan Shukla (Congress), who belongs to the Chhattisgarh region, raised the issue of sharing of power with the parent state till the creation of an electricity board for the new state.

Some members also suggested that state government employees, including officials of the central services, should be given the option of either remaining in the parent state or going to the new state.

Sixteen districts of Madhya Pradesh would form the new state of Chhattisgarh. They are: Bastar, Bilaspur, Dantewada, Dhamtari, Durg, Janjgir-Champa, Jashpur, Kanker, Kawardha, Korba, Koriya,

Mahasamand, Raigarh, Raipur, Rajnandgaon and Surguja.

Since the new state would inherit MLAs elected in the last elections, the Congress, which will have a majority of its own, is slated to form the first government of the new state. The existing members of the Lok Sabha elected from the Chhattisgarh region will represent the new state.



THE STATESMAN

1 AUG 2000

40-15

Chhatisgarh will facilitate development

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By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 31. The process of creating Chhatisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand got off the ground today with the Lok Sabha passing the Madhya Pradesh Reorganisation Bill, 2000 by voice vote. The Bill, which seeks to "re-constitute" Madhya Pradesh by carving a separate state of Chhatisgarh out of it, had a smooth passage despite reservations in some quarters.

The Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, said the creation of Chhatisgarh would facilitate speedy and more balanced development of the region and meet the democratic aspirations of the people there. The proposed tribal-dominated State would consist of 16 districts and have an estimated population of 1.76 crores, of which 78 lakh people would belong to the Scheduled Tribes.

Initiating the discussion, the Congress(I) leader, Mr. Shyama Charan Shukla, said that during the past two decades development work in the Chhattisgarh area had come to a halt. He urged

the Centre to grant Rs. 2,000 crores for building a new capital for the proposed State and Rs. 8,000 crores for infrastructure.

Opposing the Bill, Mr. Bajuban Reang (CPI-M) said creation of new States would not solve the problems of lopsided development. Mr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh (RJD) demanded that the Bill be referred to a select committee. He also cautioned the Government against rushing it through.

Supporting the creation of Chhattisgarh, the BSP leader, Ms. Mayawati, said it would help tribals and backward communities.

According to the statement of objects and reasons, the Bill seeks to uphold the commitment which the President gave in his address to Parliament on October 25, 1999.

The Uttar Pradesh Reorganisation Bill is expected to come up for discussion and passing tomorrow, and the Bihar Reorganisation Bill on Wednesday. If the U.P. Bill gets delayed, the Bihar Bill would be taken up on Thursday.

THE HINDU

1 AUG 2000

At big brother's mercy

ONE is compelled to recall that tumultuous period between 1994 and 1996, when a disorganised Uttarakhand movement gained momentum, even as the Centre prepares to discuss the Uttar Pradesh State Reorganisation Bill in the Lok Sabha.

At least 25 men and women had died, scores were injured and maimed. Busloads of women were brutalised by men in uniform on a national highway, peasants put off seasonal cultivation, students boycotted classes for months, housewives neglected their families and government functioning had virtually been paralysed for weeks. Frequent bandhs, *chakkas* (jams) and rail *rokos*, street battles between unarmed activists and the armed special police forces plunged the area into chaos.

BJP leaders of the region, initially opposed the statehood stir. Or, in their words,

MS
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Activists feel their efforts to bring Uttarakhand into focus at the national level and the sacrifices of those who participated in the struggle will be in vain if a state materialises without sufficient autonomy, says PRASHANT RAHI

"opposed misled elements" who gave it force. At the beginning, the movement was directed against BJP MLAs and MPs, who were perceived by the masses as being hand in glove with the ruling Congress at the Centre and the Samajwadi Party-Bahujan Samaj Party combine in Uttar Pradesh. They felt the ruling parties had neglected their needs. Following state-sponsored repression, which included police atrocities, the Opposition BJP usurped the plank spontaneously generated by amorphous groups of

the region. The statehood demand was first accepted in principle by the Centre, when Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda, in a bid to create space for his United Front in the hills and, logically therefore, in various regions demanding autonomy, said so during his Red Fort speech of 1996.

Since then, the people's movement fizzled out. Its leadership was disillusioned. Successive governments hedged, until the pressure got too much for the BJP, which had by then virtually swept the polls with its pro-

Uttarakhand and pro-Hindu rhetoric. So the Bill was finally introduced in Parliament, four years after the Red Fort speech.

The Congress, which wasn't expected to favour a reorganisation of states until a few years ago, promised unequivocal support to the Vajpayee government's Bill, to shore up its image as a constructive Opposition. Those opposed to autonomy for states and regions have now united to grant statehood to Uttarakhand, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.

An examination of the Bill explains their volte-face. The proposed name for the state is "Uttaranchal". Uttarakhand leaders claim the term "Uttarakhand" was used for the region in ancient texts and that the word *akhanda* would reflect integrity between sub-cultures and sub-communities. But a senior BJP legislator from Adi Badri contends, quoting from ancient texts, that the name would lend a communal colour to the new state.

The official explanation offered by the saffron fold implies that *anchal* would not convey the sense of strident regionalism that *khand* would.

The provisions of the Bill, as circulated in a document inside Parliament, are not acceptable to the Uttarakhand activists. This pertains to the rights over river waters, right to alter the highly skewed land concentration in Terai areas and control over hydel projects. Also, the Bill is silent on the rationale behind the formation of a separate state.

Aspirations of the common people have not been recognised. Politicians, lawyers, bureaucrats and government officials are the only ones likely to benefit from the Bill, it is felt. An increase in the number of Assembly con-



Members of the Uttarakhand Sangharsh Samiti demonstrate near Parliament in this file photograph. — UNI

stituencies, a separate High Court and separate IAS cadres can hardly be considered cornerstones to autonomy and self-reliance within a federal structure that the common people have been yearning for.

All that a Rajya Sabha member from Uttarakhand could speak of at a press conference in Hardwar, on the rationale behind the reorganisation of Uttar Pradesh, were related to administrative and political considerations.

Development, self-sufficiency, concerns about democratically integrating sub-cultures and dialects of Kumaon and Garhwal, the right to be free of hegemonic penetration of prosperous sub-nationalities are not on the agenda.

A cursory glance at the other two statehood Bills would also suggest a similar lack of vision in the identification of the specific issues of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. State formation up to the 1970s did have a linguistic basis. The current process remains devoid of any such democratic paradigms.

According to the Bill, the

parent state would have an equal say in areas of irrigation, rural and urban water supply, hydel power generation, industrial development and other areas the Centre may specify. The Centre proposes to form a Ganga Management Board, which may have equal representation numerically speaking, but the hill representatives would have little stake in the resources of the bigger state.

The Centre will also be an arbiter in case of a dispute between the two states over resources. It is being asked why the usual laws that apply to, say, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar or Bihar and West Bengal should not suffice to ensure "equitable" usage of resources between the two states of Uttar Pradesh.

A campaign has been launched to oppose vested interests which wish to continue fleecing the hills. The undisguised move to appease the big landowners of Udham Singh Nagar district is an eye-opener. On this count, the Centre has imposed a restriction whereby the new state

will not be able to frame its own standards to implement the land ceiling laws. Uttarakhand will be at the mercy of big brother, as indicated by a provision. It says the parent state's laws on a State Subject would apply to the hill state. Expert opinion is being sought to ascertain whether the provision conforms to a relevant Article of the Constitution.

Given the kind of technical errors that have been identified in the document, which was said to have been hurriedly reframed to accommodate amendments proposed by the Uttar Pradesh Assembly, it is possible that the Bill will be referred to a sub-committee and delayed for some months. Activists feel their efforts to bring Uttarakhand into focus at the national level and the sacrifices of those who participated in the struggle will be in vain if a state materialises without sufficient autonomy.

(The author is The Statesman's Dehra Dun-based correspondent)

THE STATESMAN

2 AUG 2000

MPCC, BJP claim 51-7 2/8 victory over Chhattisgarh Bill

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHOPAL, Aug. 1. — The Madhya Pradesh Congress and the state BJP vied with each other to take credit for yesterday's passage of the Bill — called the Madhya Pradesh Reorganisation Bill, 2000 — in the Lok Sabha for the creation of a separate Chhattisgarh state.

The Speaker of the Madhya Pradesh Assembly, Mr Srinivas Tiwari, on the other hand, today again raised the demand for statehood to the Vindya region of Madhya Pradesh.

The former Union minister and Chhattisgarh Congress stalwart, Mr VC Shukla, attributed the passage of the Chhattisgarh Bill in the Lok Sabha to the strident campaign spearheaded by his organisation, the Chhattisgarh Rajya Sangharsh Morcha, over the last several weeks.

Speaking to **The Statesman** here today, Mr Shukla said, "Four massive agitations undertaken by our organisation — including the 24 June jail bhara andolan and 20 July Chhattisgarh bandh — forced the Union government, dithering on the issue since 1998, to hasten the process of introducing and passing the Bill in the Lok Sabha". Mr Shukla said the Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee made a "mistake" in not extending its full support to his organisation. "Otherwise, the MPCC could have today shared the credit with the Chhattisgarh Rajya Sangharsh Morcha for decisively paving the way for the formation of the Chhattisgarh state."

Mr Shukla attacked some state ministers from the Chhattisgarh region and other Congress leaders for trying to checkmate his organisation on the ground that the former should have launched his campaign under the aegis of the MPCC. "They are pygmies who cut a sorry figure today," he said. It is evident that Mr Shukla is eyeing the Chief Minister's post of the proposed Chhattisgarh state, given that the Congress is in a comfortable position to form the government in the new state.

THE STATESMAN

2 AUG 2000

Uttaranchal Bill passed in LS

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE 2/8

NEW DELHI, Aug. 1. — The Uttaranchal Bill was passed by the Lok Sabha amid protests by Akali Dal members who walked out over Udham Singh Nagar becoming part of the new state.

The Bill, moved by Mr LK Advani, was adopted by voice vote with three official amendments. Besides the Akalis, who protested on behalf of the Sikh settlers in the Terai region of Uttar Pradesh, another NDA ally — Trinamul Congress — registered its objection, saying migrant Bengalis wanted Udham Singh Nagar to remain part of Uttar Pradesh.

Mr Sudip Bandhopadhyay (Trinamul), however said, said: "I have got up to support the UP Reorganisation Bill."

The debate, lasting more than six hours, took note of the "sacrifices" of the people of Kumaon and Garhwal, particularly the women, during the movement for a hill state.

Two Sikh members of the Congress walked out before Mr Narain Dutt Tiwary, former UP chief minister and a resident of Nainital district, initiated the discussion expressing support for the new state. Mr JS Brar returned to the House after senior Congress leaders persuaded him to speak in

favour of the Bill. He returned but protested over inclusion of Udham Singh Nagar in the new state.

Uttaranchal will comprise 13 districts — Pauri Garhwal, Tehri Garhwal, Uttar Kashi, Chamoli, Dehradun, Nainital, Almora, Pithoragarh, Udham Singh Nagar, Bageshwar, Champawat, Rudraprayag and Hardwar. Some members, including Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, demanded that Hardwar remain part of UP.

Differences between the CPI and CPI-M came into the open. Mr Indrajit Gupta (CPI), former Union home minister, supported Uttaranchal whereas Mr Basudev Acharya (CPI-M) termed the formation of smaller states as a threat to the country's unity and integrity.

Mr Advani reminded the House that after the reorganisation of states on a linguistic basis in 1956, Punjab was divided into Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh and seven new were formed in the North-east. "But nothing happened. It has not threatened the country's unity and integrity," the home minister said.

Agreeing with Mr Ajit Singh's contention that UP be split into three states, Mr Advani said if such a proposal came from the UP Assembly, the government would consider it.

THE STATESMAN

2 AUG 2000

NGM A state is born

WITH THE Lok Sabha clearing the Chhatisgarh statehood bill, it is only a matter of time before the new state is inaugurated. All the other formalities were completed earlier as there was no opposition to the idea from within Madhya Pradesh out of which it is to be carved out. And, above all, both the BJP and the Congress supported its formation. In the Lok Sabha, the legislation in favour of the new state was opposed only by the CPI(M), the RJD and the Samajwadi Party, that is political entities which are battling breakaway demands in West Bengal, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh respectively. Interestingly, unlike the CPI(M), the CPI supports the creation of Chhatisgarh.

Those who oppose the formation of new states in West Bengal, Bihar and UP may, in part, be doing so from a narrow, possibly quasi-chauvinist, perspective. But does this automatically render valid the establishment of new states in the country? The question merits consideration. First of all, the coming into being of Chhatisgarh is likely to provide fresh impetus to the demand for Vindhyaachal in MP itself. It is far from clear if this will receive the kind of all-party support that Chhatisgarh did within that state. Besides, there are similar demands pending in other states as well, for example, Vidarbha in Maharashtra, not to mention Telengana in Andhra Pradesh. If each of these were to mature to fruition, the broadly linguistic reorganisation of states, effected in the Fifties, would be stood on its head.

Proponents of new states argue that the cause of development will be better served if their demands were met. This, however, is not the experience in insurgency-ridden north-eastern India even after new states were created by carving up Assam which, admittedly, was very large from an administrative point of view. And, let's face it, the linguistic criterion subsumes the argument for development, and also, in our context, answers issues relating to democratic quests better than perhaps any other yardstick. In MP's case, it is hardly possible to argue that the Chhatisgarh region alone suffered from a lack of development, and that the birth of the new state will automatically spur welfare. The development paradigm is far more complex than agitationists for new states think. Usually, creating new administrative units ends up buoying the narrow aspirations of small but powerful local groups, without doing much for the welfare of the general mass of the population.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

2 AUG 2000

Jharkhand Bill passed

New Delhi, August 2

THE BILL to create a separate state of Jharkhand, to be carved out of Bihar, was passed in the Lok Sabha today by voice with two key allies of ruling NDA strongly opposing the measure and the CPI-M demanding it be referred to a parliamentary committee.

Even before the Home Minister Mr Lal Krishna Advani moved the Bihar Reorganisation Bill for consideration, Devendra Prasad Yadav (Janata Dal-United) raised a point of order that the measure did not have an "adequate" financial memorandum and hence it be referred to a joint parliamentary committee or a select committee.

He was supported by Prabhu Nath Singh (Samata), Basudeb Acharya (CPI-M) and Raghunavansh Prasad Singh (RJD).

The Home Minister said the Bill has financial memorandum similar to the other statehood Bills.

Besides, he pointed out that the government has created a unit in the Planning Commission headed by the Deputy Chairperson to go into matters relating to the rest of Bihar consequent on the creation of Jharkhand.

This, he said, had happened for the first time in the history of reorganisation of states.

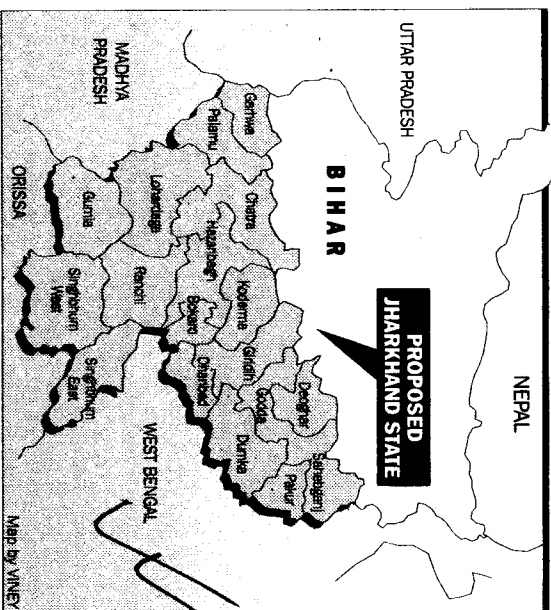
Initiating the discussion on the Bill, Thomas Hansda (Cong) said that creation of Jharkhand was a long-pending demand of the local people and appealed

to all concerned not to raise any controversy over its creation.

Referring to the underdevelopment of the Jharkhand areas, Hansda wanted the Centre to act fast to rectify the situation. He cautioned that if this was not done, there would be severe problems in the proposed state.

hungry and not those who are well fed," he said.

Karia Munda (BJP) said the people of the Jharkhand region had been exploited and neglected in social, economic, educational and political spheres for the last 50 years despite their contribution towards Bihar's development.



On demands from certain parties like the RJD that there should be a special package for the rest of Bihar, he said such a package should be given to Jharkhand. "You have to take care of those who are

Oriya-speaking people in these areas should not be ignored.

Tarlochan Kanungo said the people of Saraikela and Kharsuan felt that injustice had been inflicted upon them following the new measure.

Subodh Rai (CPI-

M) opposed the Bill saying that the creation of the proposed state would neither be in the interest of the people of Jharkhand nor that of the country.

Prabhunath Singh (Samata) supported the Bill and demanded a special package for the speedy and overall development of Bihar after Jharkhand is carved out.

The Biju Janata Dal (BJD) demanded the return of Saraikela and Kharsuan areas to Orissa saying that the aspirations of the

Akali Dal will oppose Uttaranchal Bill in RS

New Delhi, August 2

BITTERLY CUT-UP over the inclusion of Udhamsingh Nagar into the proposed Uttaranchal State, the Shromani Akali Dal (SAD) today announced that it would take up this issue with the National Democratic Alliance partners and will also oppose the Uttar Pradesh Reorganisation Bill 2000 in the Rajya Sabha.

SAD general secretary Balwinder Singh Bhunder told newsmen that they would spell out their final position on their future tie-up with the NDA in a meeting, slated to be held on August 5 in Chandigarh. The Akali leader was responding to mediapersons queries whether the Akalis would like to stay with the NDA Government following the overlooking of their point of view by their ally at the Central Government.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister George Fernandes has denied that he had misled Parliament by his statement on Udhamsingh Nagar becoming a part of Uttaranchal. In a statement, he said he had only stated that he had recommended to the Home Minister that Udhamsingh Nagar should be a part of Uttaranchal and there were differing perceptions on the issue.

He said he had pointed out in his last report to the Home Minister that Punjab Chief Minister had strong reservations as "he is of the view that either Udhamsingh Nagar stays in UP or a larger Uttaranchal, including some neighbouring districts be formed".

The Shromani Akali Dal (SAD) said it would take up this issue with the NDA partners and oppose the UP Reorganisation Bill, 2000 in the Rajya Sabha. SAD general secretary Balwinder Singh Bhunder said the party's political affairs committee (PAC) would spell out its stand on August 5.

(PTI)

HTC, Agencies

Uttaranchal State may spell trouble for Gupta Govt

New Delhi, August 2

THE CREATION of the three new states spells a mixed bag of fortunes. The formation of Uttaranchal and Jharkhand is likely to hoist the BJP and its allies to power in these states.

But it would also ironically put the party's Ram Prakash Gupta government in Uttar Pradesh under greater strain and threat from allies like the Loktantrik Congress as it is left to skate with the razor-thin majority provided by them.

The party, which was in a minority would be left with only 158 members in an assembly left of 404 seats, with the Loktantrik Congress upset that its demand to keep Haridwar in Uttar Pradesh was not met.

Although the new state of Uttaranchal will have 70 legislators and five MPs, the BJP had virtually swept the last elections in the area which elects 21 MLAs and four MPs.

With 17 of the party's legislators hailing from this region, the UP

government is expected to limp along till one of its allies pulls the plug.

While Jharkhand could see the NDA in government, in neighbouring Bihar, its bete noire, RJD's Laloo Prasad Yadav stands to strengthen its position.

With less than 10 of the 123 RJD legislators coming from the Jharkhand region, the RJD would need the support of only about a half a dozen MLAs as independence on the Congress gets substantially reduced in the truncated assembly.

However, Mr Yadav, who is fighting a legal battle and the Opposition onslaught over the series of killings in his state, is unlikely to shrug off its ally whose depleting strength would get further sapped with the bifurcation of the state.

Meanwhile, the BJP's strength would be cleaved in the middle with 32 of its members coming from the Jharkhand region and 35 from main Bihar.

The party would have to redouble its efforts to catch up with the RJD.

Interim administrative set-up for Uttaranchal put on hold

By Arvind Singh Bisht

The Times of India News Service

LUCKNOW: A proposal for an interim administrative arrangement in the 13 hill districts was put on hold by the UP cabinet on Wednesday despite adoption of the Uttaranchal Bill in the Lok Sabha.

Chief minister Ram Prakash Gupta found it tough to push the proposal in the face of angry protests lodged by a host of cabinet ministers from the BJP and its coalition partners, particularly the Loktantrik Congress Party (LCP).

The cause for concern for the state government was the adoption of the bill without carrying its amendments. The state government had proposed as many as 28 amendments in the Bill when it was sent for approval in the legislature. The important amendments included the creation of Uttaranchal without Hardwar and the control of UP over power projects in the hills.

Prominent among those who opposed the proposal for new administrative arrangement were senior BJP ministers like Kalraj Mishra (PWD), Lalji Tandon (urban development) and Naresh Agarwal (power), also president of the LCP.

The proposal, moved by the UP hill development department, sought a complete administrative

and financial control over the planned as well as non-planned budget. For the current financial year, the plan outlay stands at Rs 900 crore and the non-plan outlay at over Rs 2000 crore. Although the fund is provided by the hill development department, it has no control over various other departments, which work under the super-

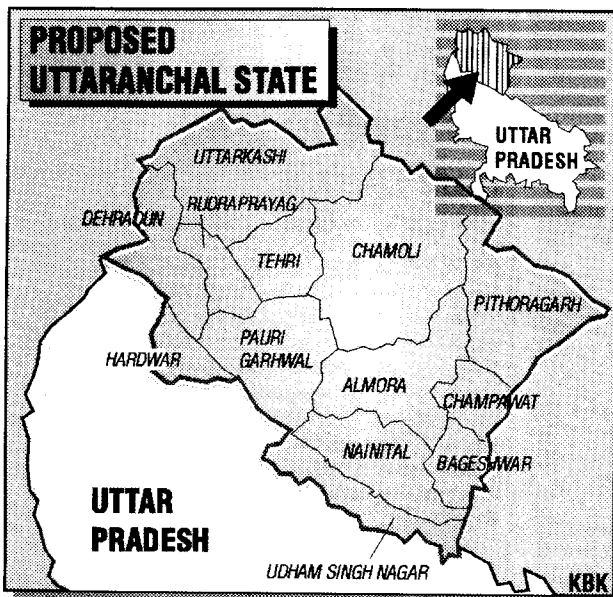
ister late Indira Gandhi.

Cabinet approval was sought for financial and administrative powers to nodal officers in hill region, strengthening of mini hill secretariats already functional at Nainital and Dehradun by recruiting more staff and transfer and posting of officials to the hill region with the approval of the hill development department. The cabinet, however, decided to set up a committee headed by chief secretary for studying the proposal and a decision would be taken only after his decision.

Refusing to comment on the issue, the chief minister said any decision about the hill areas would be taken only after it received the copy of the bill passed by the Centre. On other hand, Naresh Agarwal said that his party had the option to go to court regarding the inclusion of Hardwar in Uttaranchal.

Meanwhile, hill development minister Matvar Singh Kandari

while hailing the adoption of the bill said that misgivings created against Uttaranchal were nothing but a handiwork of vested interests. He said Uttaranchal would in no way stand in the development of UP, which was like its big brother. Regarding the inclusion of Hardwar and Uddham Singh Nagar in the hills, he said they were integral part of the hill areas.



vision of different ministries concerned.

This creates an imbalance with the effect that the purpose of coordinated planning in the hills remains unfulfilled in spite of the creation of the hill development department. The department was created in 1973 as a part of package to keep the demand for a separate hill state at bay by the then prime min-

THE TIMES OF INDIA

4 AUG 2000

Issue of Jharkhand CM may cause deep rift in NDA

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By Sachchidanand Jha
The Times of India News Service

PATNA: The passing of the Bihar Reorganisation (Jharkhand) Bill, 2000 by Parliament is likely to give rise to a deep rift in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) since one of its constituents, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM), has already staked its claim to the post of chief minister of the proposed Jharkhand state. JMM president Shibu Soren staked his claim to the post soon after the ratification of the Bill by the Bihar legislative assembly last year.

The JMM had joined the NDA after the Bihar assembly elections and had played an important role in the formation of the NDA government headed by Nitish Kumar in March last.

Although Mr Soren's claim annoyed the BJP leadership, none of its top leaders took issue with him about the chief ministership of the proposed new state in view of the delay in passing the Bill by Parliament. Now that the Bill has been passed, the power struggle in the NDA is likely to intensify since the BJP, Samata Party and JD (U) together would have only 41 members in the 82-member Jharkhand state assembly. This includes one

nominated member.

The BJP cannot form government in Jharkhand unless it gets the support of the JMM, which would have 12 members in the new state assembly. The NDA would need the support of at least one more MLA to form its government if the JMM refuses to support it. The BJP would have 32 members in the

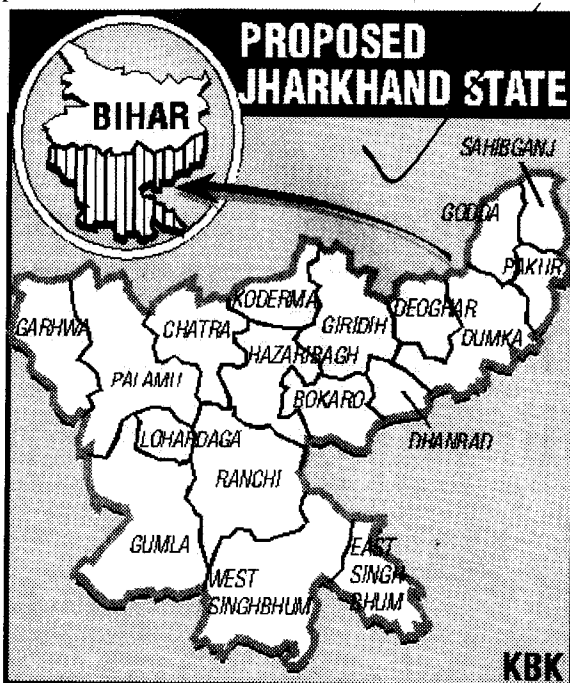
government. But the number game does not favour the Congress, RJD and JMM either as they would have to muster the support of at least 10 more MLAs to prevent the NDA from forming its government in Jharkhand.

Meanwhile, Bihar law minister Shakeel Ahmed Khan said that the Centre should simultaneously announce special packages for both the truncated Bihar and Jharkhand. The RJD wanted the development of both the states, he added.

The Bharatiya Jan Congress (Rashtriya) has, however, described the passing of the Bihar Reorganisation Bill as an unfortunate development. Its state president Jagnarain Trivedi and vice-president I.A. Khan said that the division of Bihar would go against the interest of all its people. They maintained that the NDA-led Union government wanted to divide the state for obvious political reasons. They also held the Congress responsible for the division of the state.

The BJP leaders said that the division of the state would give a fillip to extremist activities in the Jharkhand region.

Senior BJP leaders, including its state unit chief Nand Kishore Yadav, general secretary in charge of South Bihar Saryu Rai and leader of the opposition in the Bihar assembly Sushil Kumar Modi, and RJD chief Laloo Prasad Yadav are currently away in Delhi.



Jharkhand assembly while the Samata and the JD (U) would have 5 and 3 members respectively.

Obviously, the Congress with 11 members in the new assembly and RJD with 9 members would like to woo Mr Soren in their bid to prevent the formation of an NDA gov-

Regional outfits begin to dream of getting national party status

Saroj Nagi
New Delhi, August 3

REGIONAL OUTFITS and small political groupings like the Revolutionary Socialist Party, the Samajwadi Party and the Samata have begun to dream of securing the status of a national party with the proposed creation of Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chattisgarh. Even the major parties, like the CPI-M, under threat of being stripped of this status, are likely to use the opportunity provided to bolster their case.

The fact that the proposed States would be small in size - with Jharkhand and Chattisgarh getting a 90-member Assembly and Uttaranchal a 70-member House - makes the task less arduous for many of these parties, to qualify for recognition as a national party, a political formation needs to fulfil at least one of the three criterion set out.

It should either have one Lok Sabha member for every 25 MPs in that State or one legislator for every 30 MLAs in the Assembly or six per cent of the valid votes polled in the last Assembly or general election in the State.

At present, according to the

Election Commission's records, only the BJP, Congress, Bahujan Samaj Party, CPI and NCP fulfil the recognition criteria. While the CPI-M, the JD (S) and JD (U) still figure as national parties on its records, the Commission is also looking into the question of withdrawing the status from them since they no longer meet the yardstick.

The formation of the new States would bring the RSP closest to such recognition.

Virtually an unknown entity in the vast tracts of the country, the

Jharkhand State, with only two of its 14 Bihar MLAs hailing from this region.

The Samajwadi Party is a strong force only in UP. Although it has a couple of legislators in Maharashtra and West Bengal, it does not measure up to the EC's standards for recognition. However, the SP leadership has already begun talking about expanding the organisation and its activities, particularly in Uttaranchal, where it has only one legislator at the moment.

The party proposes to contest all the 70 seats in the first elections after the formation of the State so that it can garner the necessary votes in its road towards recognition.

The CPI-M, which is expected to go into a long-drawn battle with the Election Commission to retain its status as a national party, would use the opportunity provided in some of these States to build up a base and poll the necessary votes even while contesting the existing rules that put a State with one MP at par with another which elects over 50. Other outfits, confined to one or two States, could also attempt a foray.

Creation Of New States

RSP fulfills at least one of the three yardsticks in the three Left strongholds of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura.

It needs to carve out a niche for itself in one more State to claim recognition as a national party. Jharkhand and Bihar are likely to be the obvious choices for making such a foray.

The Samata meets the EC's requirements only in Bihar and Manipur and needs to build its base in another two States before it can claim recognition. It fails to pass the test in the proposed

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

AUG 2000

Tremors in new states

THE CONSTITUTION is quite flexible when it comes to the creation of new states; it requires only a simple majority in Parliament for the step. And yet, the question of separate statehood has often persisted for years for reasons of political expediency and competitive populism. Take the case of Jharkhand. The demand was first made over 60 years ago. Even the States Reorganisation Commission considered it favourably. But all major political parties merely exploited the divisive character of the Jharkhand movement and used the statehood issue only to win elections. The story of Uttaranchal is hardly any different. The UP Assembly passed resolutions in its favour thrice but the Centre paid only lip service to the movement. The BJP Government can now claim credit for the passage of the Bills paving the way for the creation of Chhattisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand, but the BJP leaders too have hardly spoken in one voice on these issues.

The Vajpayee Government's decision to get the statehood legislations approved by Parliament is in line with its election pledge. That the Bills could be passed despite serious reservations by some of the NDA allies is creditable. But the Government cannot ignore the warnings from the Akali Dal and the Biju Janata Dal in this respect. The creation of the new states is bound to gladden many hearts in these regions. But not everything has been said on the matter. If the protagonists of the Jharkhand movement feel somewhat cheated for getting less than what they had bargained for, the BJD is peeved over the inclusion of Seraikella and Kharasuan in the Jharkhand State. No one believes that the BJD leaders will walk out of the coalition if their demands are not met. They are perhaps raking up an emotive issue more to secure political mileage than for a decisive break with the NDA. But misgivings will nevertheless remain.

Unlike the BJD's complaint, the Akalis' grouse is not merely part of pressure tactics. They seem to feel genuinely hurt. The Akalis have been demanding the exclusion of Udham Singh Nagar from the proposed new State of Uttaranchal. They are now complaining that their party has done more for the BJP — by recognising it when it was considered untouchable — than the BJP for it. The Akalis will presumably take a decision whether to stay on in the coalition or not in the next few days. Even though the Akali demand is evidently parochial, a hard line adopted by the party can rock the NDA boat. The BJP, therefore, appears to have taken a calculated risk. The only difficulty is that if the disillusioned allies choose to act tough, the BJP will find few escape routes.

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

4 AUG 20th

Militant resurgence by Kamtapuris

Regional Observer

A fresh separatist movement threatens to tear apart the social fabric of North Bengal, nearly 18 years after the GNLF claimed Darjeeling for itself. The demand for a separate Kamtapuri homeland is spearheaded by the Kamtapuri People's Party while the Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation provides the muscle. The threat has become prominent after the recent murder of two schoolteachers in Jalpaiguri. Though the movement has not yet mustered mass support, it is gaining momentum. The question is whether it can be contained by the administration. **SUNIT ROY finds out:**

armed wing recently shot dead two CPI(M) teacher-leaders telling the administration they know exactly how to twist arms.

And Kamtapuri People's Party leader Atul Roy recently met GNLF chief Subhas Ghising in Darjeeling — in a bid to create a camaraderie that can jointly wrench away the top of West Bengal. The secret meet was immediately followed by a fresh demand for a separate state by the GNLF.

Identification of the killers and the police's hunch that they were trained by northeast rebels in Bhutan are pointers that the Kamtapuri rebels are preparing to launch their movement on a larger scale. These also indicate they have gained in strength. The fate of the

people of North Bengal hangs in the balance should the militant movement snowball.

The call for a separate state for the North Bengal districts is not new. In the early Eighties, a separatist movement reared its head with the demand for Udayachal, wherein a separate state for the North Bengal districts and Sikkim and lower Bhutan was made. GNLF leader

Subhas Ghising and former chief minister of Sikkim Nar Bahadur Bhandari were among the propagators of the struggle. The movement was nipped in the bud because it was not focused and lacked efficient leadership. In later years, it was finally translated into the GNLF movement for a Gorkhaland by Ghising.

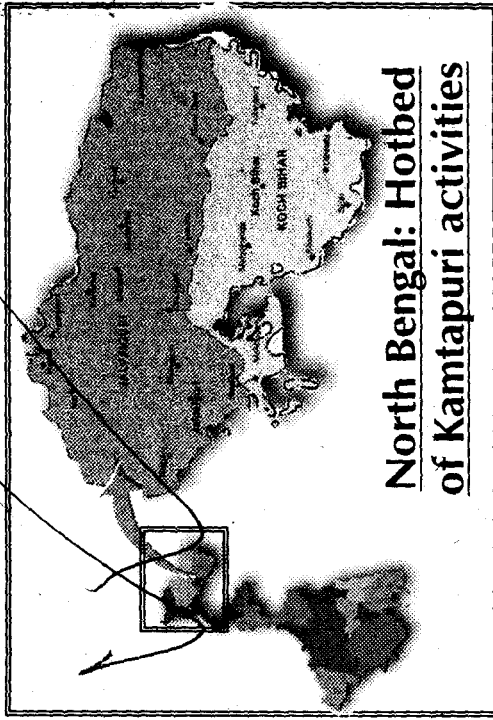
Earlier demands for a Kamtapuri state fell by the wayside because the separatists were not eager to revive the real Kamtapuri — a private state developed and owned by Cooch

Behar's king Raja Rajarain and expanded by his *senapati* Sukladhwaj Chila Roy. The kingdom encompassed Gourbanga, Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Tripura, Srikhatta and parts of East Pakistan.

But 20th century followers were divided over regional interests, like the revival of the local language. And the Udayachal or Kamtapuri movement — whatever the name may have been — failed to get off the ground.

The Kamtapuri movement this time has begun on a militant note.

□ To be continued



North Bengal: Hotbed of Kamtapuri activities

THE ASIAN AGE

13 AUG 2000

States for the asking?

THE IMMEDIATE fallout of the formation of three new states to be carved out of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar will be one new Chief Minister each for the Congress(I) and the BJP in Chhattisgarh and Uttaranchal, and a narrowing in the gap to majority for the Rashtriya Janak Dal in what will be left of Bihar after Jharkhand becomes a separate entity. The expectation is that it will take six to eight months for the new States to become a reality.

But yet another reaction could well be demands for more bifurcations, especially in Uttar Pradesh, where already distinct sounds are being heard in favour of a separate western Uttar Pradesh and Bundelkhand. And the move could also fuel the demand for a separate Vidarbha in Maharashtra and a Telengana in Andhra Pradesh. The fractured national polity has already given rise to parties articulating the demands of specific regions and it should not surprise anyone if new formations spring up to cash in on the new mood favouring smaller States.

While the post-bifurcation political situation is clear in Uttaranchal and Chhattisgarh, there will be uncertainty in Jharkhand where Mr. Shibu Soren, JMM leader with 12 MLAs, could well emerge as the king. And in the long-run, the region will see a direct battle for supremacy between the Congress(I), which traditionally had a base here even if now eroded, and the BJP, which has more recently been able to establish its presence in this tribal region.

For the BJP, the gains made in Jharkhand and Uttaranchal (the hill districts of Uttar Pradesh) will be offset by the expected loss in the rest of U.P. which during the Nineties helped the BJP emerge as a national party contributing 57 MPs to its tally in the 12th Lok Sabha and an equally impressive 52 in the 11th Lok Sabha.

For the last several years the BJP has dominated the U.P. hill region where the other major players in the State, the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party, have failed to make any impact. But with a separate Uttaranchal, the growing presence of the SP and the BSP in the rest of U.P. will become more marked. Even senior BJP leaders admit that the party will have to wash its hands off U.P. at least immediately after the Assembly elections scheduled for next year. "If we cannot retain the big U.P., let us settle for the small part," a senior leader commented.

There is also the fear in the BJP camp that with delimitation to be done in Uttaranchal resulting in smaller Assembly segments — 22 constituencies will have to be divided into 60 new seats — the electoral fight could become too close for comfort. And new political formations could spring up to spoil the BJP show. Uttaranchal is expected to be formed only after Assembly elections.

The other major problem for this hill state would be financial viability. Many families in this region survive as a result of the money-order economy, with the men working elsewhere sending some of their savings home. Of course, tourism and growing of fruit and flowers if properly developed could make the new State economically self-sufficient.

The expected bifurcation in Bihar and Madhya Pradesh will be taking place without fresh elections. Polls in these States are not due for

its population may create new forces of political disunity. The BJP may find it hard to reconcile the aspirations of both the Kumaon and Garhwal regions which may claim, for political reasons, to have distinct cultural and linguistic identities. The danger seems to be inherent in the concept of a separate Uttaranchal itself.

Another point of discord would be the selection of a new capital, with neither Dehradun nor Nainital, the two most important towns, ideal for this purpose. One suggestion was to build a new capital at a location central to both the regions, but that idea could end up as a loser because it would entail a huge expenditure.

There is also the inherent danger that no sooner will the new State take birth that it will get embroiled in disputes with U.P. over distribution of power generated by projects in the hills, sharing of river water and division of resources of undivided U.P.

But it is in Jharkhand that a high voltage political drama is expected to be enacted, for none of the parties has a clear majority. And besides this, the birth of the new State is not going to be easy. Besides the legislation, the sticky question of compensation for the impoverished North Bihar has yet to be decided. While the RID has made a demand of Rs 1.8 lakh crores (which it knows cannot be met), the BJP's ally, the Samata Party, is also insisting on a hefty package. And Bihar, which may well become financially unviable with the mineral-rich Chota Nagpur Plateau becoming part of Jharkhand, will not let go of its southern part easily. As one politician remarked, "the rest of Bihar will be left with only caste violence and floods".

The Assembly elections forced the BJP to make peace with the JMM and give up its own concept of Vananchal in favour of Jharkhand. But the problem before it now is to keep the NDA flock together and break a few more MLAs from other parties, or take the JMM support and give it the Chief Ministership.

The breakup in the new Assembly of 81 members will be BJP (32); JMM (12); Congress (I) (11); RID (9); Samata Party (5); JD(U) (3); CPI (3); UJD (2) and MCC and CPI(ML) one each and two independents. The BJP-Samata-JD(U) combine adds up to 40, just short of majority. And Mr. Soren is pressing his claim to the top job, for that was the promise made to him for garnering support for the NDA. It

happen only after fresh elections due next year.

The formation of Uttaranchal does fulfil a long-cherished dream of the hill people who had been agitating for the past many years to have a hill State comprising Kumaon and Garhwal divisions with a geography distinct from the rest of U.P. But now the focus will naturally shift to the control of power in the new State, triggering a new political process.

The carving of U.P. is also expected to set off a chain reaction influencing the course of political events in both the parent and the new State.

The BJP which has staunchly supported the demand for a separate Uttaranchal during the past several elections continues to remain the strongest force in the hills with the Congress(I) steadily losing ground, mainly because it has accepted Uttaranchal reluctantly.

In the interim Uttaranchal State Assembly comprising 22 MLAs and six MLCs (in all 28 members) of present Uttar Pradesh, the BJP would have a strength of 18. The first Chief Minister of Uttaranchal would thus be from the BJP with the Opposition expecting only a marginal role.

Lobbying for the top job in the new State has already begun with banners and posters having appeared in all important towns of the region. The front-runner is the chairman of the U.P. Legislative Council, Mr. Nityanand Swami. Others in the race include Major General (retired) B.C. Khanduri, Mr. Manohar Kant Dhyani (both MPs), the U.P. Minister, Mr. Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank, and the Union Minister, Mr. Bachi Singh Rawat. Although the decision will naturally be taken in New Delhi, this has not prevented aspirants from building up cases in their own favour.

Uttaranchal may look like one geographical unit as compared to the rest of U.P. but the stress of the region and the composition of

will be perilous for the BJP to ignore his claim, for he is also being wooed by the RID, the Congress(I) and others. The other factor is that the NDA itself is a fairly loose factor in Bihar, and its cohesiveness in Jharkhand is even more in doubt.

The two BJP leaders who are themselves in the race for the Chief Ministership are the Union Minister, Mr. Babu Lal Marandi, and the tribal MP, Mr. Karia Munda.

The other side can hope to make the BJP squirm only if the JMM agrees to lead a non-BJP Government. In any case, even if this does not happen, the real prize for the RID will be its emergence as a stronger force in the rest of Bihar. It will be just nine short of an absolute majority in an Assembly of 243, and to that extent it will be less dependent on the Congress(I). It also means that its ability to attract some from the Samata Party would increase. After all, elections in Bihar are over four years away.

CHHATTISGARH STATE

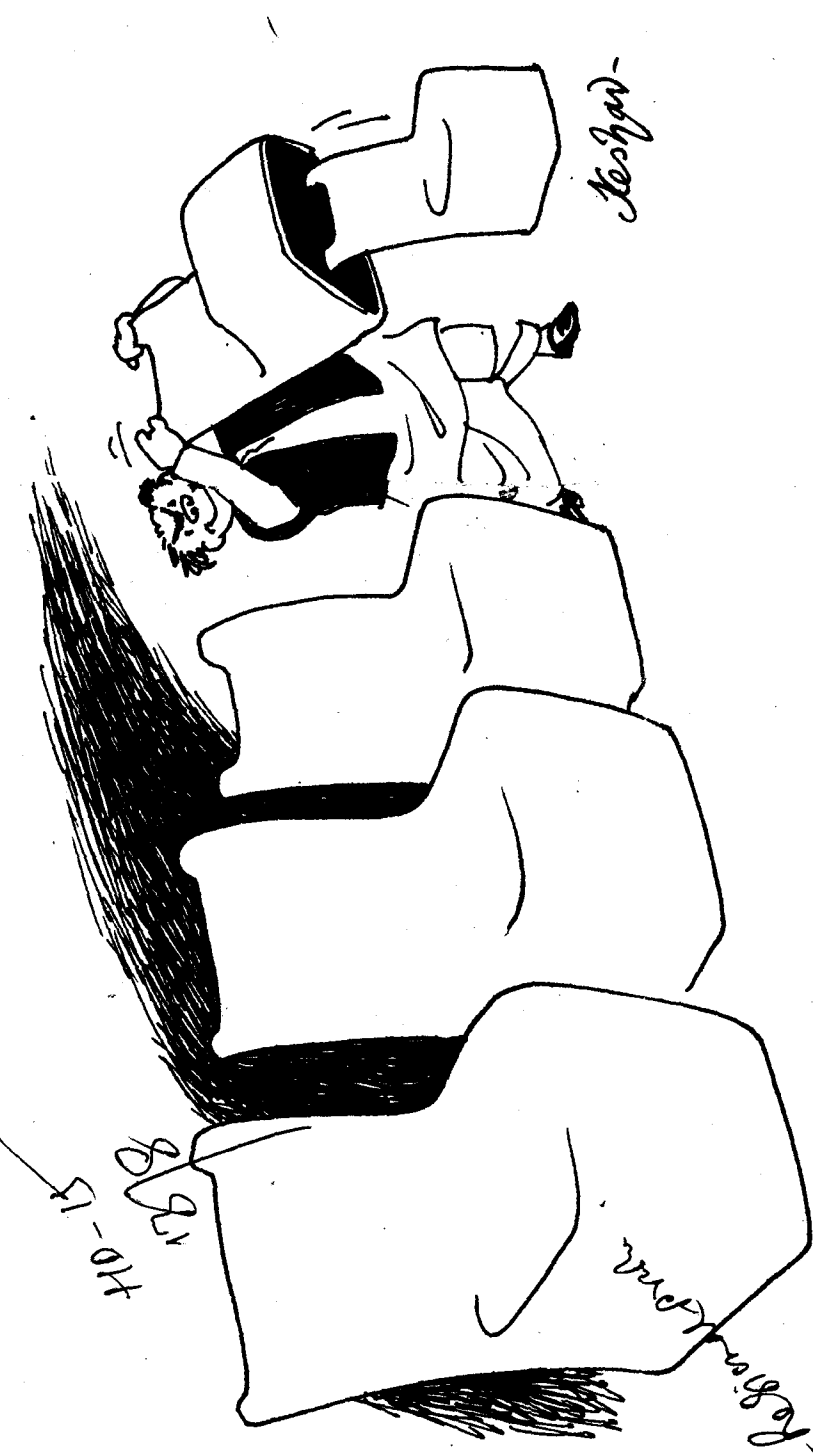
Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh

UTTARANCHAL STATE

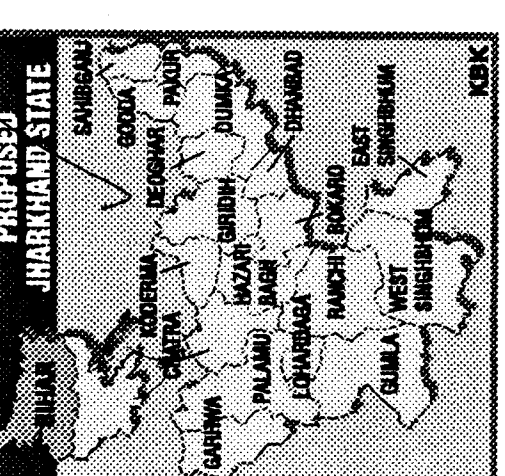
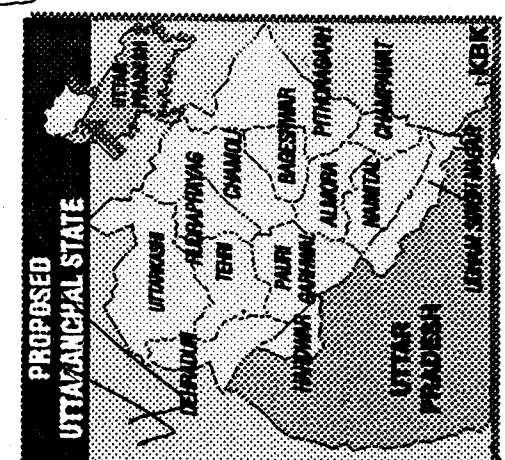
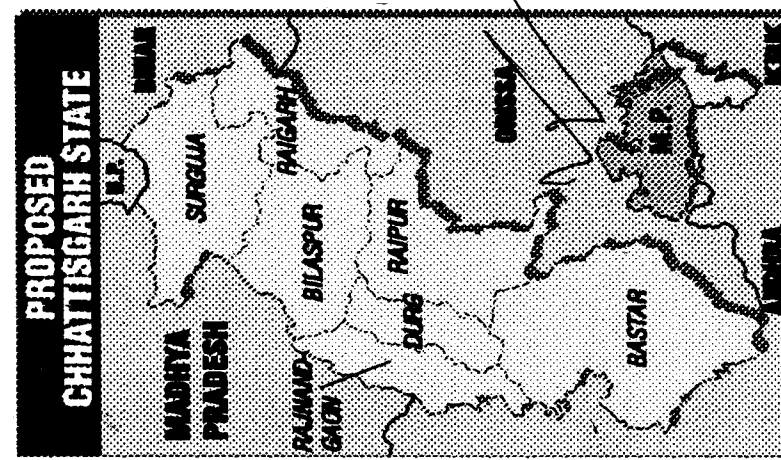
Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh

JHARKHAND STATE

Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh



The formation of three new States could fuel demands for more. NEENA VYAS on the carving out of Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chhattisgarh, with reports from K. BALCHAND, J. P. SHUKLA and LALIT SHASTRI.



Bihar Congress divided over backing Soren

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J. Soren
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MOHAN SAHAY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Aug. 19. — The Bihar unit of the Congress is sharply divided over backing the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha leader, Mr Sibu Soren, as the chief minister of the proposed Jharkhand state in league with its ally, the RJD.

Mr Satyendra Jaiswal, Mr Vinay Srivastav and Mr JP Choudhary of the Congress met the party's central leadership, including Mrs Mohsina Kidwai, at the AICC office yesterday and informed them of the "defeatist move" of some leaders to support Mr Soren in the leadership race.

Mr Thomas Hansda, MP and president of the Regional Congress Committee of Chhotanagpur and Santhal Parganas, is also opposed to supporting Mr Soren.

But some Congress leaders from Patna and New Delhi say supporting Mr Soren is "like resurrecting the JMM from the ashes in Chhotanagpur".

The JMM is facing a decline, having lost its sway over the tribals. The party did not win a single seat in the 1999 Lok Sabha polls. In the Bihar Assembly, the JMM's strength has come down from 29 MLAs to 12 at present.

The Congress leaders told Mrs Kidwai, the AICC general

BJP CHANGES TACK

RANCHI, Aug. 19. — The NDA will begin the process of selecting a leader to head the first government in the Jharkhand state in good time, the BJP president told a press conference today. The issue has not been taken up because it is too early, Mr Kushabhau Thakre said.

This is in contrast to the party's earlier stand that the chief minister would be from the BJP. Reports of the Congress being in touch with the JMM seems to have had an impact on the BJP. — SNS

secretary in-charge of Bihar, that the party should not join hands with the JMM and the RJD in Jharkhand. "The credit of creating the Jharkhand state goes to the Congress and the BJP. By propping up the JMM, the Congress would be promoting its political rival," one of them said.

"Let the NDA form the government in Jharkhand, the Congress can afford to strengthen its base and the next round of elections would go in its favour. But any move to the contrary would marginalise the party in the new state," Mr Srivastav said.

Mr Laloo Yadav has vested interests in retaining his power

base in Jharkhand with the help of Congress ministers in the Rabri Devi government. Of the 22 Congress MLAs, 10 are from the Jharkhand region. Once the new state is formally constituted, the ministers would lose their office when they become members of the interim state assembly of Jharkhand.

The Congress ministers from Chhotanagpur in undivided Bihar are working hard to retain their jobs by trying to form a coalition government with Mr Soren as chief minister.

Mr Furkhan Ansari, Congress Legislative Party leader and minister in Bihar, too is lobbying with the central leaders for a coalition government with the JMM and the RJD. But the combine is 11 members short in the proposed interim house of 81 members.

Mr Soren's one time deputy, Mr Suraj Mandal, is also opposed to the former's candidature. Mr Mandal said the JMM has no mandate to head the new government. He has proposed the formation of an all-party government in Jharkhand headed by a tribal leader of the BJP.

"Such a government should be only for one year and fresh elections should be held to seek a mandate from the people to form the next government," Mr Mandal said.

THE STATESMAN

20 AUG 2000

2 Re Bihar
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TRIBAL POWER

Enemies join to divide the cake

5/8
7/8

IT is amusing to find a party that once did everything to stall the creation of Jharkhand state now declaring that its cadres will take to the streets to ensure that a tribal occupies the chief minister's chair. There is no reason to believe that Laloo Prasad Yadav has undergone a change of heart. The truth is that, confronted with the inevitable, he is making the best of a bad bargain. In north Bihar where the RJD is still supreme, he is left with a crop of sugarcane that is not likely to taste very sweet considering the area is in the grip of devastating floods almost every year. So the best that Laloo can do is to try to keep the BJP out by backing Sibu Soren to the hilt. The fact that the JMM leader has been chargesheeted in two cases cuts no ice with a man who is chargesheeted himself but rules the state by proxy. He can pretend that everyone has forgotten the manner in which he used the JMM for his own benefit and discarded it when he had no use for it. The point is that Laloo, the Congress and other breakaway groups, Leftists and Independents are all scrambling for a piece of the Jharkhand cake. The best way they can get it is to raise the tribal banner, play the caste card shamelessly and eulogise Sibu Soren's secular credentials. And Soren himself is pliable.

The NDA partners are certainly no silent spectators. They have the advantage of numbers, the BJP having 32 seats in an 81-member House. All they need to do is to hold their flock together, which is why they promptly dispatched Nitish Kumar to appease disgruntled Samata members. But the point is that the BJP may finally be compelled to concede the chief ministership to Soren. Given his tainted record, that may not inspire tribals themselves who have discarded their erstwhile heroes. But the JMM's tally of 12 seats may make all the difference. The signs are not propitious. The silver lining is that tribals can no longer be taken for granted.

THE STATESMAN

21 AUG 2000

Does India need more States?

By Devesh Kapur

HD-12

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THE RECENT carving out of three new States (Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Uttaranchal from Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh respectively) has raised concerns that this could amplify rather than dampen instability. Fears have been raised that in a society as heterogeneous as India's, creating new States may simply open a Pandora's Box, with an ever-growing list of claimants. This, it is argued, could not only result in a further ethnification of Indian society (presumably at the cost of national integration) but also add additional wasteful administrative expenses in new capitals, bureaucracies and Ministries. Large States may diversify risk while enjoying economies of scale and scope, which could be lost upon breakup. Indeed with eight (possibly more) candidates in the wings — three additional States from Uttar Pradesh (Purbanchal in the east, Harit Pradesh in the west and Bundelkhand in the south), Bodoland (from Assam), Gorkhaland (from West Bengal), Telengana (from Andhra Pradesh), Vidarbha (from Maharashtra) and Saurashtra (from Gujarat) the question, "Does India need more States?" needs some reflection. Should more States be created and how would India's development trajectory change if this were to occur?

The answer is a qualified yes. The country is more likely to benefit from a greater number of (smaller) States, than the status quo, notwithstanding the aforementioned concerns. Even with the creation of three new States, India still has just over half as many States as the U.S., with four times the population. In particular, the creation of additional sub-national units offers an institutional solution that could help check the growing economic divergence among States, without sacrificing economic efficiency.

There are several arguments that suggest a strong political and economic imperative for a greater number of States in the Indian Union. First, this allows for greater competition among States as well as for more experimentation and innovation. Both act as a positive force for reforms. There is considerable evidence that such market-preserving federalism has been an important political factor that has helped the rapid diffusion of reforms

across sub-national units in China. The competition amongst Indian States to attract investment attests to this reality. Second, smaller States will have relatively more homogenous preferences. The tribals of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar may have a different set of priorities than the majority population of the State. The creation of new States allows groups to choose Governments whose policy choices are more in line with their preferences. This is likely to make policy-making less onerous and (other things being equal) is likely to mitigate political instability. Third, smaller States means smaller political stakes. India's problem today is not centralisation of

of governance. Vertically, there are likely to be fewer hierarchies in administrative structures, which improves the quality of information that decision-makers receive. And horizontally, the span of control is smaller, allowing for greater focus.

India's historical experience with state reorganisation, in two main phases the mid-1950s and the late 1960s, has also been reassuring. The major reorganisations were in the South, West, the Northwest (Punjab) and the Northeast. Analytically the interesting question is whether smaller units carved up from the larger entity have done better than the whole. While categorical evidence is not

three critical issues need to be addressed if the potential benefits of additional sub-national units are to be realised. One, India needs to considerably strengthen institutional mechanisms for collective action across state boundaries. This is particularly so since it is possible that the benefits at the state level may result in greater instability at the national level, if one result of a greater number of States is to further fragment political parties. The Inter-State Council offers a mechanism for inter-state coordination and its recent decision to implement a uniform floor rate for sales tax and value-added tax, and to withhold a fraction of Central Plan assistance from States which do not adopt the uniform floor rate, is a good example of efforts to limit the race to the bottom in States tax regimes. On the other hand, the poor record of inter-State water tribunals in resolving disputes points to the continued weakness of inter-State coordination mechanisms, and with environmental concerns and water shortages bound to become even more pressing, the consequences will become increasingly adverse. The refusal by States to sanction the creation of a federal police force and attempts to weaken Article 311 of the Constitution (on the federal civil service) are also tragically short-sighted. The role of the federal civil service as an institution of coordination needs strengthening.

A second danger arises from the possibility of increased parochialism, manifest in anti-migrant sentiment or barriers to movements of goods. Firm efforts must be made to abolish all barriers to inter-State movements of factor and goods, especially labour mobility. Finally the procedural requirements for creating new States need greater transparency beyond the Government's current official position: a resolution by the State Assembly and economic viability. In addition, a constitutional requirement of a minimum population size (say one crore) for a new State as well as a super-majority vote (at least sixty per cent) through a referendum in the districts seeking to form a new State would ensure that much needed expansion does not degenerate into political brinkmanship.

(The writer is Assistant Professor of Government, Harvard University.)

There are several arguments that suggest a strong political and economic imperative for a greater number of States in the Indian Union.

available, the general impression is that States that emerged from these reorganisations have done better. The experience of Himachal Pradesh, which today has emerged after Kerala as the exemplar in human development, is a good example of the possibilities and value of local experimentation, consequent to break-up of larger units. The only region that remained unaffected was the BIMARU States.

To be sure, creating new States is no panacea for India's problems and evidence from the Northeast could be cited to demonstrate that smaller States do not necessarily result in better economic performance. But the counterfactual in that region is hardly likely to have been better. Still, there are significant issues that need to be addressed before a further set of new States is created. The least of the problems is the one most cited, namely an increase in fixed administrative costs. They will indeed increase but modestly so. Given current excess staff at all levels of the Government in India, newer States need not mean an overall expansion in Government payrolls although there certainly are some additional expenses that come with a new state capital etc.

With most Indian States still larger than most countries, the case for the benefits of state breakup is very strong. However,

power between the first and second tiers of Government (i.e. between the federal and sub-national Governments) but between the second and third tiers of Government (i.e. between States and local Governments).

Four, in large States with extensive natural resources, the natural resource curse thesis means that the sub-regions with the resources inevitably suffer (east Madhya Pradesh and southern Bihar are good examples). The demands from north Bihar politicians for compensation for the loss of the natural wealth of south Bihar underscores this point. If anything, it is the latter who should be claiming compensation for decades of stolen wealth. Five, if the quality of political leadership is a random variable, and the probability of a good leader being elected is low, dividing a State improves the probability that one of the units gets a good leader. If good leadership results in higher growth then by itself this will not change the overall average. However, if competition and spatial diffusion of innovation and other neighbourhood effects matter, then a virtuous circle of State-level reforms could result. Finally, since all structures of organising Government are pyramidal, smaller size of sub-national units also has two further advantages that are likely to improve the quality

Boundary Management

A New Round in Political Contests

By MAHESH RANGARAJAN

THE creation of three new states carved out of the Hindi heartland is a significant step in redrawing the internal boundaries of India. More than anything, this will further loosen the grip of the two large Hindi-speaking states, Uttar Pradesh and Bihar on the polity. Such a denouement is in itself not a negative development. In any case, the last decade of political turmoil and social fragmentation in these provinces has prepared the way for their dismemberment. While it will not be easy to put the genie back in the bottle, this need not be seen as the first step towards the break-up of other states of the Union. In fact, having endorsed the partitioning of the two most populous states, the leaderships in the other regions now have a vested interest in working overtime to retain their states in the present form.

N Chandrababu Naidu, the chief minister of Andhra Pradesh, is on record against the creation of smaller entities. His contention is that, the process, if carried to its logical conclusion, will only reinforce the political and economic clout of the Centre on national affairs. Small states, as in the North-east, have a tendency to be more financially dependent on handouts from the Union. In some cases, they have proved unable to bear the burden of combating insurgency; in virtually all, the productive base has not been wide enough to give them scope for financial self-reliance. The progress towards a more federal polity will be retarded and not facilitated by breaking up the medium-sized states.

The linguistic regions outside of northern India have certain features of a shared culture and common bonds that unite them. The birth of Andhra Pradesh reinforced a deep sense of regional pride without in any way adversely affecting the sense of being part of a larger entity called India. Regional parties like the Telugu Desam or for that matter the Shiv Sena would stand to lose their *raison d'être* if the very region whose interests they champion is dismembered. In fact, the borders of the states in the entire peninsula as well as the eastern and western flanks of the country are organised on linguistic lines. Touch their borders and Laloo Yadav's calls to oppose the bifurcation of Bihar will pale in comparison with the unrest that will follow.

By way of contrast, federalist

agendas have never been a priority in northern India. In Hindi-speaking India, virtually all politicians from Mulayam Singh Yadav to Ram Prakash Gupta do not question the logic of having a strong Centre. In a sense, they believe that the Hindi belt constitutes the heartland of a unified all-India polity. The absence of deep regionalist sentiments only strengthens this resolve.

Yet, the next set of logical candidates for statehood is all located in linguistic states. In the east, there are demands for Gorkhaland in West Bengal and a Bodo state to be carved up from Assam. The slogans of Telengana and Vidarbha have never quite lost their emotional appeal. It is only over the next decade or so that the drama will unfold fully.

There is a spoke in the wheel, namely the implications of the re-

IN BRIEF

- The last decade of political turmoil has prepared the grounds for the break-up of bigger states
- Federalist agendas have never been a priority in northern Indian
- Smaller states will enhance the chances of regional satraps playing a greater role in Union politics
- New political alignments will come about as a result of redrawing boundaries

duction of the relative weight of large Hindi belt states. Maharashtra with its 48 seats will now elect the second largest block of MPs in the next Lok Sabha. Next in the line will be West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh with 42 MPs each. This will enhance the chances of a regional satrap playing an even weightier role in the politics of the Union.

The transformation at the all India level will also have its counterpart within the rumps of the provinces that are being broken up. In both Bihar and UP, the *savarna* Hindu groups who dominated politics until recently will emerge much weaker. Not only that, in the former case, the questions of land reform that successive leaderships in Patna have swept under the carpet will probably move to centre stage. The loss of well over half the annu-

al revenues of the state may also force a rethink on the issues of economic growth that have so far taken a backseat to the division of the spoils of office. Counter currents that challenge the dominant classes in the agrarian sector are likely to get a boost. These trends will be accentuated by the Union government's inability to meet the extravagant demands emanating from the state for a compensatory financial package.

The power struggle in Lucknow will centre more on the rival claims of the Dalit and Mandal-led camps and far less on the ability of the two key upper caste-led formations, the BJP and the Congress. All in all, the decks are being cleared for a new round in political contests. What little the Hindutva party gains in the form of a *savarna* majority state in the Uttarakhand region, it is may have to forfeit in the plains areas of the UP. Due to its sheer numerical preponderance, Uttar Pradesh will remain a key battleground for aspirants to power in New Delhi, though it may not easily regain the status of the decisive arena of contest.

Madhya Pradesh alone will not see a major change in the social line-up, except for the loss of the heavily *adivasi*-inhabited eastern parts to Chhatisgarh. All three states will be impoverished by the loss of valuable mineral, hydropower or forested regions, forcing a reassessment of developmental strategies and plans. But MP will perhaps fare better due to the growing links of the western half of the province with Maharashtra's markets, increasing wheat production of the Narmada valley and the better investment picture as compared with its north Indian counterparts.

In the short term, the ruling alliance in New Delhi hopes to reap the benefits of the re-ordering of boundaries in North India. Such hopes may well be realised in Uttarakhand. In the other two new entities, there are other seasoned players who have held fast to the slogan of statehood long before the votaries of Hindutva. Now that the dream has come true, there is little to stop an *adivasi*-led Jharkhand party from joining hands with the powers that be in Patna. Similarly, the Congress is no pushover in Chhatisgarh. All in all, a new phase in politics is about to unfold, and many surprises lie ahead.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

23 AUG 2000

Violence in Bodoland

THE ASSASSINATIONS of Bodo Sahitya Sabha chief Bineswar Brahma and People's Democratic Front legislator Mohini Basumatary by suspected National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) militants threaten to shatter the relative peace that Bodo-inhabited districts of Assam have enjoyed of late. It is unfortunate that bomb blasts, ambushes and mindless killings of innocent people have continued to be the hallmarks of the Bodo ultras. Quite often the Bodo militants have indulged in more bloodletting than the ULFA extremists. However, while the cause taken up by the Bodo groups has received some support, the sharp division in their ranks, including fratricidal violence, and the growing disillusionment among the ordinary people with their terror tactics have gone a long way to blunt their mass appeal. Bodo leaders have long exploited the people's sense of isolation and resentment at the domination by what they describe as Assamese chauvinism. But the situation is changing.

One person who was trying to bring the feuding Bodo groups together was Bineswar Brahma, a leading light of the Bodo literary world. He was also a votary of the Devnagari script for Bodo language. Groups opposed to peace apparently didn't like any of this and chose to silence his enlightened voice. For long the Centre has chosen to deal only with moderate Bodo groups even though they were outmanoeuvred by the militants. Now that the Centre has suspended the anti-insurgency operations against the Bodo ultras and has initiated peace talks with the Bodo Liberation Tigers (BLT), a comparatively weaker group, the better armed outfits like the Bodo Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF) and the NDFB have unleashed a new campaign of violence to frustrate the peace moves.

The fresh spurt of violence may have the objective of demonstrating the extremists' fire power. There was a time when ULFA, too, received some support in Assam. But its campaign of mindless violence soon undermined its position. The same is now apparently happening to the Bodos. The best strategy to solve the Bodo tangle will be to make a determined effort to bring all the groups to the negotiating table. The peace initiative in Nagaland has created a good momentum. The success of the peace talks will have a sobering effect on sub-nationalist movements in the rest of the North-Eastern states.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 AUG 2000

Jharkhand CM issue premature: Nitish

BY OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

AA-2
MS
New Delhi, Aug. 25: Samata Party leader Nitish Kumar said on Friday that there was no logic in debating the leadership issue of Jharkhand as it was too premature for that.

Skirting the issue of chief ministership of the new state, Mr Kumar said when the time comes the NDA will collectively take a decision.

"But I can assure you that the NDA, which along with JMM has 53 MLAs, will form the government in Jharkhand," he told reporters on Friday. He refused to comment on whether the NDA had assured JMM leader Shibu Soren of support for the chief ministership of the proposed new state

when he (Mr Kumar) was hoisted as the chief minister of Bihar in March this year for seven days. "There is no sense in talking about these issues till the President issues a notification," he said.

It may be recalled that Mr Kumar was at the forefront of negotiations, along with defence minister George Fernandes, in March and the JMM had agreed to support his candidature only on the condition that they, in turn, would support Mr Soren for the top post whenever the new state was created. The Samata Party, however, has been avoiding the issue in the wake of statements by BJP leaders that being the largest party it was the natural claimant for the chief ministership.

Meanwhile, all the 12 JMM MLAs called on Union home minister L.K. Advani and demanded that Mr Soren be declared the chief minister of Jharkhand at the earliest. They also demanded that the Centre declare the name of the governor of Jharkhand too.

Meanwhile, in a statement issued to the press, the JMM MLAs have demanded that the Prime Minister, home minister and defence minister declare their support for Mr Soren at the earliest.

JMM legislative party leader Stephen Marandi told reporters on Friday that Ranchi, the proposed capital of Jharkhand, had all the infrastructural facilities to run a government as it had already served as the summer capital of

g-Devesh PMS
Bihar in the past, so there was no need for the Centre to wait for declaring the state.

The MLAs reminded the NDA that claiming leadership on the basis of numbers was not correct as in the past too the BJP had agreed to hoist Mr Nitish Kumar as the chief minister of Bihar in deference of public opinion though the Samata Party was not the largest party then.

"The same criteria should be adopted now and in deference of public opinion Mr Soren should be declared the chief minister of Jharkhand," they demanded. They said they will not accept anybody except Mr Soren as the chief minister of Jharkhand when it is declared a state.

THE ASIAN AGE

26 AUG 2000

No need for a tribal CM: Digvijay

MP CM favours his Home Minister Bihar parties demand package

SANJIV SINHA
NEW DELHI, AUG 26

MADHYA Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijay Singh has contended that the first Chief Minister of Chhattisgarh needn't be a tribal.

"Simply because a majority of the MLAs are tribals and the state has a predominantly tribal population, it doesn't mean that the chief minister too has to be from that community," Singh told reporters yesterday. A section of the party has raised the demand that the first chief minister of the new state should be a tribal.

Carved out from Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh is set to have a Congress government when it becomes a reality on November 1. Singh said he didn't subscribe to the view that only tribals can look after the interests and welfare of the tribal community. "I am not a tribal or a Dalit but I can tell you that a majority of both the communities in the state are with us...most of our seats in the last Assembly elections came from the tribal region," Singh asserted.

The Chief Minister's remarks assume significance since he will play a key role in the selection of the chief minister of the new state. Singh is himself in favour of state Home Minister and OBC leader from Chhattisgarh, Nand Kumar Patel, while central leaders from the state such as Arjun Singh and Kamal Nath have been pushing for tribal candidates.

His reluctance in backing a tribal for the CM's post is likely to trigger a keen power struggle within the party since Arjun is backing Raja Sabha MP and tribal leader Jhumak Lal Bhedra while Kamal Nath has put his weight behind party spokesperson Ajit Jogi.

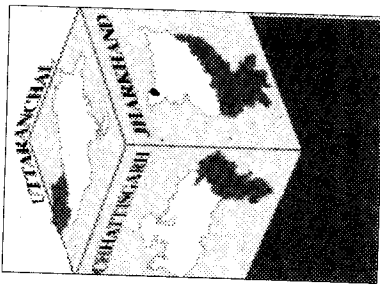
Former Union Minister Arvind Netam, a tribal, too has been lobbying hard among central leaders for the top post. The fact remains that Digvijay, left to him, will not want any of them at the helm of Chhattisgarh because of old rivalries.

The Chief Minister, who was in the Capital to discuss his state's annual plan expenditure with the Planning Commission, asserted that there would be no immediate expansion of his cabinet after the formation of Chhattisgarh.

Digvijay also lauded the recommendations of the 11th Finance Commission, which were the subject of criticism at a recent summit hosted by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu and attended by the chief ministers of Punjab, Haryana and Kerala.

DEVESH KUMAR
NEW DELHI, AUG 26

THE recommendations of the Eleventh Finance Commission has brought the ever-squabbling MPs from Bihar together. At a meeting convened by Union Agriculture Minister Nitish Kumar yesterday members ranging from the ideologically-opposite camps of BJP, Samata Party and JD (U), on the one hand, and the Congress, RJD and the CPI (M), on the other, got together to urge the Centre to rebuff the pressure-tactics being employed by Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu on the issue.



REMAPPING THE STATES

The meeting, which was attended by 47 of the 56 MPs hailing from what would remain of Bihar after the state of Jharkhand is carved out, also decided to identify the developmental projects which were to be completed on an urgent basis. The Centre would be asked to fund these projects.

The meeting also decided to consti-

tute a core group which would identify and study these projects. Based on their report, the Centre would be asked to announce a financial package for the rebuilding of post-Jharkhand Bihar. The Union Agriculture Minister has been authorised to name the members of this group. Invitations for the meeting were sent to all the 56 MPs (40 from the Lok Sabha, the remaining 16 from Raja Sabha) hailing from north and central Bihar. It was followed by dinner, which was hosted by Kumar's trusted lieutenant and Raja Sabha MP Rajiv Ranjan Singh, better known as Lallan Singh.

The Samata Party, to which the two leaders belong, has simultaneously decided to hold a rally in Patna on October 19, which happens to be the party foundation day. One of the main aims of the rally is to ensure that the Centre's promise to provide the necessary financial assistance to Bihar is fulfilled, Singh and state Samata president Raghunath Jha told reporters here. The Samata Party has already demanded a financial package of Rs 52,000 crore from the Centre for the task of rebuilding Bihar after the mineral-rich region of Jharkhand is carved out. Not to be behind, the Bihar Assembly has made out a case for a whopping Rs 179 crore as compensation to the state.

KPP to tie up with GNLF

JOYDEEP SEN GUPTA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SILIGURI, Aug 28. The Kamtapur Peoples Party has decided to align with the GNLF in its programme for a separate Kamtapur state in the plains of North Bengal.

It will also back the GNLF in its renewed demand for Gorkhaland.

The KPP will try for an electoral tie up with Trinamul Congress with an eye on the Assembly polls next year. Talks are already on between the two parties. Not that such an alliance will be a new development. Only last year during the Siliguri Mahakuma Parishad polls the two parties had forged an alliance against Left Front.

■ See KPP: page 4

KPP: wants talks with GNLF

(Continued from page 1)

The KPP and its student wing, the All Kamtapuri Students' Union have set themselves a time frame — the end of 2001 — for achieving the demand for a Kamtapur state.

Speaking of the KPP's strategy, the party president, Mr Atul Roy, said: "Time is ripe to hold talks with Mr Subash Ghisingh to exert pressure on both the Centre and the state to find a lasting solution to the demands for separate Kamtapur and Gorkhaland states. If the ethnic Kamtapuris, who constitute the bulk of North Bengal's population, insist on an armed struggle the party will not hesitate to plunge into it," he said.

He even described the insurgent Kamtapur Liberation Organisation activists as "patriots", and acknowledged their sacrifice. Till recently, the role of the KLO — which has allegedly been operating from the hideouts in south Bhutan where it is being supported by the the Ulf and NDFB — has been undermined by the KPP. He said the Kamtapur movement will not stop short of a separate state since the Kamtapuris have the requisite numerical strength to pass the muster. There are around 15 million Kamtapuri-speaking people in North Bengal, according to Mr Roy. Mobilising the KPP support base — evenly distributed in the vast plain tracts of North Bengal — seems to be the party's immediate political ploy.

THE STATESMAN

29 AUG 2000

Jharkhand likely to cause split in RJD

UNITED NEW OF INDIA
RANCHI, JULY 26

THE issue of Jharkhand statehood is likely to cause a split in Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) in the region. A section of partymen from the region had strongly reacted to party member Raghuvanshi Prasad Singh's statement opposing the creation of Jharkhand. This section of the RJD had categorically said that they would be forced to revolt against the partyline if any attempt was made to obstruct the state's formation.

According to political observers here the RJD was faced with 'a-do-or-die' situation where any slackness on part of the party in supporting the statehood issue might prove 'suicidal'. The party might even lose whatever little of the tribal support it had, observers believed. Even the Congress, which had been closely supporting the RJD in Bihar, is trapped be-

27/7
between the 'devil and the deep sea' on the Jharkhand issue.

But the worst affected were the 11 legislators from this tribal belt, who were members of the state council of ministers. For them a withdrawal of support to the RJD would mean relinquishing their ministerial berths, while continuing to support the RJD might hamper their future electoral prospects in case the RJD obstructed the introduction of the Bihar State Reorganisation Bill 2000 on the floor of the Parliament today.

Meanwhile RJD senior leader and Minister of State for Road Transport Yamuna Prasad said that the party's decision to oppose the issue might have a direct fallout on

regional problems
Party is faced with a do-or-die situation where laxity in supporting new state could prove to be suicidal

the prospects of the Rabri Devi government in Bihar. Not favouring the obstruction of the Bill he said that he did not agree with the RJD parliamentary party's decision on this matter. Continuity of the Rabri Devi government depended on the action likely to be taken by the Congress, he admitted.

The RJD men from Jharkhand had urged the party leadership to reconsider the decision taken by the parliamentary party and to support the formation of Jharkhand which had been a popular demand in the 18 districts of south Bihar. The party would commit *hara-kiri* if it opposed the Bill, said senior RJD leader Uday Shanker Ojha.

Meanwhile, Congressmen strongly reacting to the RJD's statement had urged the party high command to withdraw support to the Rabri Devi government in Bihar. A request in this regard was faxed to All India Congress Committee chief Sonia Gandhi by Jharkhand Regional Congress Backward Cell.

Reportedly the Backward Cell leader Vijay Sahu, had urged the party high command to direct the Congress legislators to tender their resignation in protest against the RJD's *vote face* on the statehood issue. The RJD's statement against Jharkhand had also been opposed by former high court judge Justice LPN Sahdeo.

He said the Lok Sabha Speaker must not spare those mps who obstructed the introduction of the Bihar State Reorganisation Bill, as the decision to table it had been taken by the members before the speaker during the last budget session.

INDIAN EXPRESS

27 JUL 2000

Kamtapuris team up with N-E rebels

10/7
7-9
OUR BUREAU

Guwahati, July 9: The Koch-Rajbongshi community is demanding a separate state on grounds that they are being swamped by illegal migrants from Bangladesh.

The proposed state, according to Rajbongshis, should comprise Cooch Behar, Jalpaiguri, South and North Dinajpur, parts of Darjeeling, Dhubri, Goalpara, Bongaigaon and Kokrajhar districts of Assam.

The movement is being spearheaded by three organisations—the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO), the Koch-Rajbongshi Liberation Organisation (KRLO) and the Koch-Rajbongshi Security Force (KRSF).

Activists of these organisations said the primary aim of their movement was the right to "self-determination." The KLO's goal is to "restore the lost identity of the Koch-Rajbongshis by carving out

a separate state." According to police and other sources, members of these organisations have "close contacts with northeastern militant groups like the Ulfa and the Bodo factions." The KLO, KRLO and KRSF activists have been undergoing training along the Assam-Bengal and the Assam-Bhutan international border for quite some time now.

By the end of 1998, a group of 50 Koch-Rajbongshi youth had already been trained at an Ulfa camp located on the southern Indo-Bhutan border.

Following Bhutan government's eviction notice to all northeastern outfits holed up in the country, many Ulfa and Bodo extremists have now taken shelter along the Assam-Bengal border, which the Koch-Rajbongshis dominate.

These organisations work on a quid pro quo basis. Ulfa and Bodo extremists help train members of Koch-Rajbongshi outfits while the

latter makes arrangements for injured Ulfa and Bodo activists to receive treatment at private nursing homes in North Bengal under false names. According to sources in the West Bengal police department, the Assam-Bengal border is a haven for Koch-Rajbongshi militants. The Kamtapur People's Party (KPP), a political unit formed in 1992, has also joined in the clamour for a separate state.

The KPP also won a few gram panchayat seats in the village council polls this time and submitted a 11-point charter of demands to the Centre. The demands include a separate Kamtapur state, issuing of inner line permits and recognition of the Kamtapuri language.

The All-Kamtapur Students' Union (AKSU) has also demanded implementation of their 13-point charter of demands, which includes the demand for recognition of the Kamtapuri language.

THE TELEGRAPH

10 JUL 2000

Fresh stir for Uttarakhand on the cards

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DEHRA DUN, July 23. — The clouds of what not many hope would be the last round of agitations for a separate state are gathering over the hills of Uttarakhand even as nervousness grips state's ruling party over the fate of the impending Bill in the coming session of Parliament.

Different outfits are gearing up for a round of protests aimed at sending signals to the Centre that yet another failure to get through the necessary piece of legislation for a separate state would evoke adverse reaction from the otherwise dependable electorate.

On the other hand, the utterings and the lack of categorical assurances from responsible BJP representatives suggest that not even the ruling party is sure that the UP State Reorganisation Bill would be okayed this session.

While the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal has been trying to drum up support here and in the rest of Garhwal and Kumaon for a "jail bhara" stir tomorrow, other organisations

would seek to focus attention on the statehood demand through a day-long bandh, followed by other agitations. The Chhatra Sangharsh Samiti of Kumaon, the Uttarakhand Chhatra Yuva Ekta Manch of Dehra Dun, the Uttarakhand Mahila Manch, the association of ex-servicemen and ex-paramilitary men and the lawyers' association of Uttarakhand are among those preparing for the bandh. A "maharally" and demonstrations in the capital are also on the cards.

The refrain with which BJP leaders have been talking about the likelihood of the Bill — pending since the United Front government first prepared a draft in late 1996 — getting approved in the forthcoming session shows their lack of confidence.

Party spokesmen have in fact been peddling the view that the Uttarakhandis should settle for a Union Territory status. This move, while not being acceptable to most outfits, shows that a section of the mainstream politicians tend to view the ongoing attempt at carving out a separate territorial entity as

nothing but an administrative matter.

Mr SS Pangti, a retired bureaucrat who has formed his own regional party, maintained that UT status would be acceptable only if entails a Vidhan Sabha. Though it's clear that the Centre may not immediately make a move to abandon the Uttarakhand Bill — one that has become controversial because of the question of including Hardwar and the amendments suggested by the UP Vidhan Sabha on the control over the region's resources and assets, the fact that suggestions to consider the UT status are being circulated indicate that efforts are on to make a prior assessment of the mass response to a further postponement of the Bill.

Whatever be the motive, not even the most incorrigible optimists would expect a statehood Bill, accompanied by two other similar Bills, to get approved by both Houses during a session spanning less than a month. In the last session, the Bill couldn't even be introduced.

GNLF WANTS GORKHALAND BILL

Says meeting
with Advani
was positive

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 14: The Gorkha National Liberation Front has demanded that Gorkhaland be created along with Chhatisgarh, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand. The organisation has stated that immediate steps should be taken to include Gorkhaland in the list of new states in the official bill on the matter which the government plans to table in the forthcoming session of Parliament.

Speaking to reporters, presidents of the three GNLFF branch committees C.K. Pradhan of Kalimpong, Deepak Gurung of Darjeeling and I.N. Pradhan of Kurseong disclosed that they had met Union home minister L.K. Advani on the issue on June 12 and claimed that his response was positive. "We hope that the government includes Gorkhaland in the list of new states," said Mr Gurung.

He said, "We are highly disappointed and surprised by the omission of the long standing demand for the separate state of Gorkhaland from the active attention of the government of India. We wish to state that the GNLFF had only temporarily suspended its demand for a separate state in 1988 to honour the call of the then Prime Minister, as the government was not considering creation of states at that point of time. However, now that the government has recognised the need for creation of new states for the betterment of the deprived segments of major states, it is felt that creation of Gorkhaland should be on top of the agenda."

Mr Gurung further said, "The Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, which had been created on an experimental basis, had died

Turn to Page 2

THE ASIAN AGE

15 JUN 2000

GNLF wants Gorkhaland

■ Continued from Page 1

with the 73rd Amendment to the Indian Constitution." Addressing a query he said, "The existence of Gorkhaland is economically viable since 54 per cent of land in the proposed state is forest land. In addition to this, the area produces a lot of tea and other cash crops. Tourism of course continues to be the main industry." He said that even the CPI(M) which is in power in West Bengal, the state from which the new state is to be carved out, should support their demand.

The proposed Gorkhaland comprises of Darjeeling district and the western Dooars upto the western banks of Sankosh river. Mr Gurung claimed that Darjeeling is still not "constitutionally" a part of India as its status has changed from being a non-regulated area under the British to a scheduled and then a backward area.

He pointed out that if the government does not pay any attention to the demand of GNLF, there will be strikes in the area and this time the agitation will be worse than the last time. "If last time there was a strike for 40 days there can be one for more than 100 days this time which will lead to cutting off of the Seven Sisters in the Northeast from the rest of the country. We definitely do not want to go back to the situation that prevailed in 1986," he said.

THE ASIAN AGE

15 JUN 2000

Joint fight planned for Uttarakhand

^{10-9 24/6}
NEW DELHI, JUNE 23. As many as 23 organisations, including political parties, fighting for the common goal of Uttarakhand, have come together under one umbrella constituting the "Uttarakhand Kendriya Sanyukta Sangharsh Samiti" (UKSSS) to fight unitedly for a separate hill state.

These organisations which have come together under the leadership of the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD), include the CPI, CPI-ML (Liberation), Nationalist Congress Party, Janata Dal (United) Uttarakhand Jan Vikas Party, Saya, Uttarakhand Chhatra Sangh, Uttarakhand Janata Sangharsh Morcha, and Bhootpoorva Sainik Sangathan (Ex-servicemen's organisation).

All the parties and organisations will continue to pursue their individual policies for achieving the goal of Uttarakhand.

The former president of the Uttarakhand Kranti Dal (UKD), Mr. Kashi Singh Airy, has been elected its president. A 21-member committee was constituted on June 21 in Dehra Dun to frame and formulate the UKSSS policies.

The meeting decided to keep away from the BJP,

Congress and other national and regional parties which are opposed to the formation of a separate Uttarakhand, Mr. Airy said.

The newly committee could develop into a viable political alternative to the BJP and the Congress in the area, Mr. Airy said adding that a mass awareness programme would be launched in July in the Uttarakhand region. — UNI

Ranvir Sena men clash

ARA (BIHAR), JUNE 23. Four activists of the banned Ranvir Sena, a private army of upper caste landowners, were injured when two groups of the outfit clashed on Thursday at Illamchak village in extremist-hit Bhojpur district, police said.

Clashes broke out when a Sena activist, Mangal Rai, was shot at and critically injured by some supporters of the rival faction of the organisation. The rival group resisted an extortion bid by Rai, police said. — PTI

THIRUVARUR

24 JUN 2000

Chhattisgarh delay prompts protest

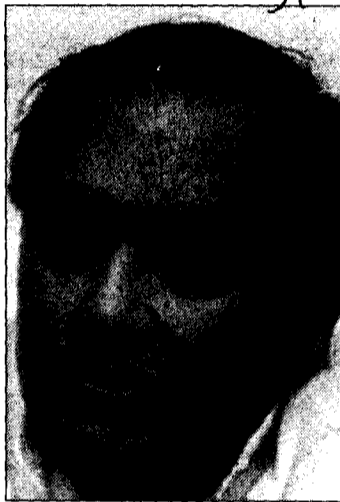
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25/6

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHOPAL, June 24. — Thousands today courted arrest in the Chhattisgarh region to protest against the "inordinate delay" in the creation of Chhattisgarh state.

The protesters — assembled under the banner of the Chhattisgarh Rajya Sangharsh Morcha headed by Mr VC Shukla, blamed the NDA government for the "delay".

Among those courted arrest were a few Congress MLAs loyal to Mr Shukla. Mr Shukla courted arrest in Mahasumund — the Lok Sabha constituency of his elder brother and former chief minister, Mr SC Shukla. The CRSM leader claimed that people from all walks of life — including government employees, teachers, traders and professionals — participated in



Mr Digvijay Singh

today's stir.

The 'jail bhara andolan' was part of a series of agitations planned by the CRSM to "compel" the Vajpayee government

to get the Chhattisgarh Bill passed in upcoming monsoon session of Parliament.

The CRSM has given a call for Chhattisgarh bandh on 20 July to press their demand. The bandh would be followed by a demonstration in front of Parliament on 24 July, Mr Shukla said. The CRSM also plan to gherao two Union ministers (BJP) from Chhattisgarh — Mr Ramesh Bais and Mr Raman Singh — in New Delhi.

Mr SC Shukla didn't participate in today's stir. He reportedly said there was no need for such a campaign since the state is being ruled by the Congress.

The state Congress distanced itself from the campaign. The PCC chief, Mr Radhakishan Malviya, however, said the party has no objections to workers participating in the CRSM's programmes.

THE STATESMAN

25 JUN 2000

Udham Singh Nagar issue rocks Punjab Assembly

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHANDIGARH, April 4. — The Udham Singh Nagar controversy today resurfaced in the Punjab Assembly, with dissidents in the ruling Akali Dal and the lone BSP MLA staging a dharna in the well of the House.

Mr Jagjit Singh (Congress) raised the issue, asking the Akalis if they still stood by their stand of withdrawing from the NDA government if Udham Singh Nagar was not excluded from the proposed Uttaranchal state.

Akali dissidents, led by former minister Mr Maheshinder Singh Grewal, wanted to know the fate of the three-member committee — comprising the Punjab and UP chief ministers and the Union defence minister, Mr George Fernandes — that was supposed to resolve the issue. He also asked the Punjab BJP to clarify its stand on the issue.

The dissidents, loyal to the former SGPC chief Mr GS Tohra, took the opportunity in taking pot-shots at the Parkash Singh Badal government.

Along with the BSP MLA, they then staged the dharna. They returned to their seats after being persuaded by some Congress MLAs.

House adjourned: The Assembly was adjourned for 10 minutes today after Akali dissidents protested against the government's move to include Rai Sikhs and Rajputs in the category of Scheduled Castes and Tribes. They went to the well of the House, raising slogans against the government.

A BJP MLA joined the Akalis in denouncing the government's move.

GNLF renews statehood call

(Continued from page 1)

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING, April 5. — The GNLF today renewed its demand for a Gorkhaland state, 20 years to the day it was first raised.

The call came at a huge rally in Chowk Bazar, held to observe the GNLF's 'Gorkhaland Revival Day' from the presidents of the party's three branch committees. Mr Subash Ghisingh was absent, but there is little doubt that the demand was renewed at his promptings.

The branch chiefs — Mr Dipak Gurung (Darjeeling), Mr IN Pradhan (Kurseong) and Mr CK Pradhan (Kalimpong) — spoke in the presence of nearly all the DGHC councillors. They carried with them the crowd which shouted slogans such as "Bengal is a graveyard" and "we want nothing less than Gorkhaland".

But many feel Mr Ghisingh's real objective is to pressure the Centre and the state into bringing the DGHC area within the ambit of the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, according the Darjeeling hills the status of a tribal region.

Another motive might be to stall the panchayat samity elections in the hills, scheduled for next month, they believe. The renewed statehood demand could provide Mr Ghisingh a lever to wrest an assurance from the state government that the upcoming

hill rural polls would be a single-tier exercise, leading to the formation only of gram panchayats. Mr Ghisingh has long argued that constitution of panchayat samities would be an infringement on the DGHC's powers.

The rhetoric at the three-hour meeting was, however, for a break from West Bengal. The speakers warned that if the "Centre this time doesn't take the statehood demand seriously, the party will launch a movement for a sovereign country". The renewed movement would "not necessarily be a violent one, unless we are forced by the state government to act otherwise".

The DGHC has somehow functioned for the past ten years, but "will be locked up" at a sign from Mr Ghisingh. Earlier, activists flaunting green party flags, their foreheads smeared with vermilion, gathered at Batasia Loop near Ghoom and marched towards the venue. Traffic was disrupted throughout the duration of the rally.

■ See GNLF: page 4

PRETENDER PREVAILS

5/9/80
When in need, cry Gorkhaland
NO one disputes the fact that Subash Ghisingh is a tactician *par excellence*. He keeps everyone from the Marxists to his rivals in Darjeeling in their place. He has called strikes, boycotts, made deals with sworn enemies, played off one colleague against another to ensure his supremacy in the GNLF and the hill council. But there are devices that are neither credible nor novel — like Gorkhaland. Shot down both by the state and whenever has been at the Centre over the last ten years, it's a slogan Ghisingh as well as his his rivals in the Gorkhaland Samjukta Morcha know will sell during election time. He has the added advantage of using it — with a minor variation called the Revive Gorkhaland Day — to push a private agenda which simply means more power and money. The device, surprisingly, still sells. He has manipulated the hill people, suggesting statehood can be forgotten when the going is good and remembered each time there is a danger signal.

This has happened again. Ghisingh has reason to be concerned about the United Democratic Front threatening to usurp the statehood slogan but also about infighting in his own backyard that led to violent clashes, and one murder, during the last hill council elections. The Revive Gorkhaland Day kills many birds with one stone. It silences his critics. It prepares the ground for negotiations with the state on *gram panchayat* elections but stalls formation of *panchayat samitis* which will constitute another centre of power. It also becomes a bargaining point with the Centre while demanding that Darjeeling be accorded the status of a tribal region and hence eligible for more development funds. If all this can be achieved simply by crying Gorkhaland and reviving the blood-stained memories of 1986, it is no great sin to take his audience in Darjeeling for a ride. It is, in fact, the audience in Calcutta and Delhi that he is targetting. Concessions are hard to come by given his dismal record that has left what was once the queen of hill stations in a sorry state. But he will have proved in the bargain that he has tried desperately and failed. For everyone else, it is the pretender who goes on.

THE STATESMAN

39 APR 2000

Hill clamour cloud on Uttarakhand

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 10: Raising the pitch of the anti-Uttarakhand clamour, several heartland outfits today called a "non-cooperation movement" in the hills, putting a question-mark over the fate of the statehood Bill.

The Uttarakhand Sanyukt Sangharsh Samiti joined hands with BJP allies Akali Dal and Telugu Desam, demanding that the Kumbh region of Hardwar be included in the proposed state and more water be given to it.

The samiti, an umbrella outfit of the Congress, Rashtriya Lok Dal, CPI, Uttarakhand Kranti Dal and local bodies, will organise the "non-cooperation movement" in the area from next Monday, the day Parliament reconvenes.

Samiti central coordination spokesman Dharendra Pratap said the outfit would lock up Central government offices in the hills and stop people from paying taxes as part of their protest.

It would also stage a torchlight march to the residences of Uttarakhand MPs in Delhi on the last day of the budget session to "awaken" them to the demands of the hill people, he added.

Next Sunday, the samiti will hold a "Hardwar jodo" march in the hills. It is demanding a Rs

41,000-crore package for the state.

Pratap said a samiti team had recently met the Prime Minister, who declined to give any assurance on the passage of the Bill.

The Uttar Pradesh House endorsed the Bill with 29 amendments, giving the state a say on water in case of a disagreement. The Bill does not include Kumbh in Uttarakhand, much to the chagrin of the hill people. The Akalis are resisting the inclusion of Udham Singh Nagar in the state.

The high-power committee, comprising defence minister George Fernandes, Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal and Uttar Pradesh chief minister R.P. Gupta, has not met till date to discuss whether Sikhs will be dispossessed of their land if Udham Singh Nagar is included in the state.

Following pressure from Akali MLAs and Sikh groups, Badal yesterday asked Fernandes to call a meeting of the committee before Parliament reconvenes.

While the Akalis are demanding land rights for Sikhs in Udham Singh Nagar, the Bahujan Samaj Party and Samajwadi are opposing it as they fear the Sikhs will be "dumped" in Hardwar.

The Akalis are also demanding that land rights of the Sikhs be properly defined before the region is included in the state.

THE TELEGRAPH

APR 2000

Will Uttarakhand bring hope?

The barren hills of UP have suffered for much too long. If the new state of Uttarakhand is formed, the political leadership should not betray the people, writes SUNITA ARON

A NEW era will soon dawn in the UP hills bringing to an end the half a century long peaceful agitation for separate statehood. One may still dismiss it as a case of sheer optimism as it is not the first time that the UP Assembly has passed a resolution on the creation of the new hill state. Under the constitutional provisions, such resolutions are mandatory. But they do lose their worth when passed time and again, especially when there is hardly any discernible progress on the ground.

The resolution was recently passed by the UP Assembly for the fourth time. And yet, there is a feeling of hope in the air. For the six million peace loving people of this Himalayan region, the dream might become a reality.

If formed, Uttarakhand could well be India's 27th state (or 28th if Jharkhand precedes the new hill state). The Centre seems to be ready to withstand the pressures of its allies. The Akali Dal, which had thrown a spanner by their intransigence on the exclusion of Udham Singh Nagar from the proposed hill state in the previous regime, lacks the political power to dictate terms today. The other good news is that no dissent has emanated from Udham Singh Nagar so far, though the Samajwadi Party and Bahujan Samaj Party have thrown their weight behind the "Save US Nagar Committee".

Differences on contentious issues like sharing of assets and liabilities are natural, as the parent state, Uttar Pradesh and its offspring, Uttarakhand, will obviously guard their own economic interests. The immediate bone of contention between UP and Uttarakhand is the holy city of Hardwar, primarily because it is the controlling point of Ganga water. The example of the Cauvery waters dispute is there before us. The tribunals have failed to settle the longstanding dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka. Ironically, the draft of the UP Reorganisation Bill is ambiguous on the question of sharing of waters of the three major rivers in the hill region — Ganga, Yamuna and Sarda.

However, administrative reasons govern

PLATFORM

the Centre's decision to include the *mela* area (city limit) of Hardwar in the proposed state. Hardwar is the major revenue earning area of the hills and the threshold of the *yatra* for the four *dhams* — Badrinath, Kedarnath, Yamnotri and Gangotri.

Though the hill people are demanding the inclusion of Hardwar in the proposed state, the protagonists may eventually accept the Centre's draft bill in which the urban limits of Hardwar comprising the Kumbh *mela* area have been included in Uttarakhand.

political leaders getting bogged down in factional power struggles in the initial years.

The Uttarakhand issue was raised in 1946 by advocates Soban Singh Jina and Badri Dutt Pandey in Haldwani. However, the demand continued to be raised by communist leader P. C. Joshi and later by Indra Singh Nayal, freedom fighter from Nainital. In the early fifties, the first memorandum supporting the case for a separate hill state was formally sent to Nehru, who referred it to the State Reorganisation Commission.

The Uttarakhand Kranti Dal was born in 1979 under the chairmanship of the Vice-Chancellor of Kumaon University. So strong

were the feelings on the issue that the UKD opened its account in the Vidhan Sabha elections held a year later with Jaswant Singh Bisht winning the Pithoragarh seat. Congress, then the party in power, dithered on the issue; it was afraid that this may trigger off the demand for more states in other parts of the country.

Using the Hindutva card, the BJP gained foothold in this Himalayan region in 1991, till then the bastion of the Congress. The BJP supported the creation of "Uttaranchal" and the people reciprocated with their support. The party won all the four Lok Sabha seats and 15 of the 19 Vidhan Sabha seats in the UP hills. With a national party like the BJP raising their issue, the people dumped the UKD.

The Kalyan Singh Government conveyed its gratitude in 1991 by getting the first resolution passed in the Vidhan Sabha but it was of no consequence. Though Mulayam Singh Yadav set up the Rama Shanker Kaushik Committee to conduct the first detailed study of the feasibility of a new state, he became a villain after the 1994 Muzaffarnagar firing and police atrocities against protesters, which brought women, former service men and students in the forefront of the movement.

If a new state is created, it should fulfil the aspirations of the people. There is too much suffering in the hills. The new leadership should not betray the hill people in the way all political parties have done over the years.



Emotionally it is not an issue; and politically, the BJP suffers no major risk. Its main political rival, the Congress, is lying dormant. It has yet to spell out a clear stand on the issue.

The draft bill is also silent on other contentious issues. The Kalyan Singh Government had moved an amendment vesting of all rights (ownership, construction, operation, maintenance and control) of majority of the power and irrigation projects with UP.

The Ram Prakash Gupta Government has suggested constitution of a joint board of the two states to decide on the issue. Till then, ownership will remain with UP. This may once again turn out to be a conflict zone. Plus, there are apprehensions about the

GNLF warns statehood rivals

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE *grs*

15/4
DARJEELING, April 15. — Senior GNLf leaders, including MLAs and presidents of the party's branch committees, have threatened that any group that would try to usurp the Gorkhaland issue from them would face "dire consequences". *John*

Since the GNLf supremo Mr Subash Ghisingh had "created the demand" in the early 80s, only his party has the right to lead the movement for a separate state, the leaders said at a well-attended rally in Kalimpong today.

On 5 April, the GNLf had called for a renewed agitation for a separate state.

The speakers today said their hopes that the DGHC would fulfil the hill people's aspirations had been belied. There is no alternative to a separate state, they said.

Since 5 April, there have been regular meetings between leaders of the branch committees and those of the local units to chalk out the details of the movement for Gorkhaland.

THE STATESMAN.

16 APR 2000

Cong ultimatum to Centre on Vananchal

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

SR 7 16/4
RANCHI, April 15. — The Congress today announced to hit the streets and storm Parliament if the Bihar State Reorganisation Bill, 2000 was not cleared during the current session.

Talking to reporters here, the Congress Legislature Party leader and Bihar road construction minister, Mr Furkan Ansari, said his party, which was committed to ensuring early creation of the state, would expose the National Democratic Alliance both inside and outside Parliament if the Bill was not passed by the Centre in the Monsoon session. The Bill is likely to be returned to the Centre by the end of this month with a positive opinion of the state legislature.

Assuring a positive opinion on the State Re-organisation Bill during the special session of the Bihar Legislature convened on April 24, he said "We have stood by our commitment. Now it is the turn of the NDA to prove its honesty on the statehood."

Charging the Rashtriya Janata Party with conspiring to delay the state's creation, Mr Ansari said it was creditable on the part of the Congress that even the Rashtriya Janata Dal which was opposed to bifurcation of Bihar has agreed to part away with the 18 districts of South Bihar for creation of the new state.

BJP stir plan: The BJP would launch an agitation against the Bihar government if the Bill was not recommended in the state Assembly on April 24.

Talking to reporters here today, the BJP MP, Ms Abha Mahato, threatened of dire consequences in case the state government disapproved the Bill.

She, however, said the Union Home Minister, Mr Lal Krishna Advani, had assured that the separate Vananchal Bill would be tabled in the house in the coming session.

She said Mr Advani gave positive signal when a delegation consisting 12 MPs from the region met him to find an early solution to the statehood issue.

THE STATESMAN

13 APR 2000

RJD for amendments in Vananchal Bill

19/4

HT Correspondent H 7-10
Patna, April 18

THE BIHAR Reorganisation (Vananchal) Bill, 2000, is likely to be tabled in the State Assembly on April 25.

The House is likely to be adjourned on its opening day after paying tributes to the slain legislator of the Marxist Coordination Committee (MCC), Gurudas Chatterjee.

The RJD-led government in the State is likely to recommend about 25 to 30 amendments in the Vananchal Bill and demand financial packages for both Bihar and Vananchal, in the event of constitution of a new State, according to informed sources.

In this context, the Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, Dr Ram Chandra Purve, held a high-level meeting with the Chief Secretary, V S Dubey and the secretaries to the Departments of Parliamentary Affairs, law and home on Tuesday.

The issue of bringing about amendments to the bill as well as the size of the compensatory package for the rest of Bihar were discussed at the meeting.

The State government is likely to finalise the proposed amendments and the size of the package at a meeting convened under the chairmanship of Chief Minister, Rabri Devi on Wednesday.

The size of the compensatory package to be demanded by the RJD government might be in the

tune of Rs 2,00,000 crore. The compensation to be demanded by the government for the rest of Bihar would be on the issues of tackling the problems of floods and drought as well as to industrialise the North and Central Bihar region.

The amendments to be demanded in the bill by the government is likely to incorporate the discrepancies that might occur in delimitation of Assembly segments of the parliamentary constituencies in the Jharkhand region.

In the event of formation of a new state, the number of reserved seats for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes would become less by one each and the amendments seeks to rationalise this.

Hill council polls a fight against terrorism: LF

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AGARTALA, April 25. — When the Congress, the principal Opposition of Tripura, is yet to begin its campaign for hill council polls, the ruling Left Front is projecting the elections as a "democratic struggle to defeat foreign agencies-backed terrorism in hill Tripura."

Despite killings, torching of houses and abductions by rebel groups, the LF has stepped up campaign for "peace and stability" in hill areas, it is claimed.

The Chief Minister, Mr Manik Sarkar, has in poll meetings urged people not to give in to pressure of armed insurgents "who are out to capture the democratic institution by brandishing AK weapons supplied by some interested quarters."

"It is not just an electoral contest but a struggle against separatist rebel forces who are deliberately trying to jeopardise people's democratic prerogatives," Mr Sarkar said.

Tripura hills, Marxist strong-

holds since the late '40s, have now turned into a hotbed of tribal rebellion. It is difficult for CPI-M leaders to travel freely in the region. Many party leaders and workers do not stay in their areas for fear of either being killed or kidnapped by insurgents. Election meetings are thinly attended since people are scared of reprisal by rebels.

Though the TPCC has fielded 18 candidates for the 300-member hill autonomous council, the party has not so far organised a single meeting though elections are slated for 30 April and 3 May. Besides the LF and the Congress, the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura is in the fray. The IPFT is reportedly supported by the NLFT.

Even as the Indigenous People's Front of Tripura has denied links with rebels, NLFT members are telling villagers to vote for the IPFT to avoid grim consequences.

The IPFT has in its manifesto promised hill tribesmen that it

will unite tribal groups to ensure "genuine development of the hill people."

The IPFT has said that it, if voted to power, will open schools in hill Tripura and create a conducive atmosphere for development. The IPFT manifesto is silent on insurgency. It does not mention why many schools have been closed and development has come to a stand still in hill areas.

CPM nominee withdraws: Meanwhile, Mr Mangal Devbarma, the CPI-M candidate for the Janmejoy Nagar seat of the autonomous council, has announced his decision to pull out of the contest.

Earlier, NLFT insurgents raided his house at Jirania in West Tripura and kidnapped his wife, Mrs Janaki Devbarma (26), and one-year-old son on 9 April. Both are still missing. This was ostensibly to pressure Mr Devbarma to withdraw in favour of the IPFT candidate. Mr Devbarma was picked up from here on Sunday.

THE STATESMAN

Bihar House ratifies Jharkhand Bill

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

PATNA, April 25. — The Bihar Assembly today ratified by voice vote the Centre-sponsored State Reorganisation Bill, 2000 aimed at creating a Jharkhand state, comprising 18 south Bihar districts.

The House, however, unanimously demanded a compensation of Rs 1,79,900 crore for the loss of revenue the state was likely to suffer after the new state was created.

The demand for the compensation was proposed by the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr Ramchandra Purve. He suggested that the name of the new state should be Jharkhand instead of Vananchal as referred to in the Bill.

After the leader of Opposition, Mr Sushil Kumar Modi, said his party and its allies had no objection in replacing "Vananchal" by "Jharkhand", the House adopted the resolution proposing Jharkhand as the name of the new state. Barring the CPI-M and a few Independents who opposed the Bill, all parties including the RJD and other NDA constituents supported it.

Members from various political parties suggested more than 100 amendments in the Bill. The Speaker assured them to send all the suggestions to the Centre.

Earlier, the Chief Minister, Mrs Rabri Devi, tabled the Bill which was explained by Mr Ramchandra Purve. The minister said his party and its leader, Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav, were never opposed to the creation of Jharkhand. "We wanted the creation of

■ See JHARKHAND: page 2

JHARKHAND:

(Continued from page 1)

the new state carved out from Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh besides Bihar".

The RJD chief demanded a Constitution amendment to make it mandatory that only tribals would be eligible for the posts of Chief Minister and Governor of Jharkhand. "Besides, 90 per cent of the members of the council of ministers for the state should come from the tribal communities".

He said the main objective of the Jharkhand agitation was to carve out a separate state for tribals from parts of West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Bihar. "That's why my party and I stood for the creation of the broader Jharkhand state".

Mr Yadav said the Centre should complete the formalities of creating the new state within two months.

The Leader of Opposition, Mr Sushil Kumar Modi, said the NDA government at the Centre had fulfilled its commitment by sponsoring the Bill. He criticised the RJD for opposing the move to create the separate state in the past.

The CPI-M Legislature Party leader, Mr Ramdeo Verma, demanded the Centre to withdraw the Bill for "it was inimical to the interests of proposed new state as well as rest of Bihar".

THE STATESMAN

26 APR 2000

GIFTS TO GHISINGH

5/6 2/89 But are there no limits? *Don't know*

IN a situation where the Left Front must hold on to whatever bases it has before the elections, the Darjeeling question is perhaps the easiest to settle. Subash Ghisingh has been clamouring for exaggerated powers in a 20-point charter submitted to the chief minister and it was only to be expected that some of them would be conceded. The gifts cover areas like education, tourism and infrastructure that attract even more powers and, what is important, more funds to the Darjeeling Hill Council. The Left Front has nothing to lose in the sense that it has no local ambitions and all development money comes from the Centre. It would much rather make the GNLF supremo responsible for all that has gone wrong in the last 12 years since the Hill Council Act granted him substantial autonomy. On the other hand, there is everything to gain from a *quid pro quo* by which Ghisingh leaves the three assembly seats to the CPI-M in next year's elections. A tacit understanding has obviously been worked out. The question is, can the Left Front be sure that the maverick will not change tack over the next few months or that his ambition will not grow by what they feed on.

There is an inherent danger in the policy of appeasement. It is one thing to hand over responsibilities that help Ghisingh keep his cadres satisfied — like setting up a school service commission, a tourism development corporation and a pension directorate for schools and colleges that will spawn more jobs for GNLF loyalists. The same may be true of local power stations that are to be handed over to the hill council regardless of whether they bring more light to Darjeeling. It is another matter to demand a police force under the hill council, recognising the whole of Darjeeling as a tribal region under the Sixth Schedule and Gorkha as a separate language. Ghisingh's ambitions have been known to grow uncontrollably as much as his threats of disruptive tactics every time he is faced with a challenge. That such opposition as exists is inconsequential does not rule out fresh demands later. How far can Jyoti Basu go? Limits are imposed by the tripartite agreement of 1988 to which the Centre is a party. The Left can certainly be held responsible for conniving with an extortionist.

THE STATESMAN

1989

Home Ministry officials yet to receive final Bill passed by Assembly

Centre awaits Jharkhand Bill from Bihar

SANTWANA BHATTACHARYA
NEW DELHI, MAY 3

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee wants to get it over with. The Bihar Assembly has already passed the Jharkhand Bill and the MLAs of South Bihar are all raring to get their first taste of direct governance. Even the Congress has repeatedly announced its commitment to Jharkhand state.

Admitting that Prime Minister Vajpayee is keen that the Bill be tabled during this session of Parliament, sources in the PMO say: "The new state also has a ready secretariat. Ranchi used to be the Bihar Assembly's summer capital, so the infrastructure is in place."

So what's holding up the new State Bill which will divide Bihar into two states from being tabled in Parliament?

The Congress, which has 10

(out of 23) MLAs from South Bihar, also cannot afford to play politics and delay passage of the Bill.

"The (Congress) MLAs from South Bihar will not be able to go back to their constituencies and face the people if the party holds up the Bill at this stage," a Bihar Congress leader visiting Delhi said.

Well, if officials in the Ministry of Home Affairs deputed to finetune the Bill and sort out the nitty-gritties are to be believed, the present delay is due to the time the Bill is taking to travel to Delhi from Patna.

"We are yet to receive an official intimation from the Bihar Assembly. Therefore, we do not have the details with us. Once we get the Bill in the shape it was passed by the Bihar Assembly, it will go up for a Cabinet discussion," concerned officials in the Ministry said.

The nitty-gritties apart, one as-

pect of the Bill is beyond contest. The fact that, if it is passed within the tenure of the present Bihar Assembly, the sitting members from the southern part of the state — elected in the February polls — will go on to form the first Jharkhand government.

"As per the Constitution, any state which has more than 60 elected members can form an Assembly. Sixty is the minimum number. The new state carved out of Bihar fulfils the requirement. There are more than 60 members," the ministry official explained.

And this is where the BJP has a clear edge over others. By virtue of having 32 MLAs (more than any other party) from South Bihar, it is likely to head the government along with its NDA allies — the Samata Party (5), Janata Dal U (3), and, of course, the 12 MLAs of the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) — if the Bill gets

passed. The 18-district Jharkhand State, when formed, will have 14 parliamentary constituencies and an 82-member Assembly. Of which the BJP alliance has 52 members, 10 above the required number for majority.

With the Rashtriya Janata Dal accounting for a nominal 2, and the UGDP for 9, with the rest being Independent members. The byelection for Nirsha, the only seat in South Bihar which was lying vacant after the death of Gurudas Dasgupta, is on.

In the present 324-strong Bihar Assembly, the BJP has 67 MLAs, followed by its main allies — JD-U (21) and JMM (12).

As political analysts point out, it suits Rashtriya Janata Dal chief Laloo Prasad Yadav fine as the historic Bihar break-up will help his party get a simple majority, reducing his crippling dependence on the Congress.

INDIAN EXPRESS

MAY 2 2000

MAY 2 2000

W. Bengal govt. fears communal flare-up after Kamtapuri killing

By Nirmalya Banerjee

The Times of India News Service

CALCUTTA: Killings, kidnappings and extortions by Kamtapuri activists in North Bengal may lead to a communal divide in the Jalpaiguri and Coochbehar districts, West Bengal government officials fear.

Official sources said in Calcutta on Friday that after the killing of CPM member Pranesh Pal at Barobisha village on Thursday, there were incidents of arson and attacks on members of a particular community. Three houses were burnt down and a person in a tea garden was assaulted in a case of mistaken identity.

To prevent the recurrence of such killings, the state home ministry on Friday introduced Central Reserve Police Force patrols in the affected areas. "CRPF camps are already present in the affected areas, but this has not checked the activities of militants," one official said.

In fact, two rifles were snatched from CRPF personnel near the West Bengal-Assam border a few days ago.

According to state PWD minister Manohar Tirkey, businessman Naresh Das was kidnapped a few months ago from Barobisha village near the state border. "There is no information about him till now." A number of tea gardens in the Kumargram area had been served

with extortion notices by the Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation.

CPM members have been killed in the past two months at Moynaguri, Dhuppuri and Kumargram. "They are trying to create a scare by killing prominent citizens," Mr Tirkey said. Two businessmen were

number of newly set-up tea gardens had been slapped with extortion notices varying from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh. In Moynaguri, teachers belonging to the All-Bengal Teachers Association had been issued extortion notices.

In villages, youths were "vanishing suddenly", Mr Tirkey said. "They tell their families that they are going in search of jobs. Their families receive money orders also. Actually, they go to militant camps in Bhutan."

According to army sources, KLO activists were receiving arms training in these camps run by United Liberation Front of Asom militants. "ULFA militants lend arms to the KLO activists and take them back after an operation is carried out," an army official said.

With the ceasefire with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) group in place and worsening of relations between ULFA and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland, the ULFA may be looking for a sanctuary in the border area of West Bengal, the official said. The ULFA had been getting help from the NSCN (K) in having sanctuary in Myanmar and the help of the NDFB in reaching Bhutan.

While the Kamtapuri Peoples Party demanded a separate state for the Rajbongshis based on language, the state government argued that Rajbongshis are a part of the larger Bengali community.

Bidyut committed suicide: govt.

The Times of India News Service

CALCUTTA: The West Bengal government on Friday finally announced that former industries minister Bidyut Ganguly had committed suicide.

"From circumstantial evidence collected during the inquiry and after examination of the witnesses, the police have come to the conclusion that it is a case of suicide," deputy chief minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya announced in a Press conference here. "The state government is awaiting the forensic laboratory report," he added.

He said the North 24 Parganas police had carried out an investigation into the possible cause of death of Mr Ganguly.

shot at Jaigaon near Bhutan border when they refused to meet KLO extortion demands, he added.

In the Dhuppuri and Moynaguri areas of Jalpaiguri, owners of a

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 MAY 2000

Hardwar district goes to Uttaranchal

Jay Raina
New Delhi, May 13

IN A significant move, the Union Cabinet today approved inclusion of the entire Hardwar district into the proposed hill State of Uttaranchal, to be carved out of Uttar Pradesh. The proposed State will now comprise 13 districts as against the 12 earmarked in the original draft legislation.

The decision will pave the way for extension of Uttaranchal State boundaries beyond the hilly tract of Udham Singh Nagar to the plains of Hardwar, comprising Rishikesh and Kumbh Mela areas.

The Cabinet, which met here this morning, approved the crucial changes in the draft legislation for the creation of Uttaranchal. It also okayed Bills for carving out Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar, respectively.

The Bills are slated to be introduced in Parliament next Wednesday. While announcing the decision on the states, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Pramod Mahajan refused to divulge details.

However, highly-placed sources told *The Hindustan Times* the Cabinet had rejected the UP Legislature's recommendation

against inclusion of Hardwar in the proposed Uttaranchal. It is also understood to have ignored 59 odd amendments except for the one made by the RJD-dominated Bihar Legislature on Jharkhand.

The exception pertains to acceptance of Bihar Government's plea

Proposals

Uttaranchal: Hardwar district, including the Kumbh Mela area, to be included in the proposed State.

Jharkhand: A special cell to be created in the Planning Commission to work out a financial package for Bihar in lieu of the loss of the mineral-rich area. The new State would be called Jharkhand, not Vananchal.

Chhattisgarh: No change in the proposed State's original cartographic profile.

to name the new State 'Jharkhand', against the BJP-favoured nomenclature 'Vananchal'.

With regard to a special financial dispensation against the loss of mineral-rich Jharkhand to Bihar, the Government has constituted a special cell in the Planning Commission, chaired by its Deputy

Chairman K.C. Pant, to work out a package. However, this does not form part of the Bill. The move aims at assuaging feelings of the RJD and NDA's ally Samata Party.

Significantly, representative of the Shiromani Akali Dal (Badal), Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Sports S.S. Dhindsa, did not attend today's Cabinet meeting. The SAD and many other Punjab-based political formations have been opposed to the inclusion of the Sikh-dominated Udham Singh Nagar in Uttaranchal.

As regards Chhattisgarh, the Cabinet is reported to have largely gone along with the recommendations of the Madhya Pradesh Legislature. However, these minor recommendations do not alter the boundaries of the proposed State, slated to comprise seven tribal districts: Raipur, Rajgarh, Surguja, Bilaspur, Bastar and Durg.

The new Jharkhand State, as per the present indications, will comprise 18 districts of South Bihar.

The 13 districts to be included in Uttaranchal are: Pauri Garwal, Tehri Garhwal, Nanital, Chamoali, Dehra Dun, Almora, Pithorgarh, Udham Singh Nagar, Uttar Kashi, Bageshwar, Champawar, Rudra Prayag and Hardwar.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

MAY 13 2000

Orissa MPs stake claim to two Bihar districts

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 14

HT-12 15/5
9 Personal Path

THE PASSAGE of the Bihar Reorganisation Bill in Parliament is unlikely to be a smooth affair with the Orissa leaders staking claim to two districts of the proposed Jharkhand state. All political parties in Orissa have demanded return to the State of the Saraikala and Kharasuan districts shown as part of Jharkhand in the draft legislation.

Addressing a Press conference here today under the banner of Utkal Sammilani, MPs of almost all political parties, including the BJP, the BJD and the Congress, announced an action plan if the Centre failed to correct the "historical injustice" done to the State.

A State-wide agitation would be launched on May 18 to press for the return of the two districts. The Orissa members in both houses of Parliament would also be calling on the Prime Minister and the Home Minister to plead the State's case.

Senior BJP leader and Sammilani president H C Baxipatra pointed out that after Independence the princely states of Saraikala and Kharasuan had favoured merger with Orissa.

But within five months of the January 1, 1948 merger, these states were taken out of Orissa's administrative control and tagged onto the State of Bihar under

districts in question, it was not possible to administratively control Kharsuan and Saraikala.

Once Sardar Patel was able to brush aside Mayurbhanj's claim for independence, the latter acceded and became part of Orissa, Mr Baxipatra recalled. After this accession, he said Kharsuan and Saraikala should have been restored to Orissa as the administrative impediment did not exist any more.

Creation of Jharkhand

"pressure and interference" by the then powerful Bihar leaders.

The Sammilani which has brought political rivals on one platform to fight for Orissa's "legitimate" claim on the two districts was established in 1903 and had played a key role in the creation of the State on April 1, 1936.

Mr Baxipatra said that the inclusion of Saraikala and Kharsuan in Bihar was a "temporary measure." In view of the declaration of independence by another princely State of Orissa, Mayurbhanj, which was the only geographical link between Orissa and the

"Since then we have been agitating for the return of these two districts," the BJP leader remarked. He said Orissa Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has already written to the Home Minister on the "urgency of the unification" of the two districts with Orissa prior to the creation of Jharkhand.

Among the Orissa MPs present at the Press conference were: BK Tripathy (BJD), Dr MN Das (Congress), Prasanna Patsani (BJD), Biravadra Singh (BJD), Ram Chandra Khuntia (Congress), MA Kharabela Swain (BJP), B Mehtab (BJD).

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 MAY 2000

Cabinet okays creation of three new States

Regional
9-1-1956

By Our Special Correspondent

14/5

NEW DELHI, MAY 13. The decks have been cleared by the Government for the formation of three new states — Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chattisgarh — with the Union Cabinet giving its approval today to three separate Bills which will carve these States out of Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

The Bills are expected to be circulated among the Members of Parliament on May 15 and introduced in the Lok Sabha on May 17, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, said after the Cabinet meeting. He declined to give details as the Bills would have to be first circulated among the MPs.

The Cabinet also approved of the Information Technology Bill which will usher in the age of e-commerce and introduce 'cyber' laws to govern the use of new technology in this area. The IT Bill is slated to be taken up for discussion in the Lok Sabha on May 15.

While the Cabinet approval marks the end of the phase related to drafting the legislation — which would include details of the territory to be included in the new States — the passage in Parliament will take some more time. The earliest that the Bills can be passed would be in the monsoon session this July.

Last week, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, had given more than a clear hint that at least two Bills related to the reorganisation of States would be introduced in Parliament this session itself. However, he had also said there could be some delay in the case of Jharkhand as the Bihar Assembly had only recently sent its approval along with 59 amendments.

Apparently, MPs from Bihar made strong representations to the Home Ministry, which has been working overtime to complete the work on the Jharkhand legislation to ensure that it did not remain behind Chattisgarh and Uttaranchal.

These Bills are the result of long years of struggle by the people of these regions who were of the view that their areas had remained relatively undeveloped. In the case of Jharkhand, the birth of the new State may not be entirely painless, as Bihar has demanded a whopping Rs. 1,79,000 crores as compensation for the loss of the mineral-rich Chotanagpur plateau which will become Jharkhand.

The three Bills are not expected to meet with much resistance in Parliament, as the main Opposition party, Congress(I), has already made its stand clear in their favour.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

MAY 14 1956

Badal in a spot over Udham Singh Nagar

Raveen Thukral
Chandigarh, May 15

PUNJAB CHIEF Minister and SAD president, Prakash Singh Badal, is in a fix again. The Union Cabinet's decision to introduce the Bill for inclusion of Udham Singh Nagar into the proposed hill state of Uttaranchal in the ongoing Parliament session despite stiff opposition from the Akalis has put Mr Badal in a piquant situation.

Though on the face of it Mr Badal continues to oppose the move and met Union Defence Minister George Fernandes in New Delhi today, insiders claim that the BJP is determined to introduce the Bill, and they cite the party's appeal to all political parties to support the formation of the three new states as an evidence. In these circumstances, the basic question that arises is what would the Akalis do if the Bill were introduced in Parliament.

While Mr Badal is planning to call a meeting of the party's political affairs committee (PAC) to discuss the situation, what happens to earlier decision of withdrawing the ministers from the Centre and opposing the Bill on the floor of the House if it were to be introduced. Though Mr Badal has been evading this crucial question for quite some time, it is to be seen how he handles the situation now.

"He does not have any choice. Like many other PAC decisions, the party's stand on the Udham Singh Nagar issue would also be thrown to the dustbin," said a senior Akali Minister. While main-

taining that Mr Badal is more dependent on the BJP today than ever before due to infighting in the Akali Dal, the Minister said, "We don't have any bargaining power at the Centre with a lone MP."

Boundary panel demanded

PUNJAB CHIEF Minister Parkash Singh Badal has demanded setting up of a boundary commission to determine the future of Udham Singh Nagar in view of Centre's decision to create a new State of Uttaranchal.

In a statement, the Chief Minister expressed his party's principled opposition to the Centre's proposal to include Udham Singh Nagar in the new State. He said the government must await the commission's report before taking a final decision on the district's inclusion in the hill State.

HTC, New Delhi

"The party's stand on the issue was wrong from the very beginning," said another Akali leader while adding that the issue should have been raised only at the party and not the government-level. Saying that Punjab had no locus standi to interfere in matter of the other states, he said, "Our misfortune is that Badal leads the government and the party today."

Admitting that like many other issues, the "impending somersault" of Mr Badal on Udham Singh

Nagar would only mean more loss of face for the party, he said it is time that Mr Badal leaves the party affairs to some other leader.

Both the leaders were of the opinion that the Akalis would have no choice but to "register their dissent" on the inclusion of Udham Singh Nagar in Uttaranchal. It may be recalled that when this issue came up during the last tenure of Mr Vajpayee, the Akalis were in a defiant mood and Mr Badal initially demanded a referendum on the issue and then threatened to withdraw support to the BJP-led government.

The Congress, meanwhile, continues with its stand that the party's state unit is totally opposed to the inclusion of Udham Singh Nagar in Uttaranchal. State party president, Capt Amarinder Singh, said, "Our stand remains the same. We want that the will of the residents of Udham Singh Nagar should prevail and I believe that 90 per cent of them do not want the area to go to Uttaranchal," he said.

Mr Badal's failure to stall the inclusion of the Sikh-dominated areas in the proposed hill state has provided his detractors another opportunity to gain some more political mileage. "It is not only Udham Singh Nagar where Mr Badal has failed," former Punjab speaker, Ravi Inder Singh said, adding that Mr Badal had failed on all the basic issues including transfer of Chandigarh and water and territorial disputes with Haryana. "In fact Badal, by his own admission, has given up the claim for Chandigarh by making Anandgarh," he said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

16 MAY 2000

Fernandes panel yet to report on Uttaranchal: SP

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 15

THE SAMAJWADI Party has questioned the Government's decision on the formation of Uttaranchal State even before the high-powered committee, headed by Defence Minister George Fernandes, had given its report.

Talking to newsmen after a meeting of the party's top leaders, Samajwadi Party spokesman Amar Singh said the recommendations of the committee were not known. The committee included the Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh and Punjab.

Mr Amar Singh said inclusion of Hardwar in the proposed new State was surprising when even the UP Government or the State Assembly had made no such suggestion.

He said the party supported the proposal of reservation for women but till such time there was consensus, the Government should desist from bringing up the Women's Reservation Bill. He said the modalities for giving reservation should be left to political parties as suggested by the Election Commission.

The Congress, he said, was shedding crocodile tears on the UP Religious Places Bill which discriminated against the minorities. Such a law had existed in

Congress-ruled Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh also. The Samajwadi Party had already urged Marxists in West Bengal to abolish a similar law in their State, he added.

The Samajwadi Party meet, attended by the party's Central Parliamentary Board, national office-bearers and presidents of State units, noted the Government could mediate in Sri Lanka since the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) had some constituents with links in the neighbouring country. The Government's policy on Sri Lanka was not clear so far, he said.

The party meet criticised the Government for ignoring the country's security concerns.

In the economic field, foreign MNCs were being encouraged. There was US pressure for the removal of restrictions on the import of 714 more items, the meet felt. Supporting the suggestion for open voting in the Rajya Sabha elections, the party spokesman said the method of voting could bring transparency in the whole process.

The role of money power witnessed in recent Rajya Sabha elections could be eliminated from future polls.

The next national executive of the Samajwadi Party would be held in Agra in mid-June.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

6 MAY 2000

UP CM leads chorus against Hardwar in Uttaranchal

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 15

THE BJP leadership is in a fix over the Uttaranchal Bill as UP Chief Minister Ram Prakash Gupta today echoed allies' opposition to the Cabinet's decision to include the entire Hardwar district in the proposed hill State.

The Bill is to be introduced in the Lok Sabha on May 17, the last day of Parliament's budget session. The allies' opposition is a new dimension to the controversy over the Bill, which is already opposed by the Akalis who are against the inclusion of Sikh-dominated Udham Singh Nagar in the new State.

Mr Gupta, who met senior BJP leaders, conveyed the allies' threat to withdraw support to his govern-

ment if the Centre did not reconsider its decision to include Hardwar.

The Chief Minister is understood to have conveyed his stance at the meeting of a committee headed by Defence Minister George Fernandes, which was attended by Punjab Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal.

In view of the opposition, the BJP leadership is expected to go rather slow on the Bill after introduction in the Parliament.

BJP spokesperson M Venkaiah Naidu said his party supported the Cabinet's decision to introduce the Bills to create three new States and objections could be accommodated by way of amendments to the Bill.

Notwithstanding opposition from the allies, he said the party con-

gratulated the Government and urged all political parties to support the formation of the three States of Uttaranchal, Chattisgarh and Jharkhand. "We have made our slogan to create the new States a reality."

Asked about the threat given by the Loktantrik Congress Party (LCP) and the Janata Dal (R) to withdraw support to the Gupta Ministry if Hardwar is included in Uttaranchal, the BJP spokesperson said, "Let the Parliament take a decision after discussion. Let us see their collective wisdom. I don't want to give rise to any controversy."

Mr Naidu said Mr Gupta and Mr Badal met Mr Fernandes, who is chairman of the sub-committee on the issue of inclusion of Udham Singh Nagar in the new State.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 MAY 2001

Doubts being raised over Uttaranchal state formation

By Arvind Singh Bisht

The Times of India News Service
LUCKNOW: Doubts are being cast over the creation of a separate Uttaranchal state, despite its approval by the Union cabinet and likely introduction of the bill before parliament on its last day on Wednesday.

The ruling BJP at the Centre cannot do it without the risk of sacrificing its already fledgling government in Uttar Pradesh. The main challenge comes to the BJP in the state from its allies, particularly the Loktantrik Congress Party (LCP) and the Jantantrik Bahujan Samaj Party (JBSP), which are opposed to the inclusion of Hardwar in the Uttaranchal state.

Equally important is the issue of Uddham Singh Nagar (USN), the exclusion of which has already been

sought by the Akali Dal, an ally of the BJP at the Centre and some other parties, like the BSP. And the hill state without these two districts seem to be an unfeasible proposition.

Its creation this way is bound to be counterproductive for the BJP in the hill region where it has retained its sway over the last three consecutive elections. At present the party has with it 17 out of total 19 assembly and three out of four Lok Sabha seats.

Credit, for this goes to the BJP's promise for statehood to hill people. In a house of 425, one seat is lying

Rift develops in NDA

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The Bill for carving out Uttaranchal out of the hill districts of Uttar Pradesh has caused a sharp rift in the ruling coalition with the Akali Dal strongly opposing transfer of Udhham Singh Nagar to the new state.

Punjab chief minister Parkash Singh Badal on Monday strongly opposed the proposed incorporation of the district — home to a large number of prosperous Sikh farmers — in the new state.

At a meeting of the three-member committee on Udhham Singh Nagar, Mr Badal said his party's opposition to the district's transfer was both "strong and principled." He said since the district was in the plains there was no logic in making it part of the new hills state.

vacant at present. The ruling BJP with its strength of 175 has been able to muster a comfortable majority of 227. Its allies include 20

members of the LCP, 19 of the JBSP, three of the Janata Dal (R) and two of the Samata Party, besides eight Independents. But, the actual majority of the BJP coalition is said to be much less due to allegiance of many BJP legislators to the former chief minister Kalyan Singh. They are believed to be under compulsion not to cross the floor to avoid action under the Anti-Defection Act.

The immediate impact of the creation of the Uttaranchal will be thus on the strength of the House which will be reduced from 424 to 402. The number of

MLAs to be discounted then would be 22, including three from Hardwar district. But the worst affected would be the BJP, the strength of which will come down in the House from 175 to 153, as its 17 MLAs come from hill region. Its depleting strength will pose far more difficult problem before the BJP, if the support is withdrawn from it from the LCP and the JBSP, which have repeatedly threatened to do so.

Thus, in such a situation, the BJP will be left with limited options — either to go in for President's rule in the state or form the government with the support of the BSP, which has a strength of 50 in the House. But a tie-up with the BSP too appears to be a difficult bargain, as the BSP wants to extend its support on its conditions.

Orissa parties seek return of Bihar areas

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Bhubaneswar, May 16: All political parties unanimously adopted a resolution today demanding that Seraikela and Kharsawan, two Oriya-dominated areas in Bihar, be returned to Orissa.

Seraikela and Kharsawan were among the 26 princely states, which merged with Orissa after Independence. But they were handed over to Bihar in 1948 after local tribals waged a violent struggle to merge the mineral-rich areas with Singhbhum district. Seraikela is now a subdivision of

9 1-11 M K
West Singhbhum district bordering Mayurbhanj and Keonjhar districts of Orissa. Kharsawan is a block of Seraikela subdivision.

Chief minister Naveen Patnaik called an all-party meeting to build a consensus on the thorny issue. Apart from the ruling Biju Janata Dal and the B.J.P., Opposition parties including the Congress, the Janata Dal, the CPI, the CPM and the SUCI took part in the meeting.

After the meeting, Patnaik, who has already raised the demand with the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, faxed the

resolution to Union home minister L.K. Advani.

The parties asked the Centre to return the former states to Orissa as they were carving Vananchal out of Bihar. The proposed Vananchal includes Seraikela and Kharsawan.

The resolution asked the Centre to "undo the injustice" meted out to the people of Orissa by handing over the princely states to Bihar. It said Orissa had a "national" claim to the two areas because of linguistic and cultural affinities.

In 1993, Biju Patnaik, the then chief

minister, made a similar demand but it was turned down by the Centre. His son, Naveen Patnaik reiterated the demand after some Opposition politicians raked up the issue.

Analysts said the time was ripe to stake claim after the Centre approved of Vananchal.

Moreover, it would be hard for Vajpayee or Advani to turn down the demand because the BJP itself is in power in Orissa with its ally Biju Janata Janata Dal, an important constituent of the Union government.

THE TELEGRAPH

MAY 2000

NEW STATES / OPPOSITION KICKS UP ROW

Introduction of Bills stalled

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 17. Faced with strong resistance from the Opposition and some of its own allies, the Government was forced to put off introduction of the much-awaited Bills to create three new States of Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chattisgarh in the Lok Sabha today.

There was an uproar when the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, tried to introduce the Uttaranchal Bill with members from the Congress(I), the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samajwadi Party rushing to the "well" to block the introduction. While the SP was firmly against the move to split Uttar Pradesh, the Congress(I) expressed strong reservations about the inclusion of Uddhamsingh Nagar in the proposed State. The Rashtriya Janata Dal members, worked up over certain "lacumae" in the Jharkhand Bill, also joined the protest.

As the members charged towards the Speaker's podium, he adjourned the House and there was some confusion over whether or not Mr. Advani had managed to push through the Bill. For shortly before adjournment he was heard saying he was introducing it. Later, it was clarified that the Bill was not introduced. When the House resumed, no fresh attempt was made to introduce any of the Bills. The Speaker, Mr. G. M. C. Balayogi, observed that

sensing the mood the legislation had been postponed. It is likely to be brought up in the monsoon session in July.

Earlier in the day some of the BJP's allies had objected to splitting Bihar to create Jharkhand saying it was not in the national interest. The Samata Party's Mr. Prabhu Nath Singh was strongly opposed to it, while another BJP ally, the Biju Janata Dal, wanted some areas of the proposed State merged with Orissa.

In the Opposition, even those who favoured the creation of new States were not happy that the Government had chosen to come up with the Bills on the last day of the session, and that too through a supplementary agenda. The Bills did not figure in the day's main agenda and nor were they circulated to the MPs in advance. All Bills are supposed to be given to the MPs 48 hours before introduction. Until late in the afternoon there was uncertainty about the Government's plans.

The first indication of the storm ahead came when, shortly after lunch, the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. Santosh Kumar Gangwar's announcement that the Bills would be introduced today sparked a row. The Opposition protested that it was not listed in the day's agenda and as some SP members trooped into the "well", the House was adjourned amid noisy scenes. The climax came

after the House met again with the Opposition succeeding in frustrating the Home Minister's bid to introduce the Bills. Members were agitated since the morning and the most vociferous were those of the SP who repeatedly stormed the "well" and raised slogans against breaking up Uttar Pradesh. Members were generally curious what the Government had up its sleeve as the Bills were not listed in the agenda despite repeated announcements that they would be introduced in the current session. The former Prime Minister, Mr. S. Chandra Shekhar, said the Chair should direct the Government not to slip them in through a supplementary agenda.

Parliament adjourned

Both houses of Parliament were adjourned sine die this evening after a three-month long Budget session during which, among other things, the general budget, the railway budget and the information technology bill were passed. Parliament also witnessed a historic event in the visit of the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton, and his address to the joint session.

While the Lok Sabha was adjourned late this evening, the Rajya Sabha sat till after 8 p.m. to complete a short duration discussion on the security situation in the north-east.

THE HINDU

18 MAY 2000

Gorkhaland stir from 22 May

5-1-1975
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING, May 17. — The GNLF will start a fresh agitation for Gorkhaland on 22 May — a day after the panchayat polls in the hills.

The agitation will begin with a 24-hour bandh, "and if anyone dares to oppose our movement his hand and legs will be broken," said a party leader at a hurriedly-called rally here today. The leaders said the Centre and the state government would be responsible for turning them into terrorists.

"Till now we were demanding a separate state through constitutional means, but now it will be different," a leader said.

Speakers included the presidents of the GNLF's Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong branch committees. The three leaders met Mr Ghisingh yesterday when the GNLF supremo reportedly gave them the go-ahead for the movement.

The leaders welcomed the Centre's decision to set up the three new states, but regretted that the demand for Gorkhaland "had been ignored".

THE STATESMAN

MAY 20 1975

Hills on fire over stalling of Uttaranchal Bill

PRASHANT RAHI
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

4-6-105

DEHRA DUN, May 17.—The failure to table the Uttaranchal Bill on the last day of the parliamentary session today has caused consternation in the hills as rival political formations continue the game of passing the buck.

BJP workers were among the first to take to the streets this evening after news of a fracas in the Lok Sabha having prevented the NDA government from tabling the Uttaranchal, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh Bill reached here. Effigies of the Samajwadi Party leader, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, who had reportedly opposed the Bill in the House, were burnt at the busiest junction of the city this evening.

Supporters of the Samajwadi Party outside the hills said the Centre was adamant to include the Terai districts of Udham Singh Nagar and Hardwar, located at the foothills of Kumaon and Garhwal respectively. Earlier yesterday, uproarious scenes were witnessed in the UP Vidhan Sabha as well, as the BJP's closest ally, Mr

Naresh Agarwal of the Loktantrik Congress, led the tirade against the Centre's proposal to include these two districts. The Samajwadi Party MLA from Hardwar, Mr Ambrish Kumar, had further threatened to launch an agitation in the pilgrim city should the Bill be presented in its present form.

Both Udham Singh Nagar and Hardwar have remained remarkably quiet these days. Few urban dwellers seem to be concerned about which state they would belong to. Peasants, busy with harvesting wheat, would perhaps be the last ones to get involved in the frenzy being worked up over the issue in political circles. They appear to be too overworked to be taken up by the heat of the debate over their statehood in the UP Vidhan Sabha and the Lok Sabha.

Independent supporters of the statehood movement are cynical towards the steam being expended in the House. Mrs Sushila Balooni felt hill folk were being tricked by the mainstream parties. An Uttaranchal Kranti Dal leader, she would not take the BJP bait of "singing out" SP for the failure to introduce the Bill.

THE STATESMAN

100

Deferment of Jharkhand Bill

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

RANCHI, May 18. — The deferment of the Bihar State Re-organisation Bill 2000 was strongly resented in this tribal belt by the pro-state forces.

The BJP, holding the RJD responsible for forcing the Centre to defer the introduction of the Bill in the budget session of the Parliament, has called upon the Congress to withdraw its support to the RJD government in Bihar.

The Congress on the other hand has demanded resignation of all the eleven BJP party members of the Parliament, including three Union ministers from Jharkhand, for having allegedly failed to ensure the tabling of the Jharkhand

Bill in the Parliament's budget session which concluded yesterday.

BJP Vananchal committee leaders, Mr Deepak Prakash and Mr Uma Shankar Kedia have charged the RJD-Congress combine with having conspired to delay the State Re-organisation Bill by raising noisy protests in the Lok Sabha.

The two leaders held that the RJD, which supported the Bill in the Bihar legislature "under compulsion" had come out openly in the Lok Sabha opposing statehood, while the Congress which was claiming itself as "an ardent supporter" of the statehood remained a mute spectator to the "unruly drama" enacted by its partner

in Bihar.

Congress senior leader and Bihar minister Mr Shakil Khan, describing the BJP as the "main villain", has demanded resignation of its MPs from Jharkhand. He blamed Mr Advani for engineering protests inside the Lok Sabha on the issue of Jharkhand and Uttarakhand as he was against creation of these smaller states.

Meanwhile, Mr Justice LPN Sahdeo of Patna High Court has described the Centre's decision to defer the tabling of the State Re-organisation Bill as a "conspiracy" to stall the creation of smaller states.

The retired judge said this deferment was likely to prove counter productive for those in

power and may also lead to widespread resentment in the area. This may even turn the situation violent in this tribal belt which is aspiring for statehood for over five decades.

The Samajwadi Party, the Jharkhand Peoples Party, the All Jharkhand Students Union, the local units of the RJD, the Samata Party and the Janata Dal (United) which have come together on statehood to form the Sarvodaya Sangharsh Samiti, have also strongly condemned the Centre's decision to not table the Bill in the Parliament's budget session.

The samiti has demanded a special session of the Lok Sabha before 9 June for the passage of the three State Re-organisation Bills.

THE STATESMAN

19 MAY 2000

ST-6 CYNICAL STATE

Partisan politics dogs states question

IN India's flawed democracy nothing is exempt from the narrowest and most partisan of political considerations. The last day of the budget session of Parliament underlined the cynicism that is the staple of Indian politics. The BJP has been proclaiming from the rooftops its commitment to three new states — Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chhattisgarh. Yet it managed to table the Bill for states' reorganisation only on the last day of the budget session. Pramod Mahajan's typically smart-alec excuse, which cannot, however, disguise vacuousness, is that the Bill was not printed in time. NDA allies matched big brother's deviousness. The Samata Party joined the unruly protests against the tabling. The opposition hardly covered itself in glory either. The Congress and the RJD had supported the move for the new states, especially Jharkhand, for electoral mileage. Yet when the Bill was to be tabled they joined the fracas led by the Samajwadi Party. It is difficult to pinpoint what the general objections are, because their aren't any. There are matters of detail — should Haridwar or Udhamasinghnagar be part of Uttaranchal? Should north and central Bihar be compensated? And so on. But clearly these can be sorted out once the Bill has been tabled — during the discussion of the Bill, followed by referral to a select committee. No. The answer is block the Bill, right from the outset. The reason is that there is a tacit conspiracy across the board — from the BJP to Mulayam Singh.

The problem is that the states issue is not being viewed by any party from the vantage of administrative convenience and balanced regional development to ensure politico-territorial justice — the only legitimate way of approaching the problem. It is being viewed from the vantage of unadulterated opportunism. Every party approaches the problem with a calculator in hand — how many seats do we stand to gain? How many of the new states are we likely to capture? And, consequently, how much of state resources and patronage can we lay our grubby fingers on? This newspaper said in these columns a few days ago that a cynical and *ad hoc* approach to the states question would open the door to the revival of other pending statehood demands, which would, again, be viewed through the lens of short-term electoral expediency. We were right. The GNLF has revived the call for Gorkhaland. Their agitation for a separate state will be kicked off by a 24-hour bandh on 22 May. GNLF leaders have threatened that those who oppose it will have their "hands and legs broken". The Kamtapuris and Bodos will no doubt follow with more dire threats. This is the politics of "integration" that mainstream parties promote, while mumbling beatifically about national interest. We repeat what we have said before: the states question must not be dealt with in this *ad hoc* way. If new states are to be created a states reorganisation commission should be formed to go into the issue from a holistic perspective.

THE STATESMAN

MAY 2002

Opp shadow on Jharkhand Bill

PTI and UNI

RANCHI, May 19. — The Union Minister of State for Environment and Forest, Mr Babulal Marandi, today said the Centre might not go ahead with the Jharkhand Bill if the Opposition and some of the NDA allies continued to disrupt proceedings in Parliament over the issue.

"If the Opposition and some of the NDA allies continue to create the kind of bedlam in Parliament they did last time there is no question of the Centre going ahead with the introduction of the Bill in Parliament," Mr Marandi told a Press conference here.

The Centre needed everyone's cooperation for the smooth passage of the Bill in Parliament, he said adding that it should be presented and passed in the House at the earliest.

He also said there was no need to send the Bill to the Standing Committee as suggested by the Union Home Minister, Mr LK Advani.

Criticising the Samata and Opposition parties for linking up the Jharkhand statehood issue with a special package for the rest of Bihar, Mr Marandi asked "who would guarantee

CONG SLAMS CENTRE

PATNA, May 19. — Senior Congress leaders Mr Sarfaraj Ahmed and Mr Vijay Shanker Mishra today charged the NDA government with having ditched the Jharkhand people by deferring the introduction of the Bihar State Reorganisation Bill, 2000, and called for immediate resignation of the BJP MPs from South Bihar.

BJP MPs from the region should immediately resign owning moral responsibility for the delay in tabling of the Bill to fulfil long-cherished aspirations of the people, they said. — PTI

proper utilisation of the proposed package?

The state government will have to be development-oriented before it insists on any such package," Mr Marandi said.

In a separate Press conference, BJP MP Mr Ramtahal Chaudhry also sought cooperation from all for the passage of the Bill in the monsoon session of Parliament.

Unjustified demand: Mr Marandi described as "unjusti-

fied" the demand for an economic package of over Rs one lakh eighty thousand crore for the rest of Bihar after bifurcation.

He said the two issues — creation of the state and an economic package for rest of Bihar — were being unnecessarily mixed together. The two are separate issues.

The economic package was being demanded by the Rashtriya Janata Dal in a bid to confuse the state's creation and further delay it. A state like Bihar in the past had been a witness to an alarming rise in industrial sickness and non-development. Jute, paper and sugar mills which had come up in the north and central parts of the state are presently lying sick due to the policies of the parties in power in the state.

An economic package has been demanded in the power sector by the RJD leaders, he said, and sought to know from them why land had not been made available for the ambitious thousand mw power project at Barh which was announced by Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee. He also sought to know the reason behind poor generation of power in the state.

THE STATESMAN

20 MAY 2000

Blood will flow down hills, warns GNLF

SUBRATA NAGCHOUDHURY
CALCUTTA, MAY 22

THE tremors set off by the imminent creation of three new states are likely to set off an explosive agitation in the hills of Darjeeling. The Government's move to carve out Jharkhand, Chattisgarh and Uttaranchal is rekindling the old passion among Gorkhas for their own state.

The Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) has called for a 24-hour bandh on Monday to demand a separate state of Gorkhand after a gap of 12 years. And for the first time since the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council was set up in 1988, posters with slogans demanding a separate state have come up on walls and boulders that dot the verdant slopes. Like before, they promise a bloody agitation, showing their determination in blazing red. GNLF cadre declare these posters are "painted in blood".

"The hills will be washed with blood should the Government of India continue to ignore the demand of the Gorkhas," some of them proclaim.

Political circles are abuzz with talk that this time, the threats aren't

idle. GNLF chief Subash Ghising — also the chairman of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council — finds himself hard-pressed to accede to the people's demands. Negotiations no longer seem viable. Their logic is if Jharkhand and Chattisgarh are possible, why not Gorkhaland?

Sensing the rising political heat in the hills, West Bengal Home minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya reacted quickly to the Centre's move to table these Bills, saying that the creation of three new states was akin to "opening a Pandora's box".

In Darjeeling, informed sources say things have moved quickly. Ghising convened a meeting of his three branch presidents from Kalimpong, Kurseong and Darjeeling and other important functionaries on May 16, to take stock of the situation arising out of the Government's move to form new states.

Reports suggested that there is serious resentment among the rank and file about the functioning of the Council — people at large have not benefited from it, they claim. A separate state, therefore, is what they want, Ghising was told.

Posters demanding Gorkhaland began appearing the very next day, as was the decision for a 24-bandh.

Ghising also has to deal with the growing dissident lobby within the GNLF. The last Hill Council election saw many of them entering the fray as "rebels". In the panchayat polls held a week back, there were a large number of dummy candidates put up by GNLF rebels.

Adding to Ghising's worries are two political fronts — the United Democratic Front headed by C.R. Rai and the Gorkha Sanjukta Morcha, led by former CPI(M) MP R.B. Rai — both of which have demanded a separate

Gorkha state. This demand is the trump card for any political outfit in the hills and Ghising can ill afford to ignore it for long, says a senior official.

Ghising himself has been trying to cement his position among the Gorkhas. Recently, he floated the GNLF's Sikkim unit with Nar Bahadur Bhandari pledging support. Over 50 per cent of Sikkim's population comprises migrant Nepalis from Darjeeling. For Bhandari, aligning with a vigorous pan-Nepali movement might be the right prescription for political resurrection.

■ UP buck-passing over Uttaranchal

S M A KAZMI
DEHRA DUN, MAY 22

THE Government's inability to table the Bill for the creation of Uttaranchal on the last day of Parliament's Budget session has heightened tensions in the region. All political parties are trying desperately to blame each other for the delay while the people of the region wait for Parliament's next session.

While pro-Uttaranchal parties and social groups hold the BJP as well as the Congress responsible for the delay, BJP leaders are squarely putting the blame on Opposition parties for not allowing the Bill to be tabled on the last day of Parliament's Budget session.

Adding to the resentment was the police lathicharge against a demonstration by a group of women from the Uttaranchal Sangharsh Samiti who were allegedly trying to burn an effigy of the Prime Minister, which the police were trying to take away. How-

ever, the injured demonstrators claim they had no effigy.

The incident has incensed pro-Uttarakhand activists. Several social and political groups have condemned the lathicharge and demanded strict action against the police. The state government has also asked the district administration to send a report about the incident.

But it seems it was the game of one-upmanship to burn effigies of rival political leaders that led to the violence. BJP leaders had also come out openly to burn the effigy of Opposition party leaders for blocking the introduction of the Uttaranchal Bill in Parliament. Local Congress leaders, in turn, burnt effigies of BJP leaders in protest against the party not introducing the Bill in the Budget session.

The delay has also put BJP leaders from the region on the defensive. A group of MPs and legislators from the districts met Vajpayee for a speedy passage of the Bill and were told that it would be introduced on the very first day of the Monsoon session. The assurance, though, has failed to cut ice with the people of the region.

STATEHOOD DEMAND

While pro-Uttaranchal parties and social groups hold the BJP as well as the Congress responsible for the delay, BJP leaders are squarely putting the blame on Opposition parties for not allowing the Bill to be tabled on the last day of Parliament's Budget session.

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Kamtapuris plan 'do-or-die' stir for separate statehood

Ashis Chakrabarti
Calcutta, May 29

DRAWING INSPIRATION from the Centre's decision to create three new states of Jharkhand, Uttaranchal and Chhattisgarh, the Kamtapuris in north Bengal have decided to start a "do-or-die" agitation for a separate state in north Bengal.

This should be a cause for greater concern for the West Bengal Government which has alleged that the Kamtapuri militants were receiving arms training in the south Bhutan camps of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) as well as covert support from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI). The Kamtapuris are demanding a separate State comprising six north Bengal districts and the Goalpara district in lower Assam - an area where, they claim, they had their "independent" kingdom until the 16th century.

At a meeting at Moynaguri in Jalpaiguri district last Saturday, the central committee of the Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) drew up a detailed plan for the agitation over the next few months. "We'll start a do-or-die movement at the grassroots level immediately and this'll continue till July 1," KPP president Atul Roy told The Hindustan Times today. Between July 15 and August 15, the KPP will be organising a "special fund collection" drive to sustain the movement.

Larger agitation plans, including one for a 100-hour bandh in north Bengal, will be finalised at a two-day "central convention" in Cooch Behar on September 9

and 10. The central committee of the KPP will be reorganised at the convention which will be attended by delegates from the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (Shibu Soren) and some other groups from West Bengal, Bihar and Assam.

The KPP and other Kamtapuri outfits like the All Kamtapur Students' Union (AKSU) and the underground Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) have been trying to enlist the support of the Gorkha leaders in Darjeeling too. Earlier this month, three KPP leaders met the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) chief Subash Ghisingh in Darjeeling. Another group had earlier met leaders of the Communist Party of Revolutionary Marxists, which was born in the mid-1990s after a split in the CPI(M)'s Darjeeling district unit.

Roy, however, denied that either he or any other KPP leader had met Ghisingh or the CPRM leaders. He also disputed the allegation that the KPP was only a front of the KLO.

But events of the last few months have proved that the Kamtapuris were increasingly taking to violence, both to spread their influence and to collect money. At least three important north Bengal leaders of the CPI(M), including a Jalpaiguri district committee member, were killed allegedly by the Kamtapuris in recent months.

A KPP supporter was also killed in the police firing on Kamtapuri demonstrators in the Kumargram area on May 10, when the party called a north Bengal bandh.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

31 MAY 2001

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Jharkhand, sticking point

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 2. After three rounds of talks today between Congress(I) leaders and the RJD president, Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav, it became obvious that the two parties were trying to find a face saver — a middlepath on the Jharkhand issue. Both sides claimed the negotiations were on track but “loose ends”, particularly the Jharkhand matter, had to be tied up. It was announced tonight that the Congress(I) would take a final decision on supporting the RJD in forming a government in Bihar after Ms. Sonia Gandhi returns to Delhi.

The Congress(I) leader, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, said there

were “several meeting points, including on Jharkhand.” The RJD chief looked subdued at the end of the day. All he said was, “We have met three times, for four hours today. Would I still be here unless there was reason for hope?”

During the elections, the Congress(I) was a vociferous proponent of the creation of a new Jharkhand state while the RJD opposed it and, instead, proposed a larger Jharkhand state which would include the tribal areas in Bihar, West Bengal, Orissa and Madhya Pradesh.

It appears the Congress(I) seeks to pin Mr. Yadav to a commitment on carving a Jharkhand state from only Bihar.

The other “conditions” — improving the administration, a time-bound development package and ensuring the protection of Dalits — did not pose a problem. Sources said the Congress(I) had proposed the formation of a steering committee. A senior RJD leader said that one of the suggestions put forward by his party was that they could treat Jharkhand a “contentious issue” and put it on the backburner “for the sake of the alliance.”

Besides Mr. Mukherjee, the Congress(I) team comprised Dr. Manmohan Singh, Mr. Madhavrao Scindia and Mrs. Mohsina Kidwai. Interestingly, Mr. S. R. Bommai, now in the JD(S) also participated in the talks.

Nitish at the helm, Centre may hasten creation of Vananchal

Jay Raina
New Delhi, March 4

THE CENTRE appears set to hasten the process of carving out the proposed State of Vananchal in Bihar following the installation of the NDA-led coalition Government in the State.

A fresh Bill paving for the creation of Vananchal comprising the mineral rich tribal districts of Jharkhand is to be sent to Bihar Legislative Assembly for its comments early next week.

The Vajpayee's Government's move, according to informed sources, is aimed at further deepening the existing divide in the 23-member strong Congress Legislature Group in the State Assembly over this emotive issue. Eleven out of the 23 Congress MLAs elected from the region are reported to have threatened to split the Party if it extended support to RJD in Government formation.

The Centre's move assumes significance in the light of the fact

that both the NDA and the Congress had committed themselves to the creation of Vananchal State during the just concluded Assembly elections.

Laloo Prasad Yadav-led Rashtriya Janata Dal has been opposing the creation of the tribal State in its present Vananchal form over the years.

It has forcefully campaigned against the move in the recent Assembly elections leading to appreciable gains in Central and North Bihar.

The Bill for the creation of Vananchal State had earlier been okayed by the Union Cabinet on December 23 last year along with two other Bills on Uttaranchal and Chhattisgarh.

President K R Narayanan who subsequently approved the three Bills is understood to have directed that the proposed legislation on the Vananchal State should not be sent to the Bihar Legislature for its comments before the constitution of the new State Assembly. The

two other Bills on Uttarakhand and Chhattisgarh have already been sent to the respective State Legislatures of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh for their comments.

The new Vananchal State Bill has been drafted on the lines of an earlier legislation, though with minor modifications, that was introduced in the Lok Sabha on Dec. 23, 1998 amid acrimonious scenes especially triggered by RJD members.

However, the Bill lapsed following the dissolution of the 12th Lok Sabha in April 1999.

Significantly, the Bihar Assembly dominated by the RJD and its alliance partners had rejected this particular Bill and refused to give its comments during the tenure of Mrs Rabri Devi as Chief Minister.

In accordance with the Constitutional provisions (Art 3), Bills pertaining to the creation of new States have to be referred to the respective State Legislatures losing their territory to the pro-

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 5 MAR 2000

Chhattisgarh Bill tabled in Assembly

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHOPAL, March 10. — The draft Bill on the creation of Chhattisgarh state was tabled in the Assembly yesterday.

The Madhya Pradesh Reorganisation Bill, 2000, was referred to the state government for consideration by President KR Narayanan on 26 February.

The Assembly is likely to take up the Bill for discussion and give its approval in a few weeks. It will then be forwarded to Parliament by the President. The proposed Chhattisgarh state would come up only after the Bill is passed in both Houses of Parliament and President okays it.

A similar draft Bill — the Madhya Pradesh Reorganisation Bill, 1998 — was ratified by the Assembly in August-September 1998.

The new draft Bill has incorporated several “suggestions” made by the state government in 1998. These include a proposal for creating a High Court for the new state and modalities for distributing assets and liabilities between the two states.

THE STATESMAN
11 MAR 2000

'Kamtapuris open N Bengal to Ulfa'

BAPPA MAJUMDAR

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CALCUTTA, March 14. — The Ulfa is carrying out subversive activities in North Bengal in league with Kamtapuri activists, the Union home ministry has warned the state.

The warning comes shortly after the arrest of Tamir Das (alias Jeevan Singh) and Lakshmi Suriar, both top leaders of the Kamtapuri movement for statehood.

The director-general of police, Mr Deepak Sanyal, told **The Statesman**: "The Kamtapuris are carrying out subversive activities in the state along with banned organisations. They are involved in some kidnappings as well. We are on the lookout for them."

Both Das and Suriar are self-styled 'commanders' and have carried out several joint operations with the Ulfa in North

Bengal, including kidnappings, lootings and extortion from tea gardens, police said. The Kamtapuris, in exchange for money and arms, provide shelter to Ulfa cadres.

The first reported Ulfa-Kamtapuri armed operation was the kidnapping of Mr Roshan Lal Garg, a Siliguri-based businessman, on 31 July last year. "This was the first incident of militants using AK-47s in North Bengal. The arrest of some terrorists in connection with other kidnappings established that the Kamtapuris were behind these as well," a top state police officer said.

Mr Garg, who was picked up from Ambari, hasn't yet been released. Police believe the Ulfa has taken him away to Assam. The terrorist organisation had earlier reportedly demanded a huge amount as donation from the business-

man.

On 22 November 1999, Ulfa cadres and Kamtapuri activists looted railway cash near Siliguri. Two top Ulfa leaders and Kamtapuri activists divided the loot. Five days later, three persons were arrested. One is from the banned Kamtapuri Liberation Organisation and the other two from the Kamtapuri Peoples' Party.

"KPP leaders had for a long time been saying they have no links with KLO, a militant outfit, but KLO activists regularly hold meetings with the KPP. Tamir Das, who is now behind bars, was present at all these meetings.

The KPP is just a shield for the KLO to carry out its activities," a police officer said.

The arrest of Suriar shed further light on the Kamtapuri-Ulfa connection. Suriar, arrested with a group of KLO activists near Alipurduar a few

weeks earlier, was guiding the youths to militant training camps in Bhutan. A 9mm Chinese pistol (usually issued to the military) was found on him along with incriminating documents.

The arrest of Das has been described by state police as the biggest catch of recent times. A 9mm loaded pistol was seized from him. Das has been taken to Assam for interrogation about the Ulfa-Kamtapuri nexus.

State police were alerted by the Union home ministry in August last year about an Ulfa-Kamtapuri conspiracy to destabilise West Bengal.

The Kamtapuris, who are demanding a state carved out of North Bengal and Assam, have in their public speeches threatened armed rebellion.

Udhamsingh Nagar goes, Hardwar stays

UP Cabinet nod to Uttarakhand Bill

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, March 16. — The state Cabinet today unanimously approved the draft Uttar Pradesh (Re organisation) Bill for an Uttarakhand state. According to the draft, Udhamsingh Nagar district will be part of the new hill state while Hardwar stays in Uttar Pradesh.

This had been proposed originally, but caused a controversy when the Akali Dal vehemently opposed the idea of Udhamsingh Nagar being included in the new state.

According to an official spokesman, the Bill is to be taken up by the Assembly during the budget session later this month. He said the Cabinet "disagreed" with some of the clauses of the draft Bill that was sent to the state by the Centre and accordingly some changes were made. "All contentious issues have been sorted," the spokesman claimed.

It is understood that the Centre was keen to avoid the

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opposition that had cropped up earlier and hence chose to take a middle path of splitting Hardwar district. This was, however, not acceptable to the state government.

While the spokesman declined to give details of the "confiden-

RURAL POLLS

LUCKNOW, March 16. — The state government today put off panchayat elections by six months, from April to October. Panchayats' terms expire by the second week of May. After that administrative committees, with members picked by the government, will function in their place. — SNS

tial" draft Bill approved by the Cabinet, chief minister Mr Ramprakash Gupta had no such qualms. Mr Gupta remarked that the Cabinet approved the "original" proposal. "Hardwar would not be part of the new state," he said.

It is understood that the

President has acceded to the request of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly till 16 April, for expressing its views on the state Reorganisation Bill.

Last time a similar Bill was passed by the Assembly during the chief ministership of Mr Kalyan Singh, where it was proposed that Udhamsingh Nagar would be included in the new state while Hardwar remained with Uttar Pradesh.

The issue, however, became contentious because the draft Bill sent by the Centre proposed that both districts be in the new state. Moreover the Bill passed by the Assembly was also not acceptable to the Sikhs of Udhamsingh Nagar.

The BJP was under pressure from the Akali Dal to reject the proposal. A panel headed by Mr George Fernandes was constituted by the Prime Minister to sort out the tangle. Mr Fernandes submitted his report which has yet not been made public. One of the proposals by the Fernandes panel was understood to be the division of Hardwar district.

THE STATESMAN

17 MAR 2000

Soren to stake claim for Vananchal CM's post

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Ranchi, March 23: The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (Soren) has decided to stake its claim to the chief minister's chair in the proposed Vananchal state.

Party sources said a meeting of the JMM central committee has been convened here on Saturday to decide on the party's strategy in the wake of the JMM(S) joining the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) at the Centre. Also on the agenda is a proposal to re-draft the party's constitution to grant more powers to the JMM(S) chief and other office-bearers.

In the run-up to the formation of a government in Bihar after the Assembly polls, the JMM(S) had initially staked claim to the Bihar chief minister's chair in return for its crucial support to the NDA government. However, with the JMM formally joining the NDA, the party had withdrawn its claim.

JMM(S) sources said the central committee's agenda for Satur-

day includes *inter alia* a thorough review of the party's strategy in view of its formal admission into the NDA at the Centre and the BJP's promise to carve out a separate Vananchal state during the current budget session of Parliament.

The sources said the JMM has served an ultimatum to the Centre to carve out a separate state for the 18 south Bihar districts before the conclusion of the current session of Parliament, failing which it has threatened to launch a total economic blockade of south Bihar including stoppage of outflow of all minerals from this region.

However, some NDA allies have expressed reservations over any further creation of smaller states. With the failure of the NDA to form the government in Bihar and the JMM(S) itself joining the NDA, the sources said the party needed to quickly formulate a comprehensive policy for itself with regard to its commitment towards separate statehood for south Bihar. The aim is to prevent

both the Congress as well as the RJD from wresting any advantage on this account. The sources said Saturday's meeting would also review the JMM(S) constitution, now nearly three decades old. The changes would grant more powers to the party chief to enable him to function more effectively.

The sources added that more powers are likely to be granted to the other office-bearers including the party vice-president and general secretary. Many of the curbs on the party's important functionaries, which of late have been acting as impediments to taking speedy decisions, are also scheduled to be removed. The sources ruled out any alliance with either the JMM (Munda), a breakaway faction of the JMM(S), or any of the other Jharkhandi parties.

Death sentence: Mohammad Giasuddin, a policeman, was sentenced to death today by the district and sessions judge of Bhojpur in connection with the killing of three of his colleagues, reports UNI.

THE TELEGRAPH

24 MAR 2000

Uttarakhandis call on PM

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 26

A DELEGATION of BJP MPs and legislators from Uttarakhand region, led by Minister of State for Science and Technology Bachi Singh Rawat, met Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Sunday to press the demand for early grant of statehood to the hill regions of Uttar Pradesh.

The delegation, which included as many as four State Ministers from UP, urged Mr Vajpayee to ensure that the Uttarakhand Statehood Bill was passed during the current session of Parliament after being returned to the Centre

by the State Assembly. It also emphasized the need to include the entire Hardwar district in the proposed State. Human Resource Development Minister Murli Manohar Joshi was also present at the meeting where a memorandum was presented to him and the Prime Minister. Among the prominent members in the delegation were MPs Manohar Kant Dhyani, B.C. Khanduri and Manvendra Shah, besides the State ministers.

It was pointed out in the memorandum that the proposed Uttarakhand or Uttaranchal State would remain incomplete without the inclusion of Hardwar, which had strong geographic and social links with the region. Among the

other demands raised by the BJP leaders were a Central grant of Rs 1,000 crore for setting up a new Capital for the hill state, a comprehensive economic package for its development and control over all water resources located within its territory. The PM assured the delegation that their demands would be seriously considered and all official formalities for setting up the new State would be expedited.

Meanwhile, the Uttarakhand Sanyukt Sangharsh Samiti, an umbrella organisation of various groups pursuing the statehood demand, has condemned the UP Government's move to recommend exclusion of Hardwar from the proposed new State.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 MAR 2000

President seeks Bihar House opinion on Vananchal Bill

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 30. — In a development which will test the commitment of Mr Laloo Prasad Yadav and the RJD to the Jharkhand cause, the President has referred the Bihar State Reorganisation Bill, 2000, to the state legislature for its views.

The Bill seeks to carve out the new state of Vananchal co-terminus with the existing Jharkhand Area Autonomous Council.

The Bihar Assembly has been asked to forward its views on the provisions of the Bill by 12 May. The move follows the Union Cabinet decision last December, home ministry sources said here today.

This is the second time a Bill on reorganisation of Bihar into two states has been sent to the Assembly. The first was in the middle of 1998, after which a special session of the Bihar Assembly was convened.

After a discussion, the House

Chhattisgarh

BHOPAL, March 30. — The Madhya Pradesh Assembly tonight unanimously passed the Madhya Pradesh Reorganisation Bill, 2000, to carve out of it the separate state of Chhattisgarh. The Bill was passed following a nine-hour discussion. — PTI

decided to overturn an earlier resolution, passed in July 1997, favouring creation of a separate Jharkhand state. It requested the President not to recommend the Bihar State Reorganisation Bill, 1998, to Parliament. While the RJD had opposed the move, even the Congress was divided on the issue.

According to officials, the then Chief Minister, Mr Laloo Yadav, even wrote to the President and the Prime Minister in November 1998, opposing the proposal to bifurcate Bihar.

But the Centre went ahead

and introduced the Bill in the winter session that year after the situation was reviewed by the Union Cabinet. The Bill, introduced on 23 December 1998, lapsed with dissolution of the Lok Sabha in April 1999.

The latest move is expected to force Mr Yadav to come out with a clear stand on Jharkhand, or Vananchal as it has come to be known.

As per the proposals of the Bill, 18 districts in Bihar, including Bokaro, Dhanbad, Giridih, Hazaribagh, Ranchi, Singhbhum (East) and Singhbhum (West) will be part of the new state. Vananchal is expected to be approximately 46 per cent of the existing state in terms of area and 25.3 per cent of Bihar in terms of population.

Unlike 1998, the Centre expects the Bihar Assembly to respond favourably this time. With the political equations having changed, the RJD might not be in a position to oppose a new state any more.

THE STATESMAN

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Messy privatisation haunts UP's hydel wealth

The move to transfer the Uttarkhand's resources to unknown operators via two state-run corporations is unwelcome, writes PRASHANT RAHI

WHILE the unbundling of the discredited state electricity board of Uttar Pradesh brought 100,000 engineers and workers on a collision course with the current policy of power sector restructuring, the people of the Uttarkhand region resent the fait accompli. The move to transfer the hills' resources to unknown operators via two state-run corporations is unwelcome. *Prashant Rahi*

Fast-track negotiated projects, liquid fuel generation, competitive and negotiated bids are in vogue. Regional concerns, the political right to determine the fate of present and potential resources of a hill state in the making, are being ignored.

The share of hydro-electricity in the country's total installed capacity has fallen over the last 30 years from 48 to 25 per cent. Compared to the technically desirable hydel versus thermal ratio of 40:60, the decline speaks



Striking engineers and workers of the Uttar Pradesh State Electricity Board: the Uttarkhand problem has added punch to the protests

THE STATESMAN

volumes for the issue's significance.

On the tussle between hydel power and non-renewable energy resources such as coal, it can be said the former is more reliable and non-polluting. Plus, hydel power is indispensable for peak load periods. The machines can be started or stopped almost instantaneously. For a country whose peak load performance is below that of Thailand, Pakistan and Bangalore, proper utilisation of energy resources of the Uttarkhand hills is crucial.

The Uttar Pradesh State

Electricity Board was a leading power entity until the 1980s, overshadowed by the increasing role of high-capacity central public sector corporations. It had failed to recognise the energy potential in its backyard -- the swift rivers of the Himalayas and Sub-Himalayas.

Development of hydel power stations in the hills has virtually been stagnant since 1988.

Opinions are divided on whether the sudden freeze on hydel projects was the result of financiers' stipulations -- primarily the World Bank -- or

whether the energy situation did really warrant a paradigm shift. But the fact that both the bank and the state government reneged on their commitments to maintain cash flows is undisputed.

After the launch of a full-scale privatisation drive, which followed the recent restructuring in the state's energy sector, two path-breaking hydel projects initiated in Garhwal were given to the private sector.

Memorandums of understanding were signed for the setting up of the 49 x 400-MW project at

sion to influence the course of state formation, the minister faces the people's ire for his undisguised attempt to wrest the ownership and control of existing and proposed projects in the region.

Demonstration and public speeches delivered on this count has added punch to the power

employees' strike. The UP corporation, according to the restructuring plan, would be a stepping stone for the exploitation of the precious hill resources by investors, both Indian and foreign.

The author is on the staff of The Statesman, Dehra Dun

Vishnuprayag and the 330-MW project at Srinagar in October 1992 and August 1994, respectively.

Two companies are believed to be the beneficiaries in the power-purchase agreements. This shows the generosity of the state's power monopolists. However, the saddest part is, that not a brick has been laid on the project sites cleared and prepared by the UPSEB.

Had the project delay been caused by official laxity, it would have generated heat in the Assembly. But the power companies' inaction has not even raised a whimper. There's no accountability. The decision to start is the sole prerogative of those who take the risk of selling power.

Further, a distribution company at Greater Noida was given an extension despite having failed to fulfil its earlier contractual obligation to install a 90 MW power plant. The deal, according to the UP Legislative Council Chairman, merits deeper investigation.

This has set an unhealthy precedent for the restructuring of the state's power generation, transmission and distribution.

The state Energy Minister, Naresh Agarwal, is said to be instrumental in transferring Uttarkhand's hydel-power resources to the newly constituted UP Hydro Electric Corporation Limited. He could never strike the right chord with the hill folk.

Branded as something of a prodigal whenever the BJP-led coalition government had occa-

Only Cong can fulfil Jharkhand dream: Sonia

HT Correspondent
Hazariabagh, February 4

CONGRESS PRESIDENT Sonia Gandhi today said that the Vajpayee Government had failed in fulfilling its commitment on Vananchal. She said that only the Congress could fulfil the dream of Jharkhand.

She was addressing a series of election meetings in south Bihar on Friday. She also said that Bihar was passing through a lean phase. People could not expect results from the RJD Government and reiterated that there could be a new beginning only if the Congress returned to power.

Mrs Gandhi kick-started her campaign from Hazariabagh, the hometown of late Chief Minister K.B. Sahay. She said that it was during Mr Sahay's tenure that the Congress had initiated the process of land reforms in Bihar. This however failed to pick up in the last three

decades, she said. She lambasted the BJP-led coalition for experimenting with the Indian Constitution. She exhorted people to come forward to stop the attack on the Constitution and

'Manhandling' condemned

MRS SONIA Gandhi today condemned Union Ministers Babulal Marandi and Syed Shah Nawaz Hussain for allegedly manhandling Jharkhand regional Youth Congress workers including its president Manishankar at Ranchi airport yesterday. "The two ministers should not have lost their cool when the YC workers were protesting against their visit in a democratic way," she said.

PTI, Ranchi

to uphold its pride.

Mrs Gandhi was not accompanied by her daughter Priyanka and son Rahul. AICC general secretary Mohsina Kidwai and HPCC presi-

dent Sadanand Singh were by Mrs Gandhi's side.

On the vexed issue of Jharkhand, she said the BJP and its partners were playing with the sentiments of the people. She said the BJP had lost its credibility on the issue. It, therefore, had no stand on which to seek votes in the Assembly polls.

Taking a dig at the RJD, Mrs Gandhi said development in Bihar had come to a standstill. She said that corruption was everywhere. She added that law and order was in a bad shape and women were not respected in the state.

Mrs Gandhi asked that if labourers from here could produce results elsewhere, why was it not possible to do so within the state itself. She reiterated that agriculture could thrive only if the Government was serious about them. Mrs Gandhi said that if the four allies were fighting over seat-sharing even before the election, one could well imagine the state of affairs after.

Vananchal to be reality soon: PM

Bokaro, February 9

PRIME MINISTER Atal Behari Vajpayee today sought to allay doubts about his Government's determination regarding carving out of a separate tribal state from Bihar, saying it would be a reality soon.

The Bill for the purpose has been sent to President K. R. Narayanan, he said.

Addressing an election meeting here, the Prime Minister announced: "Vananchal will be a reality soon."

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee also assured a special economic package for the rest of Bihar to compensate it for the loss of its mineral-rich region.

His assurance came in the wake of a demand by major NDA ally Samata Party that the rest of Bihar should get a special package for its economic development in the event of the creation of Vananchal.

Earlier, on his arrival at Ranchi for an election tour in the state, the Prime Minister said Vananchal would become a reality in a few months from now.

"The process for the early creation of Vananchal is already underway and there is no room for any apprehension about it," he added. Addressing people in Bihar, Mr Vajpayee said the Centre did not want to close down PSUs as it wanted to create greater job opportunities. "Nearly 15 PSUs, which are on the verge of closure, have been made viable through the efforts of my Government," he said.

Addressing the meeting, Defence Minister George Fernandes urged the electorate to cast their vote in the polls. The NDA partners in the state had resolved their differences on seat sharing and were fighting against the RJD's "misrule" unitedly.

The issue of a separate state

comprising districts of south Bihar has once again taken the centre-stage in the Assembly elections in Bihar with both the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the Congress party promising its early creation.

While the National Democratic Alliance had promised creation of Vananchal within a few months, the Congress leaders doubting the Centre's intentions had threatened to storm Parliament if the Bihar State Reorganisation Bill, 1999, regarding statehood, was not introduced in the budget session.

While Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, who was here on his way to Bokaro talked of the state's creation, Congress chief Sonia Gandhi, who was also at the airport, reiterated her party's commitment to strive for its realisation and to force the National Democratic Alliance to honour its commitment on statehood.

(Agencies)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
10 FEB 2000

Move to put half of Hardwar in Uttaranchal

SVS
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HEMENDRA NARAYAN
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, Feb. 20. — There now seems to be a possibility of dividing the Hardwar district, with one of the portions going to the proposed Uttaranchal state.

Official sources confirmed yesterday that a draft Bill was sent to the state by the Centre, but declined to discuss the details of the draft.

It is however understood that the Centre was keen avoid the opposition that had cropped earlier and hence decided to take a middle path. It was suggested to the state that a Bill in this connection be passed by the Assembly during the budget session. Observers, however, feel that the move of splitting Hardwar will not be a smooth affair either. It would be for the fourth time that the state Assembly was taking up the Uttar Pradesh Reorganisation Bill.

Last time, it passed by the Assembly during the chief ministership of Mr Kalyan Singh. It was proposed that

Udhamsingh Nagar district be included in the new state while Hardwar remained with Uttar Pradesh.

It, however, became contentious because the draft Bill, sent by the Centre at that time, proposed that both districts be in the new state.

The Bill which was passed by the state was not acceptable to the Sikhs of Udhamsingh Nagar. The BJP was under pressure from the Akali Dal to reject the proposal of including the district in the new state. A panel headed by the defence minister, Mr George Fernandes, was constituted by the Prime Minister to sort out the tangle.

Mr Fernandes submitted his report which has not yet been public. One of the proposals by the Fernandes panel was understood to be division of Hardwar district.

The Assembly first passed the Bill for division of the state during the chief ministership of Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav and it was later taken up when Ms Mayawati was the chief minister.

THE STATESMAN
27 FEB 2000

Govt draws Kamtapur fire

FROM KESHAV PRAHDHAN

Jaipauri, Feb. 27 : West Bengal deputy chief minister Buddhadev Bhattacharya today blamed both the Centre and foreign agencies for the growth of the Kamtapur agitation in North Bengal.

Speaking to reporters after launching the CPM campaign against the movement at a convention, Bhattacharya said: "The Kamtapur agitators started raising their heads after the Centre decided to create more states by bifurcating Bihar and Uttar Pradesh."

He added: "After the formation of states on the linguistic basis earlier, it is now both impossible and impractical to have new states. We will oppose any move to form new states by the Centre, be it Uttaranchal or Varnanchal."

The deputy chief minister alleged that ISI and some other foreign agencies were helping Kamtapur activists. He added: "We have information that some of the

agitators, especially Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) have set up base in neighbouring countries," he said, adding the KLO has forged links with the ULFA. But he declined to name the countries where the KLO has set up camps.

On the presence of KLO militants in Bhutan, Bhattacharya said: "Bhutan has a close relationship with the Centre as well as our state. I have met its king who is a very knowledgeable person. We have appraised both Bhutan and Delhi about our problem."

He added: "Not only this, we have expressed our concern about militant activities in Nepal which is also a very close friend. Our open border with Nepal, and air services between Kathmandu and Calcutta, which are treated as domestic flights, have added more to our problems."

Bhattacharya described the spurt in the Kamtapur agitation as a new development. "Earlier also, some discredited and dis-

posed landlords tried to raise the demand unsuccessfully under the leadership of the Uttarbanga Taposhli-O-Adibasi Association and the Uttar Khand Dal," he said.

But this time, Kamtapur protagonists under the Kamtapur People's Party (KPP) and the KLO, have revived the agitation by raising "illogical and baseless" issues like "Kamtapur is a different language", "Rajbanshi are not Bengalis" and "Rajbanshi culture is different from Kamtapur culture". He added that Rajbanshis were Bengalis and their language was one of the 15-odd Bengali dialects.

Bhattacharya refuted allegations that the state government had always neglected and deprived Rajbanshis. He said: "What they (Kamtapur protesters) are saying is not true. Compared to this region, areas like Purulia and Bankura are very much poor and backward."

But the government would soon set up a development council

for North Bengal and also create separate funds for its development after meeting Left Front partners in Calcutta on March 1, he said.

Bhattacharya expressed happiness at what he described as "the dwindling influence of Kamtapur supporters" in the region. "All their strikes have failed. They performed very badly in the elections. All we can say is that majority of the Rajbanshis have not supported the statehood agitation. We appeal to all those who think violence can solve their problems to return to the right path," he said.

Bhattacharya said other Left Front partners would later join the anti-Kamtapur campaign started by the CPM.

Today's convention was held at the newly-built arts centre. The campaign proposal against Kamtapur and other separatist forces was placed by tribal welfare minister Dimesh Dakua, also a prominent Rajbanshi leader.