

Mamata, Panja quit over

With elections round the corner, Trinamool was waiting for a 'right and just' cause, writes Arindam

Calcutta, September 30

*9-Council
of Ministers*

MAMATA BANERJEE today made virtue of her political necessity by resigning from the Cabinet and the help came, ironically, from the Vajpayee Government of which she is an important member.

She announced that she and her colleague, Ajit Panja, would resign from the Cabinet and also that her party, the Trinamool Congress, would withdraw support from the NDA Government.

The immediate cause for her action today was the rise in the prices of LPG, kerosene and diesel. "Yesterday midnight, the Centre decided to increase the prices without consulting us. We are a pro-people party and can never support such a decision. Ajit Panja and I have decided to resign from the Union Ministry and we will also withdraw our support to the NDA Government", Mamata Banerjee told The Hindustan Times.

"We are giving three days to the Government to roll



back the prices or accept our resignation".

Mamata then went into a huddle with Ajit Panja and party chief whip in Parliament Sudip Bandopadhyay.

The Prime Minister, however, rejected the resignations of Mamata and Panja. A PMO spokesman in New Delhi said efforts were on to persuade them to withdraw their resignations.

Another ally of the NDA, the Telegu Desam Party (TDP) also expressed "displeasure" over the oil price hike. Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said in

Hyderabad that he would write to the Centre asking it to exempt people below the poverty line from the hike in LPG price. Naidu made it clear that his party would not demand rollback of the hike. He would ask the Centre to "further absorb the hike".

The real cause of Mamata's action lies in the NDA's lackadaisical approach to the demand to impose Article 356 had Mamata been Trinamool chief. Secondly, persistent demand for more flood relief led to the final decision by PM to impose Article 356. Finally, the recent decision by PM to induct BJP MP, Satyabrata Mukherjee, from the Union Minister came as the last straw.

With Assembly polls round the corner was a known fact that Mamata would campaign in Bengal. She just needed a "right" cause to eject.

NO ROLLBACK: Petroleum Minister ruled out any rollback. "We have taken into consideration all factors and I don't think there is any scope to reconsider the decision".

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 1 OCT 2000

Sushma back in the Cabinet

The cabinet expansion might upset the allies, writes *Kalyani Shankar*

New Delhi, September 30

BUT FOR the induction of the two BJP heavyweights Sushma Swaraj and Venkaiah Naidu, the swearing in today turned out to be a tame affair with most ministers of the NDA allies staying away, with the exception of George Fernandes and S S Dhindsa. Are they unhappy?

They appear to be or have reasons to be. DMK has already protested saying one of its ministers, A Raja, was shifted to another ministry without consulting senior party leader Murali Maran. And Shiv Sena, which was rooting for another berth in the cabinet, has had to settle for just a change of ministry—Suresh Prabhu moves to power.

There is then Mamata Banerji. Though she and Ajit Panja sent in their resignations today ostensibly over the oil price hike, it's likely she is also upset over the fact that the cabinet now has the only two MPs, the BJP has in West Bengal—the new entrant is S Mukherji.

But the induction of Ms Swaraj and Mr Naidu was politically significant as it indicated the expansion was a compromise thrashed out by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Home Minister L K Advani.

The two heavyweights have had their own reasons for desiring a cabinet post. Mr Naidu, for instance, has his eyes on Andhra Pradesh and he wants to gain some experience so that when the party is in a position to form the government there he can stake a claim to the Chief Minister's post.

Ms Swaraj, on the other hand, has been out in the cold since she was made the Chief Minister of Delhi in 1998 and the party lost. She was offered in, but didn't happen until now. Though she was wanted a party post, she refused.

Mr Advani wanted the return of Ms Swaraj, the PM was opposed to it. And Mr Vajpayee wanted Mr Naidu in, while Mr Advani was against it believing he was of better use in the party. Both are in now.

But for the addition of these heavyweights, the cabinet expansion was more than anything an exercise in broadbasing the cabinet region-wise.

So West Bengal and Goa, which will be going to polls, have got a ministerial berth each. Andhra

NEW PORTFOLIOS POST-EXPANSION CABINET MINISTERS

Name	Portfolio
Suresh Prabhu	Power
Sunder Lal Patwa	Chemicals & Fertilizers
M. Venkaiah Naidu	Rural Development
Sushma Swaraj	Information & Broadcasting
MINISTERS OF STATE	
Shripad Yesso Naik	Agriculture
P. Radhakrishnan	Youth Affairs & Sports
Satya Brata Mookherjee	Chemical and Fertilizers
Krishnamraju	External Affairs
Syed Shaheenawaz Hussain	Human Resource Development
V Dhananjaya Kumar	Textiles
Gingee N. Ramachandran	Finance
Rita Verma	Rural Development
A Raja	Health & Family Welfare
Ramesh Beis	Information & Broadcasting

Pradesh has two ministers—both from the upper caste.

Of the two ministers shifted, first, Sunderlal Patwa, moves for health reasons - to chemicals and fertilisers - and, the second, Dhananjaya Kumar, goes from revenue to textiles. Sources said he has been punished for his conduct during the match fixing incident when he went to the press over the income tax raids.

Mamata rolls back resignation

PM's written assurance on petroleum price hike review mollifies her

Arindam Sarkar
Calcutta, October 6

AFTER SIX days of edge-of-the-seat suspense, Trinamool chief Mamata Banerjee today announced that she would once again resume her duties as the Union Railway Minister. In other words, Mamata Banerjee and her colleague, Minister of State for External Affairs Ajiit Panja, withdrew their resignation.

This decision comes following a verbal and written assurance from Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee this afternoon that "he would take a re-look at the rise in the prices of petroleum products and take appropriate action" when he returns after undergoing knee surgery in Mumbai.

"I am grateful to the Prime Minister for sharing my concern about the effect the rise in prices of petroleum products would have on common people. I am

also grateful that he assured me that he would take action immediately after he rejoins the PMO after his operation. He called me this afternoon and then also faxed a letter to me. Following his written assurance, I am convinced that he would definitely do something. We trust Vajpayeeji," Mamata Banerjee told *The Hindustan Times*.

Till late in the afternoon, Mamata had been adamant on her stand to eject from the Cabinet. But it was the PM's call at her residence and the subsequent fax that made Mamata change her mind.

In the signed fax on Prime Minister's letterhead, Vajpayee wrote to her: "Even though the Government has



tried to minimise the burden of price increase on the consumers, it cannot be disputed that hike does cause hardship to the common citizens. We are closely watching the trends in international oil prices. I assure you that the entire issue will be given a re-look and appropriate action taken after I return from Mumbai subsequent to my knee surgery".

"The PM has requested me to withdraw my resignation. Since he sounded so positive over the telephone and also in his letter, I have decided to start work. But let me make it very clear that I am not hungry for Ministry. I will always stand by the people. And since the PM has assured me that he would uphold the demand of

the people, I am rejoining work," she said.

However, Mamata pointed out that her decision to get back to work was not a climb-down from her stand that unless the Government rolls back the prices of petroleum products, she would quit the Cabinet and withdraw support. She said it was respect and trust for Vajpayee that made her give the PM time to take a decision on the issue.

"After Vajpayeeji returns to work, if we see nothing is being done then definitely we go back to our old stand. For us, the interest of the people is more important than being in the Union Ministry," she told *The Hindustan Times*. "However, I thank the allies who have backed our cause and have urged the Government to reconsider the rise in prices of petroleum products," she said.

Related report on Page 3, photograph on Page 8

Thailand to try Rajan for illegal entry

Extradition only post-trial • Mumbai cops question don in hospital

Bangkok, October 6

THE THAILAND police today arrested Mumbai underworld don Chhota Rajap for entering into the country on an "illegal" passport and said he would be sent back to India after his trial.

Thai Immigration Police chief Lt Gen Hemaraj Theerathai said Vijay Kadam, alias Chhota Rajan, was arrested by a three-member Mumbai police team which arrived here yesterday, confirmed that the passport on which the don entered Thailand was not genuine. "This allowed the Thai Immigration Police to detain him for illegal entry," he added.

"Kadam is under arrest and won't be allowed to leave the country until his trial

for illegal entry is over. Then he will be sent back to India where he is wanted for many charges," Theerathai said.

Under the Thai law, a person is deported to the country of his origin if he is charged with illegal entry.

The Immigration Police chief said that the Mumbai Police also showed to them Rajan's criminal records in India. He said Rajan, who is undergoing treatment for bullet wounds received during an assault, would continue to stay in the hospital under police custody.

Theerathai had yesterday announced that he was going to let the don go free as the Indian police had not asked for his extradition.

However, the Thai authorities apparent-

ly changed their mind after the arrival of the Mumbai Police team and withheld his release documents and passport. They also blacklisted him from re-entering the country in view of his arrest warrants in India.

Mumbai: City Police Commissioner M. N. Singh today said the Crime Branch sleuths would make all out efforts to bring back Chhota Rajan. "Though India does not have an extradition treaty with the Thailand Government, Rajan could be brought to the city by mutual understanding between the two governments", Mr Singh told reporters here.

Meanwhile, the three member police team, in Bangkok, interrogated Rajan today for over an hour, top crime branch sources said. (PTI)

Vajpayee calls off meeting with Asim

Calcutta, October 6

THE MUCH-AWAITED meeting between Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and State Finance Minister Asim Dasgupta that was finally scheduled for tomorrow is off again on the grounds of Vajpayee's health.

Doctors from Breach Candy Hospital is to arrive tomorrow in Delhi for a pre-surgical check-up on the Prime Minister. Dasgupta said: "A Central financial assistance for flood damage and reconstruction has little to do with a verbal expression of sympathy. We will keep our fingers crossed until the Centre takes some concrete steps." **Detailed report on Page 5**

Minor cabinet expansion today

Jay Raina
New Delhi, November 6

0 Council of Ministers

THERE IS to be a minor expansion and a significant reshuffle of portfolios in the Vajpayee cabinet tomorrow. Law and company affairs minister Arun Jaitley is to be elevated to the rank of cabinet minister. Three ministers of state (MoS) are to be inducted. The swearing in ceremony is slated for tomorrow evening.

The fiery BJP leader, Uma Bharati, is set to return. Jharkhand tribal leader Karia Munda and Maj Gen Bhuwan Chandra Khanduri (ret'd) from Garhwal (Uttaranchal) will be the two new additions to Mr Vajpayee's team. Mr Munda's induction into the Council of Ministers provides a strong indication that forest and environment MoS Babulal Marandi is to become the first chief minister of Jharkhand. Marandi is understood to have resigned as Union minister for this. Mr Munda is tipped to take over Mr Marandi's portfolio.

Who is getting what

Rising star: Arun Jaitley, law and company affairs minister, to be given cabinet rank and additional charge of shipping.

Returning star: Uma Bharati, to be back as youth affairs and sports minister.

New faces: Karia Munda, as MoS forest and environment; Bhuwan Chandra Khanduri as MoS in the ministry of roads.

Musical chairs: S.S. Dhindsa (from sports and mines to chemicals and fertilizers); Sunderlal Patwa (from chemicals and fertilizers to ministry of mines)

Goodbye: Babulal Marandi. Headed for Ranchi as Jharkhand's first CM?



Arun Jaitley



Uma Bharati

Mr Jaitley is to be given additional charge of the shipping ministry, which is to be delinked from surface transport.

The surface transport is to be renamed as ministry of roads. Mr Khanduri is to be its MoS with independent charge.

Sources said Ms Bharati is likely to be given independent charge of the ministry for youth affairs and sports, currently held by the Akali Dal's S.S. Dhindsa.

The BJP's Sunderlal Patwa, currently holding the chemicals and fertilizers portfolio, is expected to make way for Mr Dhindsa and take over the ministry of mines. Mr Dhindsa currently holds additional charge of the mines ministry.

Ms Bharati's return to the council of ministers had been a subject of speculation ever since she decided not to resign from the Lok Sabha.

Sources said External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh informed Ms Bharati this evening about the Prime Minister's decision to induct her into his team again.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 NOV 2000

Vajpayee inducts Uma Bharti, elevates Jaitley

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's conciliatory politics saw the return of the disgruntled Uma Bharti as minister and the elevation of Arun Jaitley to cabinet rank. The PM also inducted Uttaranchal leader B.C. Khanduri into the ministry but failed to appease veteran leader from Jharkhand Karia Munda, who declined to take the oath as minister of state on Tuesday.

Mr Munda, a minister in the first Janata government of Morarji Desai in 1977 and a cabinet member in Mr Vajpayee's 13-day government in 1996, had apparently been slighted by the offer of a minister-of-state portfolio. According to sources, Mr Munda told his party colleagues that he would need time to consider the offer.

Asked for his reaction after the swearing-in ceremony at Rashtrapati Bhavan, Mr Vajpayee said, "He (Munda) has expressed a desire to work in his state." Mr Munda was in the running for the chief ministership of Jharkhand.

President K.R. Narayanan administered the oath of office to the new ministers in the presence of Mr Vajpayee, home minister L.K. Advani and several other ministers and MPs.

Continuing his politics of appeasement, the PM accommodated Ms Bharti, who had earlier quit the ministry and even threatened to resign her Lok Sabha seat, as cabinet minister for sports and youth affairs, a charge she had held earlier.

In another significant move, the PM elevated Mr Jaitley to cabinet rank, giving him the portfolio of shipping in addition to law, justice and company affairs. Mr Khanduri, a strong contender for Uttaranchal chief ministership, was given surface transport minus shipping.

The minor reshuffle of portfolios saw Sunderlal Patwa being shifted from chemicals and fertilisers to mines. S.S. Dhindsa was moved from the sports portfolio to chemicals and fertilisers. Hukumdeo Narain Yadav was shifted from surface transport to shipping.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

8 NOV 2000

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 11, 2000

Flourish

A MINOR EXPANSION AGAIN

10-12/11

TRUE TO WHAT appears to have emerged as a pattern of sorts since the National Democratic Alliance assumed the reins of power a year ago, the 'expansion' the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, effected early this week was patently an exercise dictated by the BJP's own compulsions of realpolitik. In fact, unlike during the coalition regime he headed in 1998, most of the ministerial changes Mr. Vajpayee has made so far — the latest is the fourth such exercise — have had to do with the pulls, pressures and factional power equations within his own party, rather than its partners in the ruling alliance. The reinduction of Ms. Uma Bharati as a Minister with Cabinet rank is widely perceived as a caste-centric image-correcting initiative for the BJP set against the backdrop of the upper caste-oriented changes recently effected in the governmental and organisational segments of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh. At the personal level, Ms. Bharati's comeback is in the nature of rehabilitation after her brief foray into agitational politics in her home State (Madhya Pradesh) and an introspective sojourn. And for the other inductee, Maj. Gen. (ret'd) B. C. Khanduri, the ministerial berth is a sop or possibly a tradeoff for not pressing his claim to the Chief Ministerial gaddi in the newly-formed Uttaranchal where the party's choice has gone in favour of Mr. Nityanand Swami.

What emerges from all the shuffling episodes is that the Union Cabinet has come to be increasingly regarded by Mr. Vajpayee as no more than an expedient tool in the management of party affairs, using ministerial berths for appeasing the disgruntled elements or striking a balance in the inter-factional power equations at the State level, much the same way as the Congress had been doing. For a national party that happens to be in power at the Centre, such political exigencies are perhaps unavoidable. But,

when partisan considerations become paramount in determining the entry and exit of Ministers and the Cabinet is shuffled too often and in a piecemeal fashion — which indeed is the impression one gets from the way Mr. Vajpayee has gone about this business — the basics of governance inevitably get a hard knock. What is more, the intended objectives in party management are rarely realised inasmuch as the strategy tends to have a backlash. A case in point is that of Mr. Karia Munda who refused to bite the bait of a Minister of State berth offered by Mr. Vajpayee to persuade him to stay out of the race for the Chief Minister's office in Jharkhand, paving the way for Mr. Babulal Marandi. Whether he sticks to that stand or yields ultimately, settling for a higher 'price', is a different issue.

As for the portfolio-related part of the exercise, Mr. Arun Jaitley's elevation to Cabinet rank is well-merited and the additional charge of Shipping he gets is perhaps intended as a compensation for the 'loss' of the high-profile Information and Broadcasting Ministry, which went to Ms. Sushma Swaraj in the September round. That Mr. S. S. Dhindsa should have been divested of 'Sports' (now under the charge of Ms. Uma Bharati) at a time when matters relating to the cricket match-fixing scandal have entered the climactic stage and the Government is all set to take a decision on the CBI's report indicting certain key players is bound to raise some eyebrows. A striking example of the casual approach that has characterised the Ministry reshuffle exercises is provided by the fact that a crucial subject like Chemicals and Fertilizers has changed hands frequently — it has now come to Mr. Dhindsa from Mr. Sunderlal Patwa who himself got it only last September. Such ad hocism and piecemeal approach does little credit to a regime that flaunts 'good governance' as its credo.

THE HINDU

11 NOV 2000

Atal Cabinet changes at Advani's insistence

Sushma, Naidu on list

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN AND DIPTOSH MAJUMDAR

New Delhi, Sept. 29: Sushma Swaraj and Venkaiah Naidu are slated to enter the Atal Behari Vajpayee ministry in the Cabinet shuffle planned tomorrow.

The BJP leaders, waiting in the wings for a ministerial cap for some time, are likely to be allotted the information and broadcasting and the power portfolios.

The power ministry fell vacant after the death of P.R. Kumaramangalam and is under the Prime Minister. Arun Jaitley is doubling up as law and I&B minister. Vacancies have also been created by some resignations.

While Sushma has already had a stint as I&B minister, Naidu will make his debut in government. Sushma held the I&B portfolio before she was asked to replace Sahib Singh Verma as Delhi chief minister shortly before the 1998 Assembly polls.

The other new faces may be Sripath Naik from Goa and Pon Radhakrishnan, MP from Tamil Nadu. Government sources said both are likely to be made ministers of state.

Goa has so far been unrepresented in the Cabinet though the BJP has been making huge gains in the state. Radhakrishnan is being brought in to fill up the Tamil Nadu vacuum.

This evening, junior agriculture minister S.B. Satyanarayana Rao put in his papers on grounds



Sushma and Naidu

that he is given "no work". Rao, who is from Andhra, reportedly offered to "relinquish" his post to save the government money and help its austerity drive. It is not known whether his resignation has been accepted.

BJP sources gave a different spin to Rao's stepdown, saying it was linked to the induction of Naidu, who is also from Andhra and from the same

Kamma caste. "It was felt that there is no point taking two ministers from the same caste," sources said. Andhra MP Krishnam Raju may be brought in.

The Shiv Sena is also piling pressure on Vajpayee to give it "weightier" portfolios like power. Sena ministers Manohar Joshi and Suresh Prabhu are in charge of heavy industries and chemicals and fertilisers respectively. Sena boss Bal Thackeray has been targeting Vajpayee and BJP chief Bangaru Laxman for their "pro-Muslim" overtures. BJP sources said either Joshi or Prabhu would be given a more "important" ministry.

Given the pulls and pressures on Vajpayee, a section of the BJP said tomorrow's exercise would be "more than a small reshuffle". "It will be a reshuffle in the real sense of the word, and there may be surprises," said sources close to home minister L.K. Advani.

BJP sources added that the Cabinet is being shuffled at Advani's insistence and Vajpayee is "quite content" to let things be till his knee surgery is over.

Kumaramangalam in coma

By Our Staff Reporter

AD-1
NEW DELHI, AUG. 16. The Union Power Minister, Mr. Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, is battling for life at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) following deterioration in his condition early this morning due to multiple organ failure.

9- Council of
While AIIMS authorities described Mr. Kumaramangalam's condition as "critical", doctors attending on him said late tonight

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that some of his body functions were "stabilising".

Mr. Kumaramangalam was admitted to the AIIMS on Saturday with high fever. He was shifted to the institute's Intensive Care Unit this morning after his blood pressure dropped and he slipped into semi-coma.

Immediately thereafter doctors started emergency treatment and put Mr. Kumaramangalam on a ventilator. Throughout the day, a team of anaesthetists, haematolo-

gists, physicians and cardiologists were on their toes trying to revive him. The President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, the Vice-President, Krishan Kant, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, and many Cabinet and State Ministers and Members of Parliament visited the AIIMS.

Doctors attending on Mr. Kumaramangalam said he had been put on a heart-lung machine. While they could not immediately say what had caused the complications, they said Mr. Kumaramangalam had septicimia (a medical condition in which blood in the body becomes poisonous).

A medical bulletin issued by the AIIMS this evening said the 48-year-old Power Minister continued to be in a 'critical condition'. "He is on assisted ventilation. His blood pressure continues to be low despite high ionotopic support. His urinary output is low. He has shown no improvement in the last few hours," it said.

While further medical investigations on the Union Power Minister could only be carried out after his condition stabilises, doctors said he had been admitted to the AIIMS twice in the past six months. All that they could say was that Mr. Kumaramangalam had "undiagnosed fever".

Close family members and colleagues were caught by surprise when they received news that Mr. Kumaramangalam had slipped into coma. "Even last night, he was casual and in a jolly mood. I was shocked when I heard this morning that he had slipped into coma. I pray for his speedy recovery," an official close to the Power Minister said.

According to family sources, Mr. Kumaramangalam was admitted to Apollo Hospital last month following complaints of fever. "Except during the past four months, I have never ever seen him taking any medicine," said a Member of Parliament close to Mr. Kumaramangalam.



The Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, and the Health Minister, Mr. C. P. Thakur, coming out of the ICU of the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences, where the Power Minister, Mr. P. R. Kumaramangalam, is battling for life. — PTI

THE HINDU

17 AUG 2000

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24/8

Nation bids adieu to Kumaramangalam

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By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, AUG. 23. The Union Power Minister, Mr. P.R. Kumaramangalam, who was battling for life in the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) here for the past one week, died early this morning following a massive heart attack. He was cremated with full State honours in the electric crematorium at Nigambodh Ghat in the evening. The last rites were performed by his 21-year-old son.

The 48-year-old Minister, who was admitted to the AIIMS on August 12 with "undiagnosed fever", and slipped into coma soon after, suffered a major heart attack at about 4-20 a.m.. Efforts to revive him proved futile and doctors pronounced him dead 20 minutes later. The body of Mr. Kumaramangalam was then embalmed and taken to 30, Aurangzeb Road, his official residence. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Vice-President, Mr. Krishan Kant, and the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, were among the first to visit Mr. Kumaramangalam's residence to pay their last respects.

Later in the day, the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, the Congress (I) president, Mrs. Sonia Gandhi, and Union Ministers paid homage.

The funeral procession started



The President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, paying homage to the Union Power Minister, Mr. P.R. Kumaramangalam, in New Delhi on Wednesday. — Photo: R.V. Moorthy

from his residence at about 4 p.m. With Mr. Kumaramangalam's body draped in the national tricolor, the procession was led by a high-ranking officer of the armed forces.

Wreaths were placed on the body by the Union Home Minis-

ter, Mr. L. K. Advani, the Union Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, and the three Service Chiefs. With guns booming in salute, Mr. Kumaramangalam's body was consigned to flames in the electric furnace.

Tributes on Pages 14, 15

INDIA

24 AUG 2000

Rangarajan Kumarangalam: 1952-2000

RANGARAJAN KUMARAMANGALAM showed a characteristic political dexterity that surprised his friends and foes alike.

He was a stormy Left-wing petrol, who embraced the BJP and liberalisation after a long journey through Congress and the trade union movement.

As an active student and youth leader, he represented the changing Congress under Sanjay Gandhi and as a popular parliamentarian he was 'Ranga' to the Opposition and the ruling clan.

For a third generation politician, Kumarangalam endeared himself by his unassuming style. His late grandfather, P. Subbaroyan and late father and former Union Minister Mohan Kumarangalam were legends in their lifetimes in Tamil Nadu politics. His mother, late Kalvani Mukherjee, was a CPI leader, who was related to the late West Bengal Chief Minister Ajoy Mukherjee and CPI stalwarts of Bengal, late

Vishwanath Mukherjee and Geeta Mukherjee.

Born on May 12, 1952, he started out as a Youth Congress activist in 1975 when Sanjay Gandhi was at the helm. He was the first president of the Congress's student arm, the National Students Union of India but suffered a setback when he rubbed Rajiv Gandhi's aides on the wrong way between 1985 and 1991. At 39, he became a Union Minister under Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao. Even in his first year as minister, he was tempted to respond to AIADMK chief Jayalalitha, the then Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, by resigning in protest against the Centre's failure to notify the Cauvery Tribunal's award.

While his senior Congress colleague, Labour Minister Vazhpadi Ramamurthy, resigned, Kumarangalam was dissuaded by President R. Venkataraman from taking such a drastic step. He resigned after he publicly

played Rao's leadership for the Congress's debacle in the Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh in 1993 in the post-Babri Masjid demolition period. His rebellion against Rao brought him closer to Arjun Singh and N.D. Tiwari. He joined them in the breakaway outfit, the Congress-Tiwari.

After the top leadership of the Tiwari Congress returned to the parent unit, Kumarangalam followed suit, only to quit on the eve of the general elections. His joining the BJP on the eve of the 1998 polls raised eyebrows in Left circles, as his family was known for its Left leanings.

His father Mohan Kumarangalam had become Steel Minister in Indira Gandhi's Cabinet in the post-nationalisation era when the Communists decided to support her. Mohan Kumarangalam died in an aircraft crash

1973 when 'Ranga' was only 21.

The son's entry into the BJP was a big event for the party, for he was the first senior Congress leader to join the BJP. In 1998, when Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee took office, Kumarangalam was made Minister for Power.

In March 1999, when the BJP's ties with the AIADMK soured, Kumarangalam was the first to attack Jayalalitha, who sought his resignation as a precondition for continuing support to the coalition.

He dared Jayalalitha to withdraw her ministers and the support of her party if she was unhappy with the Vajpayee Government. At one stage, Kumarangalam thought Vajpayee might oblige Jayalalitha to save his Government by asking him to withdraw his statement. The Prime Minister was, however, firm.

But by then Jayalalitha's tea party had brought her close to

Congress chief Sonia Gandhi. She withdrew her ministers and her party's support. Vajpayee lost the confidence motion in the Lok Sabha by a single vote, leading to fresh elections.

Kumarangalam went back to Tiruchi to contest the Lok Sabha elections. He won the seat after a tough fight against the AIADMK.

When he was inducted into the Vajpayee Cabinet in 1998, BJP leaders in Tamil Nadu were surprised that a new entrant was chosen. Kumarangalam, despite being put up for the Tiruchi seat where the BJP had a negligible presence, romped home with a thumping majority.

He was elected to the Lok Sabha five times - in 1984, 1989, 1991, 1998 and 1999. He was Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs and Law, Justice and Company Affairs in 1991. In 1992, he was shifted to Science and Technology.

Kumarangalam was active as a trade unionist, who organised the

Congress-controlled Union of Government Servants.

In the last two years, he turned a proponent of reforms in all sectors. Consumer is the king was his motto but he was disappointed by the resistance from several quarters to changes in the State Electricity Boards for efficient production and distribution of power.

Although, under Kumarangalam's stewardship the Ministry of Power managed to project an industry-friendly image, no major power project with foreign collaboration could actually take off.

When employees of the Uttar Pradesh Electricity Board went on strike, he went to Lucknow to bail out Chief Minister Ram Prakash Gupta. He talked to the State Electricity Board employees to convince them that splitting the board would benefit them and the consumers. With no improvement in the power situation, his dream of sweeping reforms in the power sector remained a mirage.

Obituary

Once-bitten govt stalls House statement

Jethmalani threat to go public

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

J. J. C. C. C.
P. P. P. P. P.

New Delhi, July 26: The Vajpayee government today prevented Ram Jethmalani from making a statement in the Rajya Sabha on his resignation, but the ousted law minister struck back by threatening to go public if he is not allowed to speak tomorrow.

Though technical reasons were cited for not letting Jethmalani take the floor, the government apparently developed cold feet as the statement is said to contain disparaging references to Chief Justice A.S. Anand and attorney-general Soli Sorabjee.

The 18-page statement has 93 pages of annexures, including documents that Jethmalani obtained in his capacity as law minister.

Even as the government began efforts to persuade Jethmalani to delete his criticism of the chief justice and the attorney-general, the mercurial former minister promised to make public the statement on events leading to his resignation if he is not allowed to speak tomorrow.

"I will speak to the media and public about the circumstances that led to my resignation from the Cabinet if I am not given a chance to make a statement in the Rajya Sabha tomorrow," he said.

Asked why he did not make the statement today, he said: "The government raised some technical objections to the statement I had placed before the secretariat and I have answered them."

Sources said Jethmalani had secured photocopies of certain documents which he is now trying to make use of. The Rajya Sabha chairman could not allow the documents to be placed before the House without the government's consent as they pertained to top constitutional authorities. "You cannot just discuss the conduct of such persons in the House," a Cabinet minister said.

The sources said the original statement had six references to the chief justice, the "sordid exchanges" he had with the attorney-general besides some correspondence between Jethmalani and the chief justice and the attorney-general.

Realising that the statement could put the Centre in a spot, crisis managers succeeded in stalling Jethmalani from making the statement in the House. Chairman Krishan Kant refused permission on the ground that the documents were not authenticated.

Deputy chairperson Najma Heptulla said the chairman wanted time to study the papers presented by the former minister. She said the secretariat received the copy of Jethmalani's explanation along with some attachments only at 9.45 this morning.

For the past two days, the government has been making efforts to placate Jethmalani. Sources said Sorabjee wrote to Jethmalani yesterday in a bid to mollify him. The attorney-general told Jethmalani that he had nothing personal against him.

THE TELEGRAM

27 JUL 2007

 NEW FACES, OLD HANDS	
CABINET MINISTERS	
Name	Portfolio
Nitish Kumar	Agriculture <i>v/s</i> New
Ananth Kumar	Tourism and Culture
Jagmohan	Urban Development and Poverty Alleviation
S S Dhindsa	Youth Affairs and Sports, Additional charge of Mines
C P Thakur	Health and Family Welfare
Arjun Sethi	Water Resources New
MINISTERS OF STATE (Independent charge)	
N T Shanmugam	Coal
B K Tripathi	Steel <i>of Council</i> New
MINISTERS OF STATE	
Rita Verma	Health and Family Welfare
Syed Shahnawaz Hussein	Youth Affairs and Sports
Hukumdeo Narayan Yadav	Surface Transport
Debendra Pradhan	Agriculture
Jaising Rao Gaekwad Patil	Mines
Th. Chaoba Singh	Department of Food Processing In Ministry of Agriculture

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 MAY 2011

Jethmalani dares baiters to nail him over secrecy issue

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Deposed Union law minister Ram Jethmalani on Thursday defended photo-copying certain letters before he quit office and dared his detractors to prosecute him for violating the Official Secrets Act.

"These are my personal letters and I have made their copies," a charged Mr Jethmalani told the media at his residence after Rajya Sabha chairman Krishan Kant had "sustained" the objection to his making a statement in the House on the resignation issue. The irony was especially apparent, Mr Jethmalani said, as the government had moved the Freedom of Information Bill on Wednesday.



Ram Jethmalani

'RAM'ROD STANCE

- Jethmalani defends photo-copying papers
- Reiterates stand on time-barred case involving CJI
- Says Sorabjee should have been dismissed

Mr Jethmalani issued a 17-page statement criticising attorney general Soli J. Sorabjee and supreme court Chief Justice Adarsh Sein Anand, whose

outburst during the hearing on the Srikrishna Commission report on the 1992-'93 Mumbai riots had culminated in his resignation.

Referring to allegations about a land suit which was allegedly decreed in favour of Justice A.S. Anand's wife and mother-in-law, Mr Jethmalani said a lower court had entertained the suit even though it was time-barred for two decades.

After a report on this had appeared in a magazine, the Chief Justice had been "cold" towards him, apparently suspecting him of being behind the publication, Mr Jethmalani said and added that he had met the CJI and clarified the matter.

Mr Jethmalani described his

relations with the CJI as "extremely cordial". The only difference between them, he said, had been on the appointment of former Patna high court judge B.M. Lal as chairman of the MRTPC.

Mr Jethmalani felt that there was no need for consulting the CJI on this issue. The stand "seems to have offended His Lordship's dignity. How can a CJI be told that he is wrong both in law and in fact?"

Mr Jethmalani said the CJI persisted in the view that he should have been consulted before the MRTPC chairman was appointed. "My firm answer was that before I consent to this deviation from past practice, I would have to consult my other colleagues in the cabinet," he said. Later, he had a "cordial" meeting with the CJI and thought the matter was settled, he

added.

"But I thought wrongly. The Chief Justice thinks that I am impertinent. Yes, I do not easily surrender the privilege of the executive merely to keep a Chief Justice happy and contented. If that is impertinence, so be it," he added.

He aired various grievances against Soli Sorabjee, among them that Mr Sorabjee had "advised" the Hinduja, accused in the Bofors case, even when the CBI was investigating them, and that he had advised the government to transfer the cases involving AIADMK chief J. Jayalalitha to courts "more congenial to her". "The AG has a lot to explain," Mr Jethmalani added.

Opposition cries for prosecution

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Both houses of parliament were paralysed on Thursday as an agitated opposition asked the government for a commitment to prosecute Ram Jethmalani for an admitted breach of the ministerial oath of secrecy and of the Official Secrets Act. On Wednesday, Mr Jethmalani had annexed several confidential documents to his formal letter seeking permission for making a statement on his removal.

The opposition wanted the Prime Minister to explain all the various charges Mr Jethmalani had been making about his removal, including his accusations against attorney-general Soli Sorabjee and supreme court Chief Justice A.S. Anand. The government has been saying that it will probe the "leakage" of secret documents and then decide what is to be done.

Attorney-general rebuts charges

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Attorney-general Soli Sorabjee has rebutted the charge by Ram Jethmalani that he gave legal advice to the London-based Hinduja on the Bofors case, and clarified that his opinion was related to a power project in Andhra Pradesh. Mr Sorabjee said the opinion given to the Hinduja "had no connection whatsoever with the Bofors case". It related to the "interpretation of a counter-guarantee given in respect of a power project in Andhra Pradesh", he said.

Police file chargesheet against Abu Azmi

Santosh Bane 5:1 By Our Law Reporter



ANOTHER TIME, ANOTHER FACE: Samajwadi Party city unit president Abu Asim Azmi (centre) leaves Mazgaon court in Mumbai on Thursday after appearing before the magistrate in the Mastaan Tal'io speech case.

MUMBAI: The city police on Thursday filed a chargesheet in the metropolitan magistrate's court at Mazgaon against the city unit president of the Samajwadi Party, Abu Asim Azmi, for allegedly making an inflammatory speech in February this year. However, Mr Azmi was not arrested.

The chargesheet has been filed under Section 153 (A) of the Indian Penal Code. Earlier this year, the police had framed charges under section 153 of the IPC in the same case. Mr Azmi appeared in court on Thursday with his counsel, Majeed Memon, even as his supporters thronged the area. Magistrate A.M. Garde adjourned the case to August 10 when he said he would consider whether to take cognisance of the offences against Mr Azmi.

"The question of taking cognisance is to be given a thought to," he said in his order, adding that he did not want to "hurriedly pass an order" without going through the papers of investigation. Additional commissioner of police B.B. Patil told this newspaper later that the police had merely filed a chargesheet and that Mr Azmi "appeared in court on his own".

Nitish back, Dilip dropped, BJP hopefuls left out

5/27/2005

Council of Ministers

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 27 — The Prime Minister today made minor changes in his council of ministers by recalling Mr Nitish Kumar to Krishi Bhavan and dropping Mr Dilip Ray.

Belying rumours, Mr Sharad Yadav, in the thick of a controversy over rerouting of an Alliance Air flight, remains civil aviation minister.

None of the BJP hopefuls, including Mrs Sushma Swaraj, gained from the latest expansion. Induction of BJP leaders was never under consideration when the Prime Minister decided to fill up some vacancies a week ago, Mr LK Advani said soon after the swearing-in. It was all in the media and minds, he said.

"The Prime Minister has already reallocated the tourism portfolio, held by Miss Uma Bharati before she resigned, to Mr Ananth Kumar. We have aspirants for the ministerial berths, but all of them are senior members, and won't settle for anything less than a Cabinet rank. As a matter of principle, the Cabinet should not be very large," Mr Advani said, explaining the non-inclu-

sion of BJP members in today's exercise.

Two new faces, both from the BJD, are Mr Arjun Charan Seth, Cabinet minister in charge of water resources, and Mr Braj Kishore Tripathi, minister of state, with independent charge of steel, held earlier by Mr Dilip Ray, also of the BJD.

In the reshuffled government, Dr CP Thakur, a physician, gets the department of health and family welfare, held earlier by Mr NT Shanmugham who, as minister of state, gets independent charge of coal.

Despite pressure from Delhi BJP and RSS leaders to remove him as urban development minister, Mr Jagmohan retains the portfolio and gets additional charge of the department of poverty alleviation.

Mr SS Dhindsa too gets additional charge of mines, besides youth affairs and sports. Mrs Rita Verma, minister of state, mines and minerals, has been transferred to health and family welfare.

The departments of some half-a-dozen junior ministers too have been changed, with Mr Hukumdeo Narain Yadav given surface transport under

Mr Rajnath Singh.

The exercise was clearly a tightrope-walk for the Prime Minister who restricted himself to filling up vacant slots and took great care not to ruffle his allies.

Mr Dilip Ray was dropped under pressure from the Orissa chief minister, Mr Navin Patnaik. Mr Nitish Kumar, was given back his old job as agriculture minister and Mr Arjun Sethi (BJD) filled the berth vacated by Mr Patnaik. Another BJD leader, Mr Braj Kishore Tripathi, was inducted to replace Mr Ray, who was a minister of state with independent charge.

Miss Uma Bharati was not reinstated. Mr Vajpayee justified the non-inclusion of BJP leaders, saying his party was adequately represented.

The intended message was: Even his reshuffled ministry would not be bigger than Mr PV Narasimha Rao's.

Mr Vajpayee's ministry now has 29 Cabinet ministers, six ministers of state with independent charge and 38 ministers of state, still one fewer than Mr Rao's 74.

■ More reports on page 10

THE STATESMAN

28 MAY 2005

Jethmalani may have to go for locking horns with SC

Vinod Sharma
New Delhi, July 22

PRIME MINISTER Atal Behari Vajpayee is understood to have asked Ram Jethmalani to tender his resignation from the Council of Ministers.

The PM's move apparently has its genesis in the Union Law Minister's action in locking horns with the Supreme Court over the latter's observations against his defence of Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray.

No official confirmation was available about the PM's move. But knowledgeable sources confirmed to *The Hindustan Times* tonight that Jethmalani has,

indeed, been asked to put in his papers.

Currently away in Pune, the Law Minister too wasn't available at the contact number provided by his staff here. It is reliably learnt that he sought to approach a key politician for help upon being asked to quit.

The apex court's remarks had come in the course of a hearing yesterday on a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) seeking implementation of the recommendations of the Sri Krishna Commission which probed the 1993 Mumbai riots. A three-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice A S Anand had expressed distress that some Cabinet Ministers chose to

comment on the matter even while it was pending before it.

"Is there something called collective responsibility or not?" the Bench had queried while wondering "whether this concept is known to the Government".

Without naming the Ministers, the Court pointed out that their reported statements were in conflict with an affidavit filed before it by the Centre on September 10, 1999, stating that the Union Government had no role in the report's implementation, the jurisdiction of the State Government being "exclusive" in the matter.

Related reports on Pages 8, 11

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

Jethmalani resigns, blames Sorabjee; Jaitley takes over

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 23. — Mr Ram Jethmalani, who became a member of the Rajya Sabha due to support of the Shiv Sena, today lost his job as a Union Cabinet minister fighting the cause of the Sena chief, Mr Bal Thackeray.

While the fight brought him into direct conflict with the Supreme Court and forced the Prime Minister to ask him to quit, Mr Jethmalani insisted that his decision followed "constant pin-pricks" from the Attorney-General of India, Mr Soli J Sorabjee.

The President, Mr KR Narayanan, today accepted Mr Jethmalani's resignation from the council of ministers, after Mr Vajpayee forwarded it to him. The law minister had faxed his resignation from Mumbai yesterday at the instance of the Prime Minister.

The minister of state for information and broadcasting and disinvestment, Mr Arun Jaitley, has been asked to hold additional charge of the law and justice portfolio. Mr Arun Shourie takes over the disinvestment portfolio.

Mr Jethmalani held Mr Sorabjee responsible for his exit. "His constant pin-pricks led to my exit," he told reporters in Pune. He denied that the resignation was due to the observations made by the Chief Justice of India or the case against Mr Bal Thackeray.

"Though I have some more minor irritants adding to the decision to quit the Cabinet, the Attorney-General was the



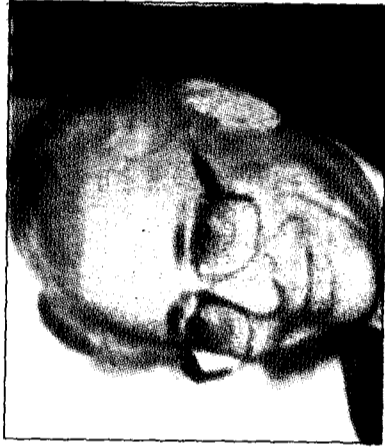
Mr Ram Jethmalani

single biggest factor which weighed in my mind when I submitted my resignation," he said.

Pushed to the wall due to Mr Jethmalani's comments on the Supreme Court's observations questioning the principle of collective responsibility, the Prime Minister had very few options available to him, a source said.

Mr Vajpayee was reportedly upset with Mr Jethmalani for so openly defending the Shiv Sena chief and later after the court's observations about collective responsibility.

Mr Jethmalani could have survived had he not commented on the Supreme Court's observations as he was not alone in suggesting that the Centre could intervene in the Maharashtra crisis, the source said. His statement indicating that the court's observation was



Mr Soli Sorabjee

wrong also ran contrary to the opinion expressed by Mr Sorabjee.

Mr Sorabjee held after the court's observations that the ministers should speak in one voice if they were speaking on behalf of the government. Otherwise, they should clarify that it was a personal opinion, he had said.

The Supreme Court had chided the government on Friday while disapproving of the statements of some ministers on the Maharashtra government's decision to prosecute the Shiv Sena supremo. The court held that the government's affidavit on the Sri Krishna Commission, which probed the Mumbai riots, did not match the statements of these ministers.

"Is there something called collective responsibility or not," the Bench, headed by the Chief Justice, Mr AS Anand,

asked and wondered "whether this concept is not known to this government."

A vocal Mr Jethmalani, who had suggested that the Centre could intervene to prevent Mr Thackeray's prosecution, reacted the same day saying the court ought to have realised it was making comments about a minister "who knows his law as well as anyone else".

Mr Jethmalani came out against the decision of the Maharashtra government to prosecute Mr Thackeray for his alleged inflammatory editorial in party mouthpiece *Saamna* during the 1993 Mumbai riots.

He argued that the state government had no powers to arrest Mr Thackeray for an offence as old as seven years and that the Centre could issue directions to the state against such a move.

Even after resigning, Mr Jethmalani looked to be in a combative mood. But this time, his ire was directed at the Attorney-General who he said did not defend him in the Supreme Court. "The Attorney-General almost encouraged the Chief Justice of India to make all those observations."

He said: "I will make everything clear in due course of time. I have to record my protest about the behaviour of the Attorney-General in court."

About the Prime Minister's decision, he said Mr Vajpayee was asked to choose between "a pliant Attorney-General and a no-nonsense law minister".

■ More reports on page 8

THE STATESMAN

24 JUL 2003

Aruns key to Vajpayee's plans

Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, July 24

HEA 2579

PRIME MINISTER Vajpayee's decision to entrust new assignments for the two Aruns - Ministers of State Arun Jaitley and Arun Shourie - underscores his priorities and concerns.

Firstly, he wants to improve the Government's relationship with the judiciary and, secondly, he wants the disinvestment process to continue in a transparent manner without any hindrance.

Mr Jaitley has taken the place of Mr Ram Jethmalani, who was asked to resign on Saturday, in the Law Ministry. Mr Shourie has moved to Mr Jaitley's position as Disinvestment Minister.

Mr Jaitley will continue to hold the additional charges of Information and Broadcasting. Mr Shourie will also look after Statistics, Programme Implementation, Personnel, Public Grievances and Pension. Minister of State O Rajagopal, who was Mr Jethmalani's deputy, will now be Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs.

Both the Aruns had endeared themselves to Mr Vajpayee by their perfor-



Arun Jaitley



Arun Shourie

mance as ministers, which won appreciation both in the party and outside. They were seen as among the most able hands in the Government.

Mr Vajpayee's choice of Mr Jaitley for the Law Minister's job was inevitable, considering his standing in the bar and excellent relations with leading legal luminaries, BJP circles point out.

Mr Shourie had already been involved in evaluation of some PSUs. And most importantly, he has a reputation that is identical to Mr Jaitley's: clean, efficient and sincere. Therefore, he was considered as the best alternative to Mr Jaitley

to handle disinvestment.

Significantly, Mr Shourie was among the Ministers, who participated in the face-to-face discussion between the BJP leaders and the RSS leaders, including the office-bearers of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch, on July 17.

That interaction ended with the Prime Minister sending a strong signal. Notwithstanding the RSS hawks' objection, the Government would not compromise on the reform process, as stated by Home Minister L K Advani later in a television interview.

Mr Jaitley emerged as the Prime Minister's Man Friday to speed up the disinvestment process in the last two months without raking up any controversy.

The Government has been driven by an ambitious target to recover at least Rs 700,000 crore from the disinvestment of the public sector undertakings.

Similarly, in the case of Mr Shourie, his ability to delve into details and figures impressed Mr Vajpayee, who appreciated his analytical style in the evaluation of delays in Government's projects and irregularities in the MPs' funds scheme.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 JUL 2000