
A Thought for Today

The credibility gap is so wide that our suspicions are confirmed by any official denial.

— LAURENCE J PETER

Operation Crossfire

What happens when security compulsions clash with terrorist activity? In the crossfire, truth becomes the biggest casualty. Nothing affirms this as much as the Chittisinghpura massacre which has turned into something of a whodunit following a spate of charges and counter-charges relating to the identity of the killers. When unidentified gunmen killed 36 residents of Kashmir's largest Sikh village on March 20, the needle of suspicion pointed in one direction — Pakistan, which would benefit the most from organising a bloodbath in Kashmir at a time President Clinton was touring India. The man who had described the sub-continent as the "most dangerous place on earth" would learn for himself how dangerous the place was. Back then, nobody said the theory was too pat; indeed, no one even remotely argued that if the motive was so obvious to us, it might be so to Pakistan as well. The questions started later. To be precise, after official claims that the killer gang comprised five foreign militants all of whom had perished in an encounter. The investigation was thorough — the killers were named and their foreign (Pakistan) connection established. Or so it seemed at that time. In truth, the five 'foreign militants' were neither militants nor foreigners; they were all local civilians picked up in a random search and brutally killed thereafter. The clues emerged after the relatives of the missing men put two and two together. A visit to the scene of encounter confirmed the worst: Though the bodies had been defaced badly — burnt and beheaded in the case of some — and buried, there was enough tell-tale evidence to establish their identities.

The first doubts started at this stage: If men especially entrusted with protecting citizens could commit a crime that was not just unconscionable but clearly premeditated, then maybe, just maybe Chittisinghpura itself was not as simple as first believed? The doubts grew when the police fired into and killed some among a group of processionists who were protesting against the encounter deaths. This was further proof of official complicity: The authority vested in law enforcers could be doubly misused — to commit a crime and then to cover it up. Today, a controversy rages over what really happened in Chittisinghpura, and unfortunately, the battlelines stand drawn between people who have conveniently been fitted into two slots — patriots and traitors. The former are those who would worry about India's image abroad, who would rather no questions were asked. Needless to say, the latter do the opposite. We do not know which sick mind planned the carnage — hopefully, the inquiry ordered now will throw some light on it. Nor do we intend taking sides. Suffice to say that if questions are being raised about the possible involvement of the army in the incident then that is largely thanks to the way those in uniform have behaved. Another inquiry has held the CRPF responsible for most of the recent deaths in Pahalgam. Of course, men who operate in a tinder-box environment such as in Kashmir are under extraordinary strain. Their nerves are on edge and their lives are in perennial danger. But the remedy lies in minimising the stress levels of the forces which can only happen if the political bosses sitting in Delhi understand the meaning of strategic planning. Till then, Kashmir and its people will continue to be caught in the crossfire of questions that come at them from all sides.

Pride and Patents

... victory in getting a US patent for haemoglobin...

THE TIMES OF INDIA

2 NOV 2001

Security and governance

By P. R. Chari

THE FACT that a crisis of governance exists in India and that the state has withered away in parts of its territory is too obvious to be an arguable proposition. Instances of the lack of governance and misgovernance are too many to mention. They are manifested by pervasive nepotism and corruption, misappropriation of state funds, absence of transparency and accountability in public administration, lack of respect for the rule of law or ethical behaviour in public life, and the reluctance to delegate administrative or financial powers to grassroots organisations. The continuing feudal nature of Indian society lies at the heart of this phenomenon; only the trappings of modernisation and progress have occurred, but core values and attitudes remain firmly embedded in past traditions. The result is a propensity of the state to rule, but not to govern, which signifies inhumane governance. This situation will deteriorate when burgeoning globalisation ensures that market geopolitics penetrates the country in collaboration with its rentier classes; the worship of profit can only worsen human security and humane governance.

There are two ways in which this deepening crisis of governance in India would exacerbate its security problematic. First, by accentuating the immobility of the state in tackling its increasingly difficult challenges to national security, especially human security, in a region which is getting slowly but steadily nuclearised. Instead, an easy propensity obtains in the Indian state to strengthen the forces of repression — police, paramilitary and armed forces, intelligence services — rather than wrestle with the basic questions involved in providing human security and humane governance that require improving the quality and responsiveness of the administration.

Second, criminalisation of politics and politicisation of crime have become synonymous in India. The entry of criminal elements into the legislative chambers and Central and State cabinets should be a cause for deep concern. It would explain the continuing deterioration of law and order in the country — a basic function of the state — and the inability of the state to arrest and prosecute criminals with political connections or politicians with criminal antecedents. The state is part of the

problem, not the solution any more, to ensure human security.

The Vohra Committee Report had collated the views of several officials in the Ministries concerned and intelligence agencies on these issues. It cites them to inform that "there has been a rapid spread and growth of criminal gangs, armed 'senas' (armies), drug mafias, smuggling gangs, drug peddlers and economic jobbies in the country which have, over the years, developed an extensive network of contacts with the bureaucrats/ Government functionaries at the local levels, politicians, media persons and strategically located individuals in the non-state sector.

"I don't bother about the Ministers' past. After joining the Government, they are not indulging in crimes and are ready to help suppress criminal activities". He added in reply to another question, "The MLAs who are described as criminals have been elected by the people. They are no longer criminals". A few days later a MLA belonging to the ruling party was killed. The situation in Bihar is no better. What happens in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar has immense consequences for India, both due to their weight in the national polity and their influence over national politics; this has not decreased significantly after the excision of Uttarakhnad and Jharkhand. But, it can no

The nexus between corrupt individuals and political parties to appropriate the state defines the crisis of governance in India.

longer be argued that what happens in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar is unique. According to statistics collected by the Election Commission at least 40 MPs and 700 MLAs faced criminal charges that included murder, dacoity, rape, theft and extortion. And the weight of India in the regional polity ensures that such occurrences spread into its neighbours and an action-reaction modality ensues; indeed the situation in some parts of South Asia closely resembles what obtains in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar.

A ray of hope has emerged from a recent judgment of the Delhi High Court directing the Election Commission to inform voters about the criminal record of candidates seeking election to Parliament or State legislatures, and specifically whether they stand accused of any offence punishable with imprisonment. The Court also desired that any fact "giving insight into a candidate's competence, capacity and suitability for acting as parliamentarian or legislator", besides their educational qualifications, should be made available. These are desperate measures to deal with the increasing criminalisation of politics. Undertaking the Court's judgment is the hope that voters should be enabled to make a more informed choice. Thus judicial activism seeks to fill the void created by the political executive abdicating its responsibilities to effect electoral reforms, curb

money and muscle, and stop criminals from entering the governance processes.

Will providing information to the voters regarding the doubtful antecedents of candidates curb the criminalisation of politics? This presumes that the voters are unaware of the candidates' dubious reputation; this is difficult to believe, since the local population cannot be deemed to be collectively gullible and ignorant about a candidate's lack of qualifications and character. Obviously there are other compulsion underlying their choice of candidates with criminal proclivities. This might include intimidation, lack of suitable candidates, divisive class, caste and communal loyalties and so on; these make the criminal record of the candidate irrelevant. Or is the growing Indian middle class not averse to electing criminals if they can become their patrons and 'deliver the goods'?

This much is clear. The decay of political parties and the withering away of their grassroots relations with the people leads to the politics of manipulation replacing the politics of mass appeal. The limited purpose of the new class of politicians is to derive legitimacy through the ballot box; once elected, their exercise of power is designed to seek personal and group advantage by cornering the resources of the state. The need to garner illicitly-acquired funds and the 'influence' of criminal elements to procure power illumines the problem of criminalisation of politics; this problem worsens when the criminal elements demand, in return, immunity from legal processes and their 'rightful' share of the state's resources from their clients in the political, bureaucratic and police administration.

In essence, the nexus between corrupt individuals and political parties to appropriate the state defines the crisis of governance in India and underlies the resulting entrenchment of state and human security. Political will is needed, which is missing, to reverse this situation. A conspiracy of silence by the people will only accentuate the drift into political and administrative anarchy. More voices must be raised consequently to recognise and understand this bonding of insecurity and misgovernance, and to search for ways to reverse this situation.

(Concluded)

Rajan bribed his way to freedom'

571
2/6/11

THE NATION
ASIA NEWS NETWORK

BANGKOK, Nov. 25. — Controversy continued to surround the escape of Chhota Rajan when he claimed to have paid bhat 25 million to a police general in exchange for his 'walk' from custody, according to a recorded telephone conversation made to his former lawyer Mr Sirichai Piyaphichetkul.

Rajan told his former lawyer that he planned to leave Thailand yesterday morning for a country in south-east Asia before continuing his journey to 'somewhere' in West Asia. The transcript of the recorded telephone conversation was seen by *The Nation* yesterday.

He escaped early on Friday morning from Samitivet Hospital, where he had been in police custody while receiving treatment for gunshot wounds.

Delhi's denial

NEW DELHI, Nov. 25. — The government today categorically denied that it was connected in any way with the escape of Chhota Rajan. It described the reports in a section of the media as "a mischievous attempt to misguide the people." — UNI

Rajan called Mr Piyaphichetkul late that night to thank him for his services.

During the conversation Rajan said he had feared for his safety in police custody. "Yes, I was really in danger at the hospital," he said, alluding to policemen's comments he had overheard. Rajan said that the officers from Thonglor police station had talked amongst themselves about the fact that associates of Dawood Ibrahim had asked them to 'do

something' about him. He added that he had paid bribes in order to secure his freedom and ultimately his life.

"In Thailand, money can buy everything, including my freedom and my life," he said.

When asked about the allegations that he had used bedsheets to climb down from his fourth-floor room he said, "The story exists only in Indian movies. I used the emergency exit to escape from the hospital."

After the failed assassination attempt, Rajan employed Mr Piyaphichetkul to represent him in expediting his departure from the country.

Despite the lawyer's strong argument, based on human rights violations, immigration authorities delayed the release of Rajan's passport, preventing his departure before the extradition hearing was set in motion. Rajan subsequently dismissed Mr Piyaphichetkul.

THE STATESMAN

25 NOV 2000

Sharad asks officials to find A-320 file

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE *SK*

NEW DELHI, Nov. 25. — The Union civil aviation minister, Mr Sharad Yadav, asked the officials to locate a "missing file" containing correspondences between the Centre and the French government.

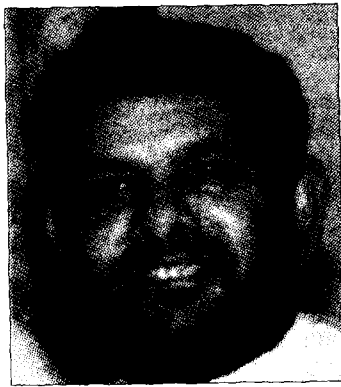
The move follows Delhi High Court's direction to the ministry to furnish counter affidavit to a petition alleging bunglings in the purchase of A-320 aircraft.

A Division Bench — comprising the Chief Justice Mr Arijit Pasayat and Mr Justice DK Jain — has directed the ministry's counsel to file a "complete" affidavit, "not in

part", and posted the matter for further hearing on 4 January, 2001.

A ministry official said, "It's very difficult to locate such file in which, besides, senior bureaucrats, top political leaders were involved." The file, missing for the past one decade, contained correspondences between the French government, and the Centre and the Indian Airlines. It is "urgently" needed by the CBI too, he said.

The CBI had filed an FIR on 23 March, 1990, against an official for criminal conspiracy under the IPC and the Prevention of Corruption Act. Former CBI



Mr Sharad Yadav

Mishra, had said probing the case was not an easy task since

operation of other countries and their investigation/judicial agencies."

When Mr Chandra Shekhar became Prime Minister he promised further probe into the matter if some "positive information" was furnished. He said grounding the A-320 fleet had cost the Centre Rs 500 crore.

On 23 August, 1983, the IA's board of directors had set up a four-member committee under Air Marshall Dilbagh Singh to formulate a fleet development plan for 1984-1991 and recommend the aircraft that would replace the Turbo-prop and Boeing 737s.

The committee, in its report dated on 22 May 1984,

recommended purchase of 12 Boeing 757s. A negotiating committee was then set up and on 24 July, 1984, a letter of intent was placed on the Boeing with a refundable advance of \$900 million.

But, on 14 October 1984, the civil aviation ministry, without indicating any reason, forwarded a letter from Airbus Industrie (with presentation of A-320 aircraft) to the IA and sought its comment within three days. On 16 November, the ministry asked the IA to send its comments immediately which would be forwarded to the Prime Minister's Office.

■ See FILE: page 10

FILE: 'Indian Airlines suppressed facts'

(Continued from page 1)

On 2 August 1985, Rajiv Gandhi, then Prime Minister, decided at a meeting that IA should go in for Airbus A-320 with V-2500 engine. The meeting was attended by Mr Jagdish Tytler (then civil aviation minister), Mr S Sindhu (civil aviation secretary), former Cabinet secretary Mr PK Kaul and former PMO special secretary Mr Gopi Arora.

The meeting resolved to buy 19 A-320 aircraft (for which agreement was signed on 15 March, 1986) with an option to buy 12 more. The decision was formulated on 5 June 1989. However, two A-320 planes crashed — in June, 1988, (at Moulhouse near France) and February 1990 (at Bangalore; ninety passengers were killed in the accident), prompting Mr Arif Mohammad Khan, former

civil aviation minister, to order grounding of the 18-plane A-320 fleet on 18 February, 1990.

A month later, on 23 March, the CBI filed an FIR alleging kickbacks were received from M/s IAE, USA, which supplied V-2500 engines and also from M/s Airbus Industrie. The FIR stated the IA had "deliberately" recorded misleading information and suppressed the materials/information about the actual cost and expenses.

The case took a new turn on 3 May, 1990, when the civil aviation minister said in the Parliament: "Very important file which contained correspondences between the French and the Centre and the Indian Airlines was missing".

Soon after the FIR was registered, the CBI came under political pressure. Former Union law minister, Mr Subramani-

am Swamy, had called the then CBI director, Mr Vijay Katan, to know whether a Letter Rogatory had named Captain Satish Sharma. The Lok Sabha Committee on Government Assurances noted in its report on 11 August, 1992, that CBI could not complete probe in three cases — Airbus, St Kitts and Letter of Rogatory (a forged letter purporting to be from Mr VP Singh to the President).

On 25 May 1998, Mr Trinath Mishra, said while responding to the petitioner, Mr BL Badehra: "The CBI had issued as many as 11 Letters Rogatory in this case.

"While we have received partial response to some of LRs, some are still pending execution inspite of the best and repeated efforts made by us through diplomatic as well as Interpol channels."

THE STATESMAN

26 NOV 2000

The escape wasn't so heroic after all

HT Correspondents
Bangkok/Mumbai/New Delhi,
November 25

THE ESCAPE wasn't so daring after all. Though it's not official yet, the Thai police are now looking at the possibility of the "expat" Mumbai don, Chhota Rajan, simply having bribed his way out of the hospital room where he was being held in custody. No heroics.

Earlier reports had suggested he climbed down a knotted rope made of sheets from a window of his room. This, in fact, has been the stand taken by the immigration police; Rajan was in their custody. The Bangkok police are now cross-checking that claim.

And the man entrusted with getting to the bottom of the story,

Deputy colonel Thawee Sodsong, said if the rope story is correct, the two officers standing below would have definitely noticed him. But they didn't.

Rajan was recuperating in this hospital from bullet injuries he suffered during an attempt to kill him, also in Bangkok, by a hit squad sent by his archrival Dawood Ibrahim. The hitmen are now in the custody of the Bangkok police but Rajan isn't.

So, how did he escape? If it indeed was a daring escape as claimed earlier, it must have been tough beating the guards, who were all over-four policemen at his door, one immigration officer at the elevator and two commandos in the alley below his room.


One theory doing the rounds here is that he bribed the hospital

authorities and coolly walked out through the fire-exit next to his fourth floor room. The other theory is that he bribed, agreeing with the first theory, but got out through the front door.

Nobody believes the rope-trick. Not the Thai police, not the Mumbai police and the intelligence agencies. An intelligence source said in Delhi, "Samitveij is not the kind of hospital from where you can escape using ropes or bedsheets. It's too public a place."

In fact, he added, "the moment I heard he was lodged in this hospital, I knew it was just a matter of time before he escaped." He has now. The Mumbai police are equally sure the man just walked out, got into a waiting blue sedan and disappeared.

He has indeed disappeared.

THEORIES ON HIS ESCAPE		IS HE MALAYSIA-BOUND?
	Immigration police say he made a rope of bedsheets and climbed down from his room	
	He bribed hospital authorities and walked out through the fire exit	
	He simply walked out through the front door after bribing hospital authorities	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is a large Indian community among whom he can easily get lost ● Communication system is better to carry out his operations ● Before shifting to Australia, he lived there for a long time

Though the Thai police have thrown a ring of security around

the exit points of the city, including the airport, they haven't found him

yet. So where is he? That's another mystery that Rajan has left behind.

And it will remain thus till he resurfaces somewhere.

As of speculations are rife about him having escaped to Vietnam, Bertil Linter, a Bangkok-based expert on Southeast Asia, told The Hindustan times on phone that it's possible Rajan is headed for Malaysia via Vietnam.

"He would dare not take a flight out of Bangkok," Linter said, "he is a well-known face here now." Not a stranger when he came in some weeks ago. And Malaysia, it seems, he added, was where he is going or has already reached perhaps.

Indian intelligence sources agreed Malaysia is the only safe destination for him. One, he can get lost in the Indian community there. Two, the communications

system there is better.

And, three, the most important of all the reasons, he has lived before in Malaysia. Indeed he has. Before he shifted to Australia, he was in Malaysia for a very long time, running his international crime operations, worth an estimated Rs 4000 crore, from there.

The only thing everybody is certain about at this point of time is that there will be a fresh round gang-wars now, and very soon. A Mumbai police source said, "Soon as he is able to establish his base somewhere, he will start."

For now, however, Mumbai is peaceful. In fact, there were celebrations in Tilak Nagar, where Rajan started as a small-time criminal. While the mood was sombre in areas controlled by Dawood such as Nagpada and Agripada.

Eunuch crowned mayor in heartland

FROM ANAND SOONDAS

Lucknow, Nov. 26: It was a resounding snub to the parties of ordinary men and women.

Ashadevi, a eunuch, was elected mayor of Gorakhpur by a huge margin of 65,304 votes. All rivals, including the BJP and Congress candidates, had to forfeit their deposits.

Traditional Varanasi, too, followed in Gorakhpur's footsteps, electing its first eunuch councillor, belying rumours that voters

would not deviate from their "sanskriti".

Ashadevi had contested the election as an Independent as no party had been willing to support a eunuch, but the 35-year-old pooled more votes than all others put together.

"I am the chosen one. Now it is clear to me that God has sent me here with a purpose. I will not let anybody down," said a triumphant Ashadevi over phone from Gorakhpur. "Humanity is my only party," Ashadevi added.

By voting for a person from a community reviled for centuries, an outsider, the electorate has made clear its deep disenchantment with political parties.

"This is what happens when leaders sit around clapping their hands like *hijras*. People get fed up some day and actually choose one," said a BJP activist from Gorakhpur.

The Gorakhpur verdict has shaken Uttar Pradesh chief minister Rajnath Singh. "The BJP has learnt its lesson. It is our responsi-

bility to see that this kind of situation does not arise again," he said. But the "third sex" seems to be a growing force in politics.

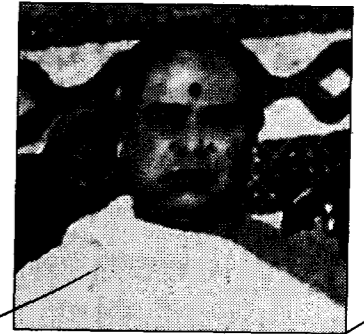
Today's twin triumphs follow the recent election of a eunuch to the Madhya Pradesh Assembly. Shabnam Mausi, the MLA, had pitched in by campaigning for Ashadevi in Gorakhpur.

Soon after the election of the new mayor, two other eunuchs from Gorakhpur, Barkhadevi and Khusboorani, decided to contest the Assembly polls.

Ashadevi has issued a clarion call to eunuchs. "It is time to come out of the shadows and widen their field of action from marriage ceremonies to politics, sports and even show business."

Referring to the recent fashion show in which five eunuchs sashayed down the ramp with some of India's top models, Ashadevi said: "Given a chance, there is nothing we can't do."

In Varanasi, Kallu won from the Jalalipura ward on a Samajwadi Party ticket.



Ashadevi

THE TELEGRAPH

27 NOV 2003

CBI told to probe paper questioning CJI's age

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, November 27

THE SUPREME Court today ordered an "expeditious" CBI probe into the "existence of a document" providing conflicting details about the age of Chief Justice of India A S Anand.

A division bench comprising Justice K T Thomas and Justice R P Sethi restricted the probe to aspects concerning the origin of the document in question and the persons behind them.

It simultaneously restrained the CBI from going into the question of the CJI's age which the President had settled almost a decade ago. While directing the CBI to determine the veracity of

the document in circulation, the Bench made it clear that the President was the sole authority to decide the age of High Court Judges.

The President settled the dispute over Justice Anand's age way back in 1991, when the latter was a High Court judge.

The apex court ordered the probe when Solicitor General Hariah Salve submitted to it a document (dated September 4, 2000) relating to the CJI's age. The Bench said that the document, purportedly sent by the General Council of the Bar, London, under the name of S Behr, to a solicitors' firm, Sohul and Co, wasn't genuine.

Salve had produced the docu-



Chief Justice of India A S Anand

ment during contempt proceedings against a Chennai based-lawyer S K Sundaram.

The lawyer had questioned

Justice Anand's age and demanded that he "step down" from the high constitutional office he was occupying.

Although the court made no reference to it, the document (certificate) given by General Council of the Bar in England appeared as an annexure in the recent book authored by former Law Minister Ram Jethmalani, who has been raking up the issue on the CJIs age.

The Bench also directed the Supreme Court registry to lodge a complaint with the Tilak Marg police station, along with documents relating to the contempt proceedings, to enable the Station House Officer concerned to forward them to the CBI.

Mr Salve submitted before the Bench documents showing the CJI's date of birth.

He said a letter from the Chief Executive of the General Council of the Bar in England mentioned the CJI's date of birth as November 1, 1936.

In a telegram, the lawyer facing the charge of contempt of court had threatened to initiate criminal proceedings against the Chief Justice of India if he did not "step down."

He said the Chief Justice has already attained the age of superannuation, as his year of birth was 1934. With the Lawyer seeking time to produce some documents, the Bench adjourned the hearing till tomorrow.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 NOV 2000

No controversy over CJI's age: SC

OUR LEGAL CORRESPONDENT
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 27. — Such questions as were raised on the issue of the age of the Chief Justice of India were settled today with the Supreme Court observing that the matter had 'attained finality'.

Responding to arguments advanced by the learned Solicitor-General, Mr Harish Salve, supported by documents, the Division Bench (coram, Thomas and Sethi; JJ), however, directed that an FIR be filed at the Tilak Road police station and further directed the CBI to conduct a probe into the origins of documents claiming to raise doubts over the CJI's age.

The CBI's remit, the court directed, will "not" include the issue of the correct birth date of Dr Justice A S Anand which was

settled today. The directions were issued during the hearing on the suo motu contempt proceedings against a Chennai-based lawyer, SK Sundaram, who had threatened to initiate legal proceedings against the CJI, if the latter did not step down over the alleged controversy over his age. The proceedings were adjourned till tomorrow on the request of the alleged contemnor, who wanted time to file certain documents to go along with his counter affidavit. "On a perusal of the documents produced by the Solicitor-General of India, we feel, prima facie, that the document purported to have been sent by the General Council of the Bar, London, dated 4 September, 2000, under the name of S Behr to Sohul and Co., in the United Kingdom is not a genuine document", the court said. "As it speaks about the age of Dr Justice

A S Anand who is currently the Chief Justice of India we take it very seriously and deem it necessary to have a full investigation conducted by the CBI, to know the details of how that document came into existence, and to trace out the person/persons responsible for creating it." The judges felt that in view of Article 217(3) of the Constitution of India, the President of India is the sole authority on the issue. "We direct the Registry (Judicial) of the Supreme court to forward a complaint to the SHO of the police station (within whose territorial limits the Supreme court of India is situated) for registration of the FIR. The complaint shall be appended with the photocopies of all the relevant documents from the paper

■ See CJI: page 8

528 CJI: 28/11

(Continued from page 1)

book and after the FIR is registered the SHO concerned shall forward the FIR to the CBI, Delhi for investigation." The court also directed that on completion of the investigation the CBI shall submit the final report to the appropriate court and a copy of the final report shall be forwarded to the Supreme Court as expeditiously as possible, preferably within three months. While listing the matter tomorrow at 2 pm, the court has asked the alleged contemnor to explain the entitlement of Mr R Karuppan, an advocate practising in Madras High Court, to argue on the former's behalf despite the lack of an advocate-on-record status. Mr SK Sundaram, the alleged contemnor, filed a counter affidavit but certain annexures referred to therein were not filed. Mr Karuppan pleaded that due to some disturbance, the documents could not be filed. Mr Salve contended that the contemnor's conduct in the past, his conduct in sending the second telegram (relating to travel arrangements), his conduct in the court, including his refusal to collect the notice and the order framing the charges, as he was directed to do, all go to show that he is guilty of gross contempt and deserves to be dealt with accordingly.

THE STATESMAN

28 NOV 2000

Oil & diesel up Rs 3, gas Rs 40

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 29: The government tonight raised the prices of diesel, petrol, cooking gas, kerosene and aviation turbine fuel, risking a groundswell of protest and an inflation spiral.

The prices of diesel, petrol and kerosene were increased by Rs 2.50-3.00 each per litre.

Cooking gas (LPG) will cost Rs 40 more a cylinder. The new rates came into effect from midnight.

The price hikes followed a stream of gloomy economic data that showed economic growth sputtering to 5.8 per cent. Industrial growth has slowed sharply in the first half of the year.

The price of diesel, which fuels most of the country's transport sector and is a key determinant of the inflation rate, was increased by about 18-20 per cent.

But it was kerosene, the poor man's cooking fuel, which took the worst beating with an almost 50 per cent hike.

In contrast, the price of petrol went up by less than 10 per cent and of air turbine fuel by just over 20 per cent.

"We were forced to raise the prices as global prices have gone

into a tizzy," said petroleum minister Ram Naik after a day of hectic consultations with Vajpayee and Cabinet colleagues like defence minister and convener of the National Democratic Alliance George Fernandes, home minister L.K. Advani and finance minister Yashwant Sinha.

The hikes — expected to stoke inflation which has been moderate at 5.72 per cent — appeared inevitable after world oil prices scaled 10-year highs in August.

The middle class will be the hardest hit with hikes in prices of diesel and cooking gas. However, the government has tried to cushion the impact by slashing the excise duty on diesel from 16 to 12 per cent and cutting customs duty on

crude from 15 to 10 per cent.

Customs duty on all refined fuels like petrol has been slashed from 25 to 20 per cent while excise on petrol has been halved from 32 to 16 per cent.

The price hike is estimated to yield about Rs 8,000 crore in a year, while the government is taking a hit of Rs 4,000 crore in lower customs and excise. The rest of the Rs 12,000-crore oil pool account gap will be covered through oil bonds and refund of the oil pool deposit by the government.

BLOW AFTER BLOW

(In Rs)	Old price	New price
Diesel	14.20	16.90
Petrol	26.33	29.03
Kerosene	5.70	8.53
LPG	217.20	256.45

All rates are for Calcutta

W W V V
Social targets not met, states mid-term appraisal of Ninth Plan

Oil price hike worries PM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 30. — The Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, has expressed satisfaction about Indian economy maintaining a steady economic growth in the '90s despite several shocks like the East Asia crisis, post-Pokhran sanctions or the Kargil war. Chairing the full-fledged Planning Commission meeting which undertook a mid-term appraisal of the Ninth Plan, he, however, expressed concern about the steep hike in oil prices and urged for constant reviewing of the situation.

The mid-term appraisal points to the failure of the social and agricultural sector to attain the Plan-target. Though the steps to eradicate poverty has been effective in the past, during the last two years the rate of poverty could not be contained as per the target set. These trends can renew the debate on the direction of the new economic policies when questions are being raised about its priorities and the concern for the social sector.

The review also found disparities across the states with Maharashtra and Gujarat registering growth rates of 8.0 per cent each and U P, Bihar and Orissa hitting the bottom with 3.5 and 2.9 per cent respectively. West Bengal registered an encouraging growth of 6.9 per cent. The appraisal cited several reasons for the failure to arrest the level of poverty — low-growth in poorest states (U P and Bihar), low agricultural growth, poor maintenance and poor rural infrastructure. Lacklustre performance of the anti-poverty schemes and its faulty delivery-mechanism are also to be blamed.

The Commission cited manipulation by brokers and corruption as the bane of these schemes. The deputy chairman of the Commission, Mr K C Pant and the Union Minister, Mr Arun Shourie, also admitted some technical problems regarding the

assessment of the number of people below the poverty line. The study also finds acute drinking water problem in 40 per cent of villages during the summer. Inadequate capital formation, credit support, losing dynamism of agriculture research, non-availability of certified seeds have resulted in the decline of the agriculture sector.

However, the study noted progress in the areas of deregulation of industry, widening automatic approval route for foreign direct investment, opening of insurance sector, removal of qualitative restrictions by year 2001, and opening up of ports and airports.

On the fiscal situation, tax revenues of the Centre have lowered. The revenue expenditure has exceeded targets, the GDP ratio of the states remains stationary while non-plan expenditure is out of control. The Centre and the states are running unsustainable fiscal deficits. Railway finance is discovered facing a crisis with the plan investment target unattainable, and too many non-priority projects being taken up. Growing back-log of track renewal and modernisation of signalling fund needs to be addressed.

On a more positive note, the first three years of the Ninth Plan registered a 6.15 per cent growth with impressive performance in the areas of manufacturing (5.05 per cent), construction (8.3 per cent), trade (6.1 per cent), transport (5.1 per cent), communications (14.1 per cent) and services (10.4 per cent).

Setting the tasks ahead, the study called for all-out efforts to double the growth rate in UP, Bihar and Orissa, boosting the agriculture sector increase the investment ratio to 30 per cent per annum an consolidation of fiscal position and creation of an investment-friendly climate to increase the foreign investment. It also called for downsizing of the government, zero-based budgeting and convergence of overlapping programmes and weeding out outlived Centrally-sponsored schemes.

THE STATESMAN

- 1 OCT 2000

THESE must be challenging, if not frustrating times for the Indian Navy. Through most of the 1990s, after the end of the Cold War, new warship construction was cut back, fleet strength reduced and equipment upgradation postponed or cancelled in the pursuance of that mirage of the so-called "Peace Dividend".

Reality in the last few years, especially after Kargil, must have come like a *douche* of ice-cold seawater for the Indian Navy. The hard reality is that new missions and roles for the Navy place greater demands on ships and personnel.

The new nuclear land attack role will place a heavy burden on it until such time as a hardened command and control system and appropriate technologies are absorbed and mastered and naval personnel trained in their use.

The continuing over-dependence on Russia for much of our naval hardware is another unfortunate factor as the economic chaos there and the consequent delays create an insupportable burden on our Navy. Russian naval equipment may still be formidable but recent events; the engine room fire on the *Admiral Gorshkov*, explosion of the Oscar-class nuclear submarine *Kursk* and the malaise of the Russian warship-building industry, fail to generate confidence in Russia's ability to deliver modern, world-class naval weaponry to India, within a tight schedule.

As India now has to pay for these naval purchases in hard currency, Russian naval weaponry has lost much of its previous lustre — price and payment in rupee or rouble. Under the present circumstances, purchases of inferior Russian naval technology or Russian warships with little or no growth potential cannot be justified.

As a possible replacement for *INS Vikrant*, now retired, the Indian Navy expressed interest in purchasing the 40,000-ton modified Kiev-class (Type 1143.4) aircraft carrier *Admiral Gorshkov* from Russia which at present is docked in Rosta shipyard. The Russian Nevskoye Project Design Bureau and the state weapons' exporter, Rosvooruzhenie, have released details of a three-year project to convert the ship with a ski-jump into a short take-off and arrested recovery carrier for the Indian Navy at about \$700 million and \$800 million. Some

If you pay peanuts, you get monkeys

As India now has to pay for naval purchases in hard currency, the buying of inferior Russian naval technology or Russian warships with little or no growth potential cannot be justified, writes
HIRAK CHOUDHURI

bargain!

Part of the financial package would be the provision of the carrier-capable MiG-29K Fulcrum (Type 9-31) fighter aircraft, with Kamov Ka-32 Helix anti-submarine warfare (ASW) helicopters and Ka-31T airborne early warning helicopters. The Fulcrums would be multi-role fighters and would come armed with the Kh-35 (AS-20 Kayak) anti-ship missiles in addition to its usual assortment of air-to-air missiles and air-to-surface ordnance.

The *Admiral Gorshkov* suffered a serious fire in the engine room in 1994 but the damage, while extensive, has reportedly been repaired. But the ship's condition, after many years of neglect because of the poverty of the Russian Navy, is poor.

The term "rust bucket" comes to mind while describing the condition of this once fine warship today! Conversion plans would remove the SS-N-12 Sandbox (Basalt P. 500) anti-ship missiles from the forward deck to allow a 14.3 degree ski-jump for the 24 embarked fighters, along with six helicopters.

A lot of hull to accommodate just 30 aircraft! The ship's sensors and electronics would also require upgrading and refurbishment.

Inevitably perhaps, the Indian Air Force is reportedly opposing the carrier acquisition plan on the basis that the IAF could more efficiently undertake maritime patrol and naval strike operations. After being divested of most maritime responsibility

25-odd years ago, the Air Force is again fighting a turf war with the Navy.

The Navy is placing high priority on its nuclear-powered submarine programme, known euphemistically as the Advanced Technology Vessel, being developed for more than 20 years. The Navy leased a 5,000-ton Charlie I (*INS Chakra*) cruise missile nuclear submarine from the former Soviet Union between 1988 and 1991.

Despite the technical problems

and difficulties with the submarine, a decision was taken to acquire four or six nuclear submarines from Moscow. But the collapse of the Soviet Union put paid to these grandiose plans and the ministry of defence was left with no alternative but to speed up its nuclear submarine programme.

It is optimistically expected that the keel of the first ATV, based to a large extent on the design of the Charlie I-class, will be laid by 2001 or 2002, two years after the completion of

the land tests of its 40-55 MW nuclear reactor. Component fabrication would be undertaken at Vishakhapatnam but final assembly will be at the Mazagon in Mumbai, the only Indian shipyard which has some experience in building submarines.

The ATV launch is optimistically planned for 2007, with the commissioning 12 months later. The new nuclear submarine is to be armed with the *Sagarika* cruise missile, reportedly at an advanced stage of development.

This missile is to have a nuclear warhead and is likely to fulfil a strategic land attack role.

The indigenous naval construction plan is proceeding after a fashion. Building of the 6,700-ton Delhi-class guided missile destroyers (DDG) and 5,000-ton Brahmaputra (modified Godavari) class guided missile frigates (FFG) are on. Both are large and expensive warships and their construction is taking a long time. Although both these classes of ships are well armed, their slab-sides and spiky superstructures do not endow these ships with the stealthy, radar echo reduction characteristics which will be *de rigueur* in 21st century naval warfare.

All these programmes show a fascination for large and expensive warship programmes. Inadequate effort is being made to integrate sunrise technologies such as containerised weapons' fitment, vertical launch missile systems, integration of weapon systems within a stealthy ship's structure, high-quality electronic sensors, especially electronic warfare systems and on board helicopters for both ASW and over the horizon missile targeting, lightweight propulsion systems and improved shipboard damage control systems.

All these are having a revolutionary impact on contemporary warships. Far more research needs to be conducted on hull shapes (long, narrow hull vs short, wide hull; single hull vs catamaran or trimaran hull) for future Indian naval

warships.

The manufacturing process at our shipyards need to be upgraded. Modular pre-fabrication methods, modern management and process control procedures need to be implemented. They would reduce time and cost of ship construction. At present, what we have are 19th-century shipyards inefficiently manufacturing 21st-century warships. This should not be allowed to continue for too long.

The naval requirements are numerous but India's financial situation highlights the need for innovation and ingenuity in warship design.

Warships of the future will, in all cases, require greater emphasis on protection from the airborne effects of nuclear, biological and chemical attack — a foolproof citadel which is neither difficult nor expensive to provide. With explosive over-

pressures extending to considerable ranges, the ship's sturdiness through an increase in structural strength requires thought. Indian warships need to be both cost and combat effective. Ultimately, you get what you pay for! As the adage goes, if you pay peanuts, you get monkeys! Our politicians and bureaucrats at the MOD should bear that in mind while funding the armed forces.

(The author is a professional engineer, who comments on defence-related matters)

THE STATESMAN

1 OCT 2000

Thai court fines and frees Rajan

DEUTSCHE PRESSE AGENTEUR
BANGKOK, OCT 3

A Bangkok district court today fined underworld don Chhota Rajan 500 baht (\$12) for providing false information to Thai immigration officials and granted him freedom, court officials said.

Rajan, alias Vijay Kadam, who was severely wounded in a gangland-style shootout on September 15, appeared in court on a hospital bed. He thanked the court for his freedom, and said he had "faith in Thailand's judicial system."

After the judgment, Rajan was immediately driven to Bangkok's immigration department on Tuesday afternoon to see if they would take further measures to block his departure from Thailand. Thai immigration police have tried to prevent Rajan from leaving the country on the claim that they want to deport him to India, where he allegedly faces several charges including murder.

Rajan has said he wishes to leave Thailand for a "third country" immediately, as he fears for his life in Bangkok.

INDIAN EXPRESS

4 OCT 2000

Ratan Tata may fulfill JRD dream, to bid for Air India

92
ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU
NEW DELHI, OCT 5

9
THOUGH the group's plans still remain a bit in the air, Tata Group chairman Ratan Tata on Thursday announced that the group plans to fulfill JRD Tata's dream, as it were, and bid for Air India — JRD started Tata Aviation which later became Air India in 1948, and the group had a 25 per cent stake till it was nationalised in 1953. "I wish he was with us," a visibly moved Tata said.

The Tatas propose to lead a consortium which will bid for Air India, and said they will hold the majority stake in this consortium — while a foreign airline will be a partner, it will hold a minority stake. Who this will be is still not clear, though, naturally enough, the Tatas are having discussions with Singapore Airlines and a couple of other airlines. Is Virgin a possible partner? 'None that cause concern about the geo-political situation in India' was Tata's tongue-in-cheek reply.

Tata said that while the foreign partner would be given control



Going after a dream

over operations in the venture — why else should they be there? — the Tata Group would be the dominant partner in the venture.

Tata said he didn't see an airline joint venture having the same kind of problems that several Indian firms including his have had in the past. IBM, for instance, wanted full control of the joint venture with the Tatas, as did Mercedes. 'In these kind of ventures,' Tata argued, "the technology came embedded with the product."

6/110
That, however, does not apply to an airline.

Funds, Tata agreed, could be a problem area — in the past, several joint ventures have collapsed since the Indian partner didn't have enough funds to put in when the organisation grew. "I think funds are an issue — and Indian financial institutions will have to be alive to the needs of Indian companies."

Tata refused to give details of which Tata group firm will be formally bidding for Air India, nor did he give details of how the group planned to finance the purchase if they won the bid.

He said the group found the Air India opportunity very exciting since there was a huge gap in the demand for seats and that available. While the total demand is for around 12 million seats per annum, all global airlines who flew to India met just around half of this.

Oh yes, thanks to the way Air India has been run down over the years, Tata does fly Air India sometimes even now, though not by choice — when he doesn't get another connection!

INDIAN EXPRESS

6 OCT 2000

Sushma calls for report on Mahajan kin's 6.5-cr 'dues'

ENS & PTI
LUCKNOW, OCT 20

UNION Information and Broadcasting Minister Sushma Swaraj today said she has sought comments from the officials of her ministry regarding media reports that a firm, owned by the family members of Union Information Technology Minister Pramod Mahajan allegedly owes Rs 6.5 crore as dues to the Prasar Bharti.

"I came to know of the issue only through media reports and have already sought the comments of the officials of my ministry in this regard", Swaraj told newsmen here.

In reply to a question, Swaraj said any further ac-

tion could be taken only after receiving the report from the concerned officials. Media reports have suggested that Integral Productions, in which Mahajan's wife and son have major financial interests, owes Rs 6.5 crore to the Prasar Bharti. Swaraj is here in connection with BJP's ongoing

"achievement week" being celebrated on completion of one year of NDA government, and to participate in two day state executive committee meeting of the party, beginning Saturday.

Talking about future programmes of her ministry, Swaraj said a new Doordarshan channel would start functioning from Guwahati on December 23 next

covering all the seven states of North-East, "where a lot of foreign propaganda was going on." She expressed confidence that granting of industry status to the film world would help improve the standard of entertainment programmes.

"There is immense scope in the entertainment world and

it is regarded as one of the upcoming industries." On the achievements of the NDA government at the Centre, Swaraj said for the first time, international community, including US and Russia, supported India's views on terrorism. "It is a major victory of India's foreign policy," she said.



PRASAR BHARTI DEALS

INDIAN EXPRESS

21 OCT 2000

The Hindustan Times

Small is not beautiful

IT IS not only the problem of who will swear in the Chief Ministers of the new states which requires a solution as the November deadlines of their formation draw near. Even more bothersome is the factional infighting that has surfaced in the various parties as the aspirants vie for the top post. The first problem has arisen because the Constitution empowers only the Chief Justice of a High Court to give the oath of office to the Chief Minister. But since the new states do not yet have High Courts, sticklers for legal propriety are puzzled as to who will do the job. Clearly, this is not an insurmountable difficulty. But what will queer the pitch is the kind of demands that are being made by the parties and individual contenders.

In Jharkhand, for instance, the BJP's initial assumption that its status of the largest party with 32 legislators in a House of 81 makes it the automatic choice for bagging the Chief Minister's post has been shot down by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha's Shibu Soren. The latter has remained unfazed by the expected reopening of the JMM bribery case against him (as well as against Suraj Mandal and Simon Marandi) and is insisting on heading the new Government. The Samata Party's support for him in return for the JMM's backing of Nitish Kumar during his brief tenure as Bihar Chief Minister means that there is a rift on this score within the NDA. The BJP was apparently willing to give the Deputy Chief Minister's post to Mr Soren, but he was not interested. It is too early to predict how the present tussle will end. But what these events portend is the political and administrative instability that is bound to plague these small states inhabited by politicians with large ambitions.

Just as the 40-member Goa Assembly has encouraged uninhibited floor-crossing because the smaller number of legislators in each party has made it easy for them to circumvent the one-third barrier under the anti-defection law, the relatively tiny size of the legislatures of Uttaranchal, Chhatisgarh and Jharkhand is also bound to make their MLAs prone to horse-trading. In case there is a stand-off between the BJP and the JMM in Jharkhand, for instance, the possibility of defections from the Congress and RJD in favour of the most promising candidate for the Chief Minister's post cannot be ruled out. Such traffic may help the cause of 'stability' but at the cost of ideology and personal integrity.

Fears in Sri Lanka

IT IS a measure of Sri Lanka's ethnic complexities that the recent moves for an accord between the island's two main political formations have given rise to apprehensions among the minority Tamil population. Given the ruling coalition's slim parliamentary majority, it will be virtually impossible for the Chandrika Kumaratunga Government to carry out the necessary constitutional changes enabling her to deliver on the promise of greater devolution to the Tamils. In fact, during his visit to Colombo early in the year, Indian External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh had impressed on both parties that their mutual cooperation was essential in working out a viable solution to the ethnic tangle. But any hopes on this score proved short-lived since both the sides started trading accusations on their alleged contacts with the Tamil Tigers as part of the campaign rhetoric in the run-up to the parliamentary elections.

This time, it is the Buddhist clergy who have prevailed upon the ruling People's Alliance (PA) and the opposition United National Party (UNP) to sink their differences and take a united stand on the Tamil issue. Subsequently, UNP leader Ranil

Chhota Rajan's bloody trail

9/2 - Crack down on the borderless mafia 18/9

THINGS are stirring again in Mumbai's gangland. That bloody territory no longer consists of the bylanes and slums of India's financial capital but extends today at least as far as Malaysia in the east and Dubai in the west. After the shooting of Chhota Rajan in an apartment in Bangkok, allegedly by members of the Chhota Shakeel gang, a new round of inter-gang warfare looks highly probable. Police forces in a number of countries in the Malaysia-Gulf stretch will have to watch out for trouble. Mumbai's cops should expect the worst. Shakeel, who works closely with Dawood at present, has reportedly said the Bangkok shooting was a retaliatory act, in part because Rajan was responsible for murdering suspects in the Mumbai 1993 riots case. In gangland, retaliation is a never-ending cycle of killings in the course of which the lives of many innocents are at risk alongside those of the gunmen, minor functionaries and innumerable hangers-on of the gangs themselves. The major gangs have been at it for more than two decades on the streets of Mumbai with nothing decided and only the occasional changing of sides to mark the passage of time.

The dons may have scattered and their businesses may have become more broad-based, but it would be a mistake to think the Bangkok incident is a stand-alone event. These criminals have shown time and again they have all the human and material resources — not to mention connections in high places — they need to carry out their will. Even though the bosses of major gangs have found more salubrious climes elsewhere, Mumbai still remains the prime focus of

the mafia-type operations of the Dawood Ibrahim, Chhota Rajan and Chhota Shakeel gangs. Hundreds in low income brackets work for them in one way or another. It is not as though having been compelled to flee Mumbai the dons have taken their rackets with them. On the contrary, they manage to run housing or land grab rackets and carry out contract killings just as well from outside India. They are entrenched in certain areas of the city and nothing the police have attempted has cleared them out.

As for their newfound homes, it is not in the interest of any one of the gangs to invite the attentions of the Thai or Dubai authorities, so they may stay away from illicit businesses for the most part while in those countries. They need their host countries as shelters and hideaways and, it is believed, some have set up legitimate businesses as a cover and for money-laundering activities. They will not want to jeopardise all that. The incident in Bangkok is unusual but not illogical since Shakeel's men do not have a stake in Thailand. The ease with which Mumbai's gangs operate across several international borders makes it essential for closer coordination between the police authorities of India and countries of Southeast Asia and West Asia. The lack of extradition treaties, of course, makes it difficult to prosecute many of the criminals, Dawood for one, who have settled comfortably abroad. But the police have not been spectacularly successful in shutting down their networks in India either and there is no excuse whatsoever for that. The Rajan incident is a reminder of how much police work remains to be done.

INDIAN EXPRESS

INDIAN EXPRESS

18 SEP 2001

MIA will ask Interpol aid to get Rajan back

BY OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

Mumbai, Sept. 18: The Mumbai police is confused about where gangster Chhota Rajan is following Friday night's shootout in Bangkok. Rajan was taken to a hospital in Bangkok after he suffered serious injuries in the attack.

Subsequently, there were reports that he escaped from the government hospital, chartered a plane and fled to Malaysia. However, there are many missing links to the various theories and reports about what happened to Rajan after the shootout.

"It is just not believable. How could he have escaped from the hospital?" a joint commissioner of police asked.

Meanwhile, joint commissioner (crime) D. Sivanandan said: "We are still working on various leads. We have no definite information now."

The Mumbai police, which is barely coming to grips with a near total information blackout, is baffled that no confirmation is available yet about Rajan's presence in Malaysia.

Sources close to the gangster's family have denied having spoken to him. Rajan's wife Kusum has not been able to get in touch with him because all his mobile phones and the satellite phone have been switched off.

What is certain however and this is confirmed by senior Intelligence Bureau officials in Mumbai, is that both gangs are releasing selective information, which is often misleading.

"Rajan would not want Shakeel to know his whereabouts. It is unlikely that he will declare that he is going to Malaysia and be a sitting duck there," an Intelligence Bureau officer said. Shakeel, on the other hand, has done his bit by saying that Rohit Verma —

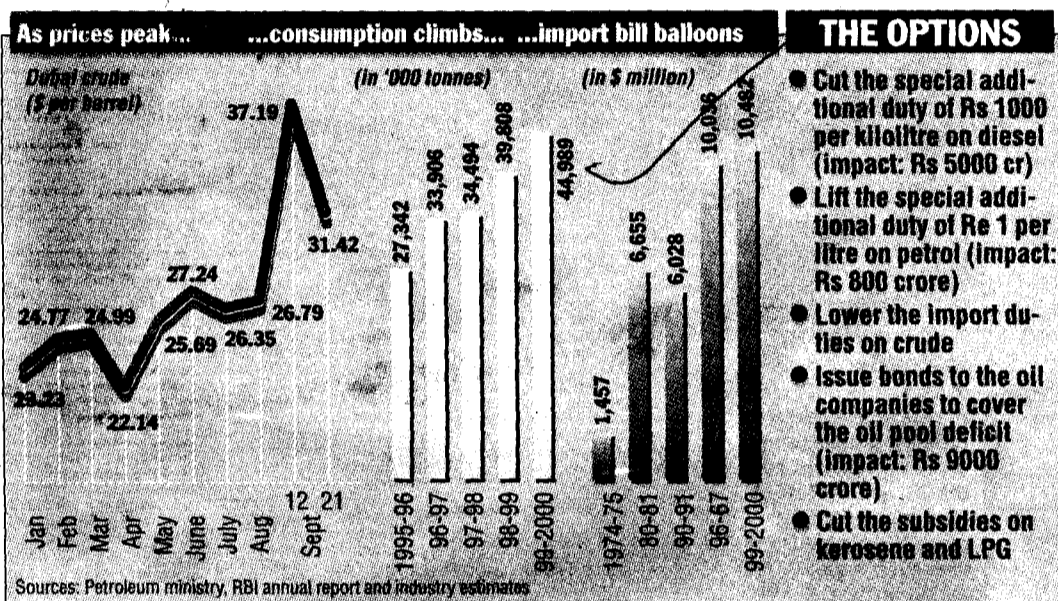
■ Turn to Page 2

THE ASIAN AGE

19 SEP 2000

15-20% oil price-rise range

Gas & kerosene face the brunt



FROM R. SASANKAN

New Delhi, Sept. 22: Oil is on the boil and the fat is in the fire. Barring a last-minute hitch, the Vajpayee government is expected to finally bite the bullet and raise petroleum prices across the board, threatening to stoke passions in hearth and home and road rage by angry commuters.

Anticipating resistance from certain partners of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), principally Chandrababu Naidu's Telugu Desam Party, the government is trying to douse passions by seeking to minimise the burden on the common man through a reduction in a range of levies on petroleum products.

However, the TDP can turn the hugely unpopular move into a burning issue as it is not in the government. It had protested against the price rise last September.

The hike this time will be across-the-board and not steep as is being recommended by the officials. There is a deliberate move to minimise the rise in diesel prices to rein in inflationary pressures.

With petroleum and natural gas minister Ram Naik opposing a steep increase and the finance ministry agreeing to reduce duties, there is a strong possibility that the hike will be kept within the range of 15-20 per cent. The maximum increase is likely to be in prices of LPG and kerosene.

The government has been claiming that the subsidy on LPG is over Rs 160 per 14 kg cylinder. As it is considered a fuel of the rich and the salaried class, there is a strong lobby within the government opposing subsidy. Politicians remain unconvinced and reluctant to incur the wrath of this influential class.

Petroleum ministry officials

have recommended a minimum hike of Rs 50 per cylinder. But the increase may be only Rs 25-30.

The precise nature of duty reduction is unclear. The finance ministry is unlikely to agree to a customs duty cut on crude. Indications are that it will snip excise duties, particularly on diesel, which accounts for nearly half of petroleum consumption.

The government had slipped in implementing the Cabinet-approved subsidy reduction both for LPG and kerosene. This makes it that much harder to achieve the objective of deregulating petroleum products by April 2002. The government is likely to raise the price of kerosene by Rs 2 per litre as it is used mainly for adulterating other petroleum products.

A large portion of the kerosene sold through the public distribution system finds its way to retail outlets for adulteration.

Even at prevailing international prices, there is no justification for increasing the petrol price. But the public perception is that it is a rich man's fuel, even though two-wheelers are widely used in cities and metropolises by the lower middle class. Politically, it does not seem feasible to leave the petrol price untouched.

The prospect of a petroleum price rise convulsed the stock market today as brokers dumped shares, sending the sensx tumbling 224.83 points to 4032.37.

Oil prices eased on world markets with the London Brent crude down 16 cents at \$32.57 a barrel as dealers waited for President Bill Clinton to decide whether or not to release emergency stockpiles.

The slight fall held little comfort for the Vajpayee government struggling to clamber out of a hole created by the mounting oil pool deficit which has risen to about Rs 9,000 crore.

23 SEP 2000

THE TELEGRAPH

DEFLATING THE CARTEL MINDSET

IS THE WORLD being driven inexorably into another oil shock? Oil prices until last week seemed to point to a crisis brewing with Brent Crude reaching a price of \$35 per barrel without an apparent indication of any respite. Both the IMF and the World Bank holding their annual summit at Prague appear to have taken note of the precipitous climb in oil prices but with little indication of how the three-fold rise in crude prices in two years would hurt the global economy. "The World Economic Outlook" released by the IMF last week, while being cautious about the outlook for oil prices, has, by no means, taken the high prices as being irreversible. Rather than succumb to the fatalistic resignation to whatever decisions the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) adopts with regard to output and thereby to the preferred price range, the international community ought to act in concert so that a few "rogue" members of the OPEC do not hold the oil-importing countries to ransom. If, as analysts perceive, the economic dislocation arising from the stratospheric levels of crude prices will only be marginal for the industrialised countries, there is no reason why the international community should not seek to protect the interests of developing countries which cannot afford to sacrifice their trudging pace of economic development under the pressure of an unreasoning cartel called the OPEC. The Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha, has rightly brought up the threat which the ten-year-high price of crude oil poses to the durability and sustainability of the growth momentum in the developing countries. His suggestion of an institutional mechanism to review oil prices in the framework of an overall demand and supply situation, bringing producers and importing countries together, may not represent a quick fix to the current situation but is sufficiently strategic to send warnings to oil-producing countries that machinations of the

oil cartel will be effectively countered through international pressure. NO 17

The decision of the Clinton administration to release 30 million barrels of oil from the country's Strategic Reserves over 30 days to douse the high crude prices, with all its political partisan overtones, on the eve of elections, cannot but send a strong message that the surge in oil prices must and can be reversed, for the strong reason that the sharp eruption of oil prices in recent months has had more to do with greater cohesion among the OPEC members than any phenomenal increase in the demand for oil. As the Trade and Development Report 2000 of the UNCTAD points out, most oil-exporting countries recognise that a prolonged spell of very high prices would prove counter-productive and could even lead to an overall global contraction in demand. As the UNCTAD looks at it, the pre-September OPEC commitment to a price range of \$22-26 per barrel will probably materialise during the second half of the current year.

The communique put out by the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) of the IMF on Sunday seems to confirm the perception that oil-producing countries will soon respond to the legitimate concern of the international community about the need to stem the price rise. While an immediate consensus on what is a reasonable price may be difficult to arrive at, the communique clearly suggests that oil-exporting countries concede that the current price level is not sustainable. For all his abrasive postures, Mr. Saddam Hussain might soon have to eat humble pie and come to terms with a moderation in crude prices not only because Saudi Arabia will whip up its spare production capacity but other oil-producing countries will begin to see reason. The fact that the OPEC accounts for 38 per cent of the global supply of crude cannot be lost sight of.

THE HINDU

28 SEP 2000

FRIDAY, AUGUST 4, 2000

PRESSURE TACTICS

BY PERPETRATING A series of massacres in different regions of Jammu and Kashmir — the toll at the last count was 90-plus — the terrorist groups opposed to the Hizbul Mujahideen's ceasefire initiative have proclaimed their intention to thwart the peace process at any cost. From the aggressive responses of these outfits, mostly backed from across the border and manned by foreign mercenaries, to the Hizbul offer it was clear that they would resort to some reckless attacks in an attempt to make it difficult for the two sides to hold the ceasefire. Going by the scale and spread of the escalated violence and the earlier rocket attack on an army camp killing six men, the administration and the security forces do appear to have been caught off guard. At the minimum they should have known that the militant elements would go in for soft targets, and with the pilgrimage to the renowned Amarnath shrine currently on, could there be a softer target than the hordes of pilgrims trekking it to the holy spot? Over 30 persons were killed in the attack on the Pahalgam base camp. In Anantnag district, some 25 labourers drawn from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh were gunned down in two other no-less-barbaric episodes.

The savage killings have rightly been denounced in the strongest of terms by every segment of political opinion in this country and elsewhere which sees in the Hizbul Mujahideen's initiative and the Government of India's positive response a valuable opportunity to restore peace and work for a negotiated political settlement in the troubled State. Notably, the HM leadership has, true to its changed frame of mind, condemned the massacre as "non-Islamic". Of profound significance from the standpoint of international pressure against 'cross-border' terrorism is the U.S. President, Mr. Bill Clinton's shared concern over the dastardly attacks and his reported promise to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to speak to Pakistan's leadership and "do everything possible to contain such activity". The tenor of Mr. Clinton's ready re-

sponse to the development squares with the widely-held perception that the rather sudden and recent sequential peace moves on the Kashmir front have a lot to do with subtle and not-so-subtle nudges and proddings at the personal level or through the diplomatic channel of the track two variety. Predictably, the Vajpayee regime has drawn much comfort and satisfaction from the American President's 'supportive' remarks.

Without in any way discounting the potential of genuine American pressure on Pakistan's ruling military establishment, it needs to be said that what matters on the ground is essentially the effectiveness of the strategy the Centre adopts to meet the challenge posed by the pan-Islamic militant groups and frustrate their attempts to sabotage the peace initiative. If evolving ground rules for the ceasefire is in itself quite a task, adhering to them is, by any reckoning, a very tricky business, given that the cadres owing allegiance to alien sources of authority and having absolutely no stakes in the State are numerically as strong as the HM. There is the distinct possibility of the HM cadres also being picked for attack by these predominantly mercenary groups for having 'betrayed' the cause of 'jihad'. It was just as well that Mr. Vajpayee and the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, came out categorically in Parliament that there was no question of the Government being cowed down by the pressure tactics of such subversive elements and abandoning the peace initiative. For this assertion to hold ground, the Government and the security forces would need to evolve a viable arrangement that serves the objective of honouring the ceasefire commitment vis-a-vis the Hizbul cadres without in any way lowering the guard against elements that are hell-bent on derailing the peace process. The extent to which they succeed in this undoubtedly delicate task — and this of course calls for cooperation and understanding from the HM leadership — will determine whether the peace initiative survives the preliminary test.

THE HINDU

- 4 AUG 2000

1678 **Russia, U.S. greet India** #10-13

MOSCOW, AUG. 15. The Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, today said his country valued and was proud of the close relations of partnership with India on the occasion of its 54th Independence Day.

In his messages to the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, copies of which were released to the media, Mr. Putin said Indo-Russian relations were based on the "concurrence" of fundamental national and geopolitical interests of the two countries.

He also called for developing cooperation with India in all fields "for the benefit of the two nations and in the interests of global stability and security."

Mr. Putin said that in the new millennium, the Indo-Russian cooperation and strategic interaction would remain a weighty factor of international stability and security and expressed the hope that his coming summit talks in October in New Delhi with the Indian leadership would help in moving ahead in this direction.

The Indian community gathered here at the embassy to attend the unfurling of the national flag by the Ambassador, Mr. Satinder Kumar Lambah. Schoolchildren from the Kendriya Vidyalayas sang patriotic songs.

People of Indian origin in Washington today celebrated country's Independence Day with traditional flag-hoisting at the Indian Embassy, followed by taking part in the community events.

In the absence of the Ambassador, Mr. Naresh Chandra, who is in Los Angeles as an invitee to the Democratic Party convention,

the flag was unfurled by the Deputy Chief of Mission Ambassador, Mr. T. P. Sreenivasan.

After reading out the Independence Day message from the President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, Mr. Sreenivasan said this year was significant in the Indo-U.S. relations especially when the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, is arriving here on a five-day state visit on September 13.

In Tokyo, the Indian Ambassador, Mr. Siddharth Singh, who hoisted the Tricolour, said the Japanese Prime Minister, Yoshiro Mori's visit to India next week could "refashion our relations and develop a strategy for the challenges of the 21st century which we can together address." Japan used the occasion to congratulate India on the success of its democratic institutions and free market economy.

A privately circulated government briefing on Japan-India relations said that the Prime Minister, Mr. Yoshiro Mori, acknowledged that "India along with Japan, ASEAN, and China was now at the core of Asian growth".

Former Foreign Minister and the Chairman of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), Dr. Taro Nakayama, in a statement, praised the Indian diversities and high-level technologies which were attracting the world.

"Japan and India could work together bilaterally and internationally on fronts like globalisation and information technology," he said.

In Beijing, the new Indian Ambassador to China, Mr. Shivshankar Menon, hoisted the national flag as Indians joined the celebrations.

Reports of celebrations also poured in from

Indian Missions in Hong Kong and Shanghai where Indians gathered at the Consulate General and heard the President's message.

Indian children sang patriotic songs at the Indian High Commission premises in Dhaka after the High Commissioner, Mr. Manilal Tripathi, unfurled the national flag and read out the President's address.

In London the Indian High Commissioner to U.K., Mr. Nareshwar Dayal, hoisted the national flag and hosted a reception. Members of Indian origin were honoured with the Videsh Samman during the Independence Day celebrations.

India was proud of its achievements in various walks of life. Despite severe constraints, it remained upbeat and confident, Mr. Dayal said.

He later hosted a reception which was attended by Lord Swaraj Paul, chairman of the Caparo group, Mr. John Spellar, the British Armed Forces Minister, Barry Gardiner and Simon Hughes, MPs, Baroness Shiela Flather and other prominent citizens.

As many as 12 persons of Indian origin were honoured by Mr. Dayal with the Videsh Samman for their contribution in different fields.

The recipients included Lord Bhikhu Parekh, Gautam Govindlal Bodiwala and Suresh Kamal Khanna, both CBE.

Others who were honoured are Sibdas Chakrabarti, Jagdish Chander Chawla, Mohammed Surur Hoda, all OBE, Dilip Kumar Joshi, Malur Lakshman Hemantha Kumar, Jagjit Singh Taunque, Jagdish Rajput and Amrit Kaur, all MBE and Councillor S. P. Sharma. — PTI

RECEIVED

16 AUG 2000

India wants French fail-safe, Mirage deal stuck

BY SHUBHABRATA BHATTACHARYA

New Delhi, Aug. 24: Efforts to pass off 10 second-hand, ex-Jordan, Mirage 2000-H aircraft as "new" has landed the Rs 1,479-crore deal in a mire. In order to emphasise that these aircraft are not old, a 28-month delivery and payment schedule has been worked out. This has run into rough weather due to the insistence of Indian financial advisers that the French should provide a bank guarantee for the 45 per cent advance money sought by them in three instalments.

The French negotiators have point-

ed out that in the past, when 40 and nine of these aircraft were bought by India in two transactions, no bank guarantee was involved. However, Indian finance officers who raised pertinent queries that held up the deal in May, prefer a cautious approach in this transaction.

For Dassault Aviation, providing a bank guarantee is not a difficult proposition. However, to get a bank to guarantee a transaction, some assets have to be pledged. At a time when the Dassault family is inclined to opt out of the defence aviation business, pledging assets for a guar-

antee may mar the disposal of their shares and the deployment of the proceeds thereof in other ventures.

Thus, the bid to pass off second-hand equipment as "new" has landed Dassault in a Catch-22 situation. Efforts are on to persuade the Indian negotiators not to insist on a bank guarantee.

As per the negotiations, the 10 aircraft are to be purchased by India for a total package of Rs 1479.143 crores, convertible at the rate of Rs 6.50 to one French franc. The payment is to be made in four tranches — 15 per cent each is to be paid at intervals of 30 days, nine months

and 16 months, respectively, from the date of signing the deal. The remaining 55 per cent will be a down payment when delivery takes place in 28 months' time.

Thus, to retain the myth that the aircraft are "new," the much-needed augmentation of the Indian Air Force's attrition squadron will have to be delayed by 28 months.

Apart from this deal, the other major deal being negotiated by Dassault Aviation is with Greece for the supply of 20 advanced Mirage 2000-5 aircraft. According to the information, the deal with Pakistan, negotiated last year, was still-born.

After the death of its founder Marcel Dassault, the Mirage manufacturers changed the company's name to Dassault Aviation. Till last year Mr Serge Dassault was its chairman. When he retired at the age of 75, Mr Charles Edelstienne, the finance director, stepped into his shoes, though Mr Serge Dassault has three sons. One of them, Mr Olivier Dassault, is a Gaullist member of Parliament.

Mr Olivier Dassault is chairman of the civilian aircraft manufacturing firm Dassault Falcon. The family, while retaining its Falcon interests, is said to be keen to get out of the

defence aviation business.

At present 49 per cent of the shareholding of Dassault Aviation is with the Dassault family. Together with two per cent held by the French government, a controlling interest is created. Three per cent of the shares are listed in the market. Forty-six per cent is held by a conglomerate called EADS, which is the abbreviation for European Aviation Defence and Space, in French. EADS has 100 per cent holdings in Aerospatiale and Matra missiles, and 80 per cent in Airbus Industrie. It is controlled by Jean-Luc Lagar

Turn to Page 2

Mirage deal stuck

Continued from Page 1

-dere who, apart from heading Matra missiles, also controls a leading French publishing house, Hachette. Sources in Paris say EADS is not averse to enlarging its holding in Dassault Aviation. The company is in a flux and, at this juncture, every bit of resource at the command of the controlling Dassault family is precious. Thus the reluctance to seek a bank guarantee to clinch the deal with India.

THE ASIAN AGE

25 AUG 2000

Is India becoming a 'soft state'?

By V. Jayanth

IN JUST eight months, there have been at least three major instances when the Government of India, or one of the States has been forced to release terrorists or criminals, facing serious charges. They have been traded for hostages or to promote bilateral relations. However serious the situation, it cannot be denied that the Government seems to buckle under threat, making it a soft state. Analysts say that the kidnap of Ms. Rubal-ya Sayeed in December 1989, resulting in the release of five JKLF militants, sparked this trend and made India a 'soft' target.

The first recent case was the swapping of three terrorists for the Indian Airlines passengers hijacked from Kathmandu to Kandahar on Christmas eve last year. The Foreign Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, escorted the three terrorists in his aircraft.

More recently, succumbing to diplomatic pressure from Russia, the Centre agreed to 'pardon' and release five Latvian pilots (who acquired Russian citizenship), serving sentences in the Purulia arms drop case. Moscow had been pressing New Delhi to release them, claiming they were only 'scapegoats' who were ordered at gunpoint to pilot the aircraft that dropped deadly weapons in West Bengal in 1995 for a mercenary from New Zealand — allegedly sent by the ISI. Since the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, is scheduled to visit India later this year, it was considered a 'friendly gesture of goodwill'.

And now, the Tamil Nadu and Karnataka Governments are releasing detenus held under the TADA, as demanded by the poacher, Veerappan, who has been holding the Kannada mainee idol, Mr. Rajkumar, hostage for 25 days now. While Karnataka took steps to release 51 TADA detenus on bail, the Tamil Nadu administration has ordered the release of five men belonging to the LTTE's front organisations, the TNLA and the TNRF. These five will be released unconditionally, when a final settlement — meaning the release of Mr. Rajkumar and other hostages — is reached. Though the two State Governments and their police forces are supposed to have coordinated efforts to nab the 'neo-Tamil terrorist' who rules from

the jungles and made his fortune by smuggling ivory and sandalwood from the reserve forests in both States, there has been a lull since 1997.

Spokespersons from the Centre or the State Governments might find reasons to justify their action. The NDA Government in New Delhi said the lives of over 100 innocent passengers on board the hijacked IC 814 were in danger and if anything happened to them on New Year's Day at the dawn of the year 2000, it could have been a national disaster. Since the hijackers were in friendly terrain and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan did nothing to facilitate the release of 155 pas-

sengers, or even allow the storming of the aircraft by Indian commandos, there was very little choice. One passenger was killed. Though Indians rejoiced at the happy reunion of the families after the drama ended, they could not stomach the fact that the hijackers drove away scot-free and are back in the business of terrorism.

But the price the country paid was quite heavy. Masood Azhar, Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar and Ahmed Omar Sayeed Sheikh (or Umar) were dreaded terrorists who were in Indian jails. Azhar was a top-ranking leader of the Harkat-ul-Ansar (later known as the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen). Their release was a damper for the security forces, waging a relentless battle with the militants in Kashmir and elsewhere. When such prize catches are set free and the hijackers escape after terrorising the passengers for a week, it hurts the morale of the troops.

Those who get away with murder want to do it again. Governments find it politically convenient to cite precedents to justify their bowing to similar demands.

In the case of the Russian pilots, pressure was mounting on New Delhi for several months. And when the Foreign Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, visited Moscow a couple of months ago, this demand was reiterated. There was even a report that Mr. Putin had made his visit to India

reduced to four strokes. More recently, examples in Singapore and Israel. An American youth was sentenced to six strokes of the cane for vandalism in Singapore, and despite a personal appeal by the U.S. President, the sentence was only reduced to four strokes. More recently,

conditional on the release of the pilots. So, after spending five years in a Calcutta prison, the five pilots were pardoned by the President of India and released on July 22. They have since returned to Russia.

These pilots were on the AN-26 that flew over Purulia and dropped deadly weapons on December 17, 1995, even as the country was preparing for a general election. Over 200 AK-47s and AK-56s, some pistols, hand grenades, anti-tank grenades, rocket launchers, parachutes and ammunition were air dropped. The brain behind the conspiracy, a New Zealander named Kim Davy, gave the slip to the Mumbai airport authorities, when the

aircraft was finally detained there. Apart from the five pilots, a former British defence service officer, Peter Bleach, was also arrested. Now that the Russians have been freed, it is quite likely that Britain will want its national released.

Official sources say "the strange part of this case, in which the foreigners had gone on appeal to the Calcutta High Court already, is that dozens of Indians attached to various Government departments and working in some of the airports which the aircraft touched (such as Chennai and Mumbai) are still facing prosecution. Many of them have retired but unable to secure their benefits". When the main characters have walked free, just because they are foreigners, the question arises whether it is proper to prosecute the Indians for their negligence in letting the alien aircraft use a couple of airports without permission from the DGCA and other agencies.

In contrast, there are some interesting examples in Singapore and Israel. An American youth was sentenced to six strokes of the cane for vandalism in Singapore, and despite a personal appeal by the U.S. President, the sentence was only reduced to four strokes. More recently,

the city-state executed a Filipino maid, charged with murdering her ward, though the Philippines pleaded for clemency. Israel's policy is not to negotiate with 'terrorists'.

Coming to the Veerappan case, the Karnataka Government facilitated 51 TADA detenus in Mysore district to file bail applications. But a father of one policeman who was killed by a Veerappan gang, has now gone to the Supreme court to challenge the move. He can only delay, not prevent the release. In Chennai, the Government revoked the National Security Act order under which four of them were detained. But 'Radio' Venkatesan, who was a TADA detenu and considered the 'most dangerous' by the police, will be released through the Designated Court in Poonamallee.

But the question that arises after such events is — has the Government done anything to mitigate the situation or the loss of face? Mr. Jaswant Singh might claim to have won some diplomatic battles after Kandahar and Kargil, though the ground situation in Kashmir remains dangerous and deadly. The hijackers have not been brought to book, nor the Taliban punished for its dubious role. Could India not have resisted Moscow's pressures for the release of the pilots? They could have at least been asked to go through the appeal in the High Court. And after the release of Mr. Rajkumar, what happens? Will the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu Governments tighten the noose around Veerappan? It is a mockery of justice and a shame on the police as well as the Government if they cannot bring the bandit to book. Veerappan's antics or political terrorism will not stop with this kidnap.

Unfortunately, these become precedents to justify their bowing to similar demands. That is why it becomes important for the Government to stand up to such situations, demonstrate the right mix of power and bargaining strength to neutralise the antagonist and avoid becoming a soft state.

It's time to reach out to Muslims, says Laxman

'Indiscipline will not be tolerated'

The Times of India News Service and Agencies

NAGPUR: New BJP president Bangaru Laxman on Sunday cautioned partymen against machinations of the opposition and asserted that there was a need to rework the party's relationship with Muslims to fill the space vacated by the Congress and other parties.

"The BJP has not yet become the preferred party of governance in the eyes of the people," Mr Laxman, who took over as BJP's first Dalit president, said in his presidential address to the national council which began its two-day session here.

About Muslims who have stayed away from the BJP, he said "The party has not made sustained efforts to reach out to Muslims in a bid

to weaken the influence on their minds of the sustained negative propaganda of our adversaries."

Mr Laxman said, "We have somehow taken it for granted that our party will not receive any significant support from them. This preconceived approach has not helped our party either. We cannot afford to allow this situation to continue. If we do so, we shall be hurting our own future prospects and Muslims will continue to be used as vote-banks by our adversaries."

The BJP leader said that in keeping with the Chennai declaration, the party needs to thoroughly review its existing relationship with minorities consistent with its resolve to strengthen Indian nationhood.

He attributed the "less than expected success" in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections to the party's fail-

ure to secure Muslim votes. He admitted that though Prime Minister Vajpayee was popular among Muslims, "they tend to keep away from the BJP."

Deploping tendencies like factionalism and power-oriented activity among partymen, Mr Laxman said, "There is no denying the fact that we have let many deviations and deformities to creep into our organisation."

In a speech marked by sharp criticism of the indiscipline affecting the party, he warned activists down the line against "hankering after the loaves and fishes of office."

"Where these have been allowed to grow unchecked, the party has had to suffer grievous setbacks," Mr Laxman said. He cautioned that traits like "groupism and lust for power among leading activists of the party" went against its basic tenets.

The new president's remarks on indiscipline acquired significance in the context of the recent instances of some senior party functionaries speaking out. After party MP Uma Bharti's abrupt decision to resign from Parliament, senior leader Sushma Swaraj assailed the government on its failings on the Kashmir front.

Mr Laxman said, "If we are not a disciplined party, we had better not be a party at all; we should put down these tendencies mercilessly. I want to make it clear that indiscipline will not be tolerated."

The BJP president said there was a need to examine the root causes of such tendencies and called for drawing a line for this purpose.

BJP conclave okays disinvestment drive

NAGPUR: Ignoring criticism from the sangh parivar, the draft economic resolution before the BJP national council on Sunday endorsed the NDA government's steps on public sector disinvestment with the caveat that it should be transparent and called for bold reforms in infrastructure sectors like power and roads.

Speaking on the resolution, which is likely to be adopted on Monday, Union finance minister Yashwant Sinha refuted criticism on disinvestment saying it was being resorted to for toning up the performance of PSUs and debt servicing. He asserted that no international organisation would be allowed to interfere in the government's economic policies nor would they be permitted to take over the economy.

A day after facing flak from some senior leaders on certain aspects of economic reforms pursued by the government, at the national council meeting, the resolution said, "The efforts to make our PSUs commercially viable brook no delay... Disinvestment is an instrument for transforming one set of assets —many of which have sadly become unbearable drains on public exchequer —into more productive assets and of redirecting the state's role in the economy."

"It is an imperative of the time. The party, therefore, endorses the steps the government is taking towards disinvestment. Simultaneously, it calls upon the government to ensure that every step in the process is transparent," it said, adding the interests of workers should be protected and that public sector continued to have an effective presence in strategic sectors. (PTI)

CHANGE OF GUARD

- Negative campaign against BJP must end, says Laxman
- PM hopes differences with RSS will be overcome
- Bold reforms in infrastructure, power needed

WHITHER NUCLEAR SAFETY? 20/12

IN THE WEEKS since it was made public that the responsibility for safety at all the installations of the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre will no longer be with the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board, there has been no satisfactory explanation for why this decision was taken and there has been no indication that the new safety mechanisms will perform their tasks effectively. The constitution of an "Internal Safety Committee Structure" within BARC is of a piece with the existing indifference to the need for completely independent regulation of nuclear facilities in the country. At present, the agency in charge of safety (the AERB) comes under an organisation (the Atomic Energy Commission) whose chairman is also the secretary of the body (the Department of Atomic Energy) which oversees the very units that the AERB is supposed to monitor.

By law the AERB is mandated to regulate safety in all nuclear facilities in the country. One reason that has been given for the decision to strip the AERB of some of its powers is that secrecy is essential in the manufacture of nuclear weapons and as it is the BARC facilities that will be involved in assembling the constituents of the Indian nuclear arsenal, the AERB could not remain in charge of safety at both the civilian and weapon facilities. This explanation does not wash since all that was required to ensure secrecy was to equip the AERB personnel with the necessary security clearances. The fact is that even before the recent separation the AERB was never given the permission it needed to monitor all the BARC facilities — yet another sign that the AERB has never been truly independent. The second reason that has been given is that a separation of the regulation of the weapon from the power components is the practice in the nuclear weapon states. True, in the U.S. the Nuclear Regulatory Commission

regulates the power industry while the Defence Nuclear Facilities Safety Board (DNFSB) oversees the weapons facilities of the U.S. Department of Energy (DoE). But the similarity between the U.S. and the new Indian situation ends there. The internal committee of the BARC will be manned by personnel from within the organisation. But the DNFSB comprises experts from outside. At present, four of the five members of the DNFSB have never been formally associated with the DoE's weapon facilities. In other words, the conditions for true independence exist in the U.S. while their absence is built into the Indian system. Moreover, the DNFSB holds public hearings and its communications with the weapons laboratories and facilities are available for public scrutiny on the Internet. Since even the AERB has never undertaken anything like a public hearing, it is impossible that the BARC safety committee will even think of doing so.

Effective and independent regulation of the BARC facilities is of crucial importance since some of these installations are more than two decades old and therefore need close monitoring. Since the Government is going ahead with the weaponisation programme, the strain on the BARC'S facilities will only increase. The BARC'S own safety record has not been a very satisfactory one, the most well-known accident taking place in the early 1990s when pipes carrying radioactive fluids burst within the BARC campus. The manner in which the decision to further emasculate the AERB has been taken also does not inspire much confidence that safety will be a very high priority in the drive towards nuclear weaponisation. The decision was taken with a DAE office memorandum in late April but it was not made public until a month later.

THE HINDU

- 4 JUL 2000

Check rising cult of violence, Narayanan tells Governors

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 12

gandhi *(u)*

PRESIDENT K. R. NARAYANAN today expressed concern about "lowering of the tolerance level" in the Indian society and asked Governors to "play a crucial role in upholding India's traditional heritage of a tolerant society."

Making a veiled reference to recent inter-religious tensions, the President told the Governors' conference on its opening day that they must exercise their "harmonising influence" in keeping normalcy. Not only was there lesser tolerance, the country also was faced with the "emerging cult of violence," he said.

The two-day conference, being attended by 25 Governors and three Lt. Governors, discussed the law and order situation in different States today.

Vice-President Krishan Kant, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and several key Union Ministers were also present. The conference has been convened after a gap of three years.

Mr Narayanan said the country had progressed in various fields but there were "certain fissiparous and disharmonising forces" which had crept into the system and were "having a retarding influence." Outlining the Governors' role, he quoted Mahatma



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Gandhi to say that the Governors "must be an all-pervasive moral influence in their provinces."

The President said the answer to the law and order problem lay in economic and social development of the people.

The fruits of development must percolate down and reach the common man so as to promote the "total good of the society."

Referring to the special responsibilities entrusted on the Governors by the Constitution, the President asked the Governors to make all

possible efforts towards the upliftment of the disinherited and the poor.

Towards this endeavour, he stressed the need to mobilise grassroot level activism and to promote decentralisation of efforts.

Several Governors referred to the problems faced by their States from trans-border terrorism, smuggling of weapons and ammunitions, drug-trafficking, infiltration of subversives and illegal immigration, and spread of religious fundamentalism.

They said there was need for coordinated Centre-State efforts to fight the problems, besides modernising the security apparatus. The Governors said there was need to expeditiously resolve long-standing inter-State boundary disputes. **Picture on Page 12**

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

Population bomb on short fuse

SHIVMATH JHA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 16 — Barely seven days are left for launch of the National Population Policy action plan for 2000, but the government is yet to issue guidelines for recruitment of additional manpower or strengthening the infrastructure to reduce the birth rate and stabilise the population which is now past the one billion mark. The action plan will be launched by the Prime Minister on 23 July.

According to the Technical Group on Population Projection, NPP-2000, if implemented fully, would keep the country's population at 1,107 million (110 crore) in 2010, instead of 1,162 million (116 crore).

But for the projected population in 2002, the government will have to open 23,190 sub-centres across the country. A sub-centre would cost Rs 3 lakh, with recurring expenses of Rs 0.5 lakh, involving an additional financial burden of Rs 811 crore against the Rs 268 crore spent in 1991. The expenditure for the sub-centres will be shared by panchayats, states and the Centre.

In view of a shortage of 1,513 primary health centres in 1991, the government will have to set up as many as 4,212 PHCs. One PHC will cost Rs 24.50 lakh with a recurring liability of Rs 13 lakh.

ALL WORDS AND NO ACTION

- 1946: Bhore Committee submitted its report.
 1952: Family Planning Programme was launched.
 1976: Statement on National Population Policy
 1977: Policy statement on Family Welfare programme. (Both statements were tabled in the Parliament, but never discussed or adopted)
 1983: National Health Policy was announced emphasising need for Population Policy.
 1991: The National Development Council appointed Karunakaran committee
 1993: An expert group was formed headed by Dr M S Swaminathan
 1994: Swaminathan group filed its report
 1997: Cabinet approved the draft for NPP.
 1999: Another draft was finalised.
 2000: National Population Policy was announced.

ry health care deliver system. The finance required to address the need for trained manpower will be about Rs 2,300 crore.

Ironically, no MTP kits have been made available since 1997, though 1,748 MTP kits were distributed during the CSSM programme, and most of these are lying unused for lack of manpower.

A senior health ministry official said: "We are at sea and still in the dark as the government has not issued any specific instruction regarding mobilisation of resources - both financial and manpower".

"In fact its necessity was emphasised in the National Health Policy of, 1983. How can it be possible to establish the population during the next 10 years when it (government) took almost 17 years in bringing out a 37-page document," the official asked.

The NPP too has stated that "practically it is impossible for the government to double the annual budget of the department of family welfare to enable government to address the shortfall in the unmet needs for health care infrastructure, services and supplies."

The NPP noted that "even though the annual budget for population stabilisation activities assigned to the department has increased over the years, at least 50 per cent of the budgetary outlay is deployed towards non-plan activities."

Again, there is a shortage of manpower, and it is estimated that as many as 27,501 ANMs, 64,860 male multi-purpose workers and 4,224 LHVs, 5126 health assistants (male), 2,475 medical officers in PHCs, 1429 surgeons, 1446 gynaecologists, 1525 physician, 1,774 paediatricians and 6,635 specialists will have to be drafted to achieve the projected target.

Similarly, there is a shortage of 1,171 radiographers, 6045 pharmacists, 12,793 laboratory technicians and 18,851 nurse and mid-wives in the rural prima-

This expenditure will be met by the state under the basic minimum service programme. The government had admitted that the financial health of the states would not let them make these investments in health infrastructure.

There was also a shortage of 2,899 community health centres in the country. To meet the target of the projected population by 2002, the government will have to open 3,776 CHCs. One CHC will cost Rs 80.5 lakh with a recurring liability of Rs 27 lakh, currently met by the state governments.

THE STATESMAN

17 JUL 2000

City police seeks Chhota Rajan's extradition

By S. Balakrishnan and Somit Sen

MUMBAI: The Mumbai police has urged the Centre to persuade the government of Thailand to help bring underworld don Chhota Rajan to Mumbai. Chhota Rajan and his ace hitman, Rohit Verma, were shot at in Bangkok on Friday evening by members of the Chhota Shakeel faction of the Dawood Ibrahim gang. While Verma died on the spot, Chhota Rajan was grievously injured and has been admitted to a hospital in Bangkok.

Speaking to this newspaper on Saturday, joint police commissioner (crime) D. Sivanandan said, "We have written a letter to the Centre stating that Chhota Rajan is wanted in several criminal cases in Mumbai and that he should be brought here. Unfortunately, our country does not have an extradition treaty with Thailand and hence the Union government will have to use its good offices to bring Chhota Rajan to India."

A supervisor at the Smitivej Hospital in Bangkok said Vijay (the name under which Chhota Rajan operated from Bangkok) was in the intensive care unit. "We can't say anything about his condition at this stage," she said.

Apparently, the gangster has received bullet

wounds below the chest. The Thai police are reportedly present in full strength at the hospital at the request of the Indian government. The security is aimed at preventing a second attempt on Chhota Rajan's life and also at blocking his escape after possible recovery.

However, the local police is clueless about the identity of the killers. But Chhota Shakeel told this newspaper over the telephone, "I had sent my boys to Bangkok to kill Chhota Rajan. I will not rest until he is eliminated."

Sources said Verma's wife, Sarita, and two-year-old daughter also sustained bullet injuries in the attack. Sarita has also been admitted to the ICU at the same hospital.

According to police sources, ever since Chhota Rajan broke away from Dawood Ibrahim after the Mumbai serial blasts of March 1993, the latter has been trying to kill him. But Chhota Rajan had not only outsmarted the Dawood gang by frequently shuffling bases between Kuala Lumpur, Melbourne, Hong Kong and Bangkok, but had even got some key lieutenants of the Karachi-based don killed.

Among Chhota Rajan's prize catch was Sunil Sawant, alias Sautya, and Dilshad Beg. Sautya was shot dead in Dubai, while Beg was gunned down in Kathmandu a few years ago. Dawood

had retaliated by killing several of Chhota Rajan's financiers, including a builder from Chembur. Dawood was even said to be planning to eliminate a key leader of the Shiv Sena who is believed to be close to Chhota Rajan.

However, there was a lull for a while, with the rival gangs quietly trying to win over each other's key operatives. Chhota Shakeel had opened a line of communication with Mohan Kotian, the right-hand man of Chhota Rajan. But the latter swung into action quickly and had Kotian bumped off by Verma near Bangalore a couple of years ago. Chhota Rajan also tried to forge a front with Abu Salem, who had drifted away from Dawood following the rapid elevation of Chhota Shakeel in the hierarchy of the D-company.

The flashpoint, however, came when a few months ago, Chhota Rajan ordered Rohit Verma to kill Ashraf Patel, who was allegedly a big-time financier of Dawood and an alleged cricket match-fixer. "It was Patel's murder that made Dawood even more determined to gun down Chhota Rajan. The task was assigned to Dubai-based Chhota Shakeel, who is one of the more intelligent lieutenants of Dawood," a police official said.

► 'Chhota Rajan's death will mean the end of his gang', Page 5

THE TIMES OF INDIA

17 SEP 2000

55 killed as Alliance Air plane

The Times of India News Service

PATNA: An Alliance Air Boeing-737 crashed here on Monday killing 55 people, including 51 on board. The plane hit a row of houses and burst into flames minutes before it was to land in clear weather at Patna airport. Four persons were killed on the ground.

Three women, two children and all six crew members were among those killed. The crew included three women.

Seven passengers, including two women and a child, survived the crash.

The flight (CD-7412), with 46 passengers bound for Patna and six for Lucknow, besides the crew, took off from Calcutta en route to Delhi at 6:50 a.m. and crashed into a building when it was just two km away from the airport at 7:30 p.m.

Civil aviation minister Sharad Yadav, who rushed to the crash site, told newsmen that the black box of the plane had been recovered and the communication between air traffic control (ATC) at Patna airport and the pilot, Captain Sohan Pal, before the crash had been traced.

"There was no emergency report from the ATC to the pilot," he said.

The seven survivors and some local residents injured in the crash were admitted to Patna Medical College hospital where the condition of a few was stated to be serious.

Among the survivors are Pramod Rajgarhia and Ketan Rajgarhia (both women) and Prachi Rajgarhia (child), Rajiv Singh Rana,

P.N. Bopanna and Bharat Rungta.

Mr Yadav said the pilot of the ill-fated plane contacted the ATC and sought its permission to take another round when the aircraft was flying at a height of 1,500 to 2,000 feet above the ground.

Suddenly, the plane lost contact with the ATC

has already begun.

Mr Yadav said visibility at the time of the incident was "quite clear" and there was no mechanical failure.

He announced that the civil aviation ministry would give an ex gratia payment of Rs 7.5 lakhs to the dependents of each of those killed in

the crash, while Rs 3.5 lakhs would be given to the injured, who are being flown to Delhi for treatment at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

The aircraft, which orbited twice over Patna airport, could have been at a lower height during the second orbit before it crashed, civil aviation secretary A.H. Jung said.

"Though at no point of time was any problem indicated during conversations between the pilot and the ATC, it is possible that the aircraft may have lost height or (the pilot) misjudged," Mr Jung told newsmen.

Mr Jung said the aircraft which crashed was 20 years old.

"The aircraft is of 1980 vintage," he told newsmen in reply to questions. Alliance Air, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Indian Airlines, owns 12 737-200s, including this plane. The average age of these 12 aircraft is about 18 years, aviation industry sources said.

The mandatory life-span of the Boeing 737-200 planes is about 15 years and the Seattle-based Boeing company had stopped building these aircraft about 15 years ago, aviation sources said.

Miraculous escape for the lucky ones

The Times of India News Service

CALCUTTA: There are at least five persons who must thank their lucky stars for having missed their flight. According to Indian Airlines sources, five persons who had bookings on the ill-fated flight did not make it to the plane on time. They are P. Danda, S. Mishra, G. Mohanty, A. Nath and N. Mukherjee. A relative of one of these passengers panicked after hearing of the accident. He heaved a sigh of relief when he was told by airport authorities that the name of the concerned passenger was listed among those who had missed the flight.

They missed their train, only to die in the crash

The Times of India News Service

CALCUTTA: Several passengers travelling on the ill-fated Alliance Air flight on Monday morning appear to have taken the flight at the last moment.

Dr Sourav Dutta, a dental surgeon, who frequently visited Patna to give lectures at the Buddha Dental College there, generally preferred to travel by the overnight train. But for reasons not yet clear, he chose to cancel his train ticket and boarded Alliance Air instead. The 34-year-old doctor was due to get married later this year, but died in the crash.

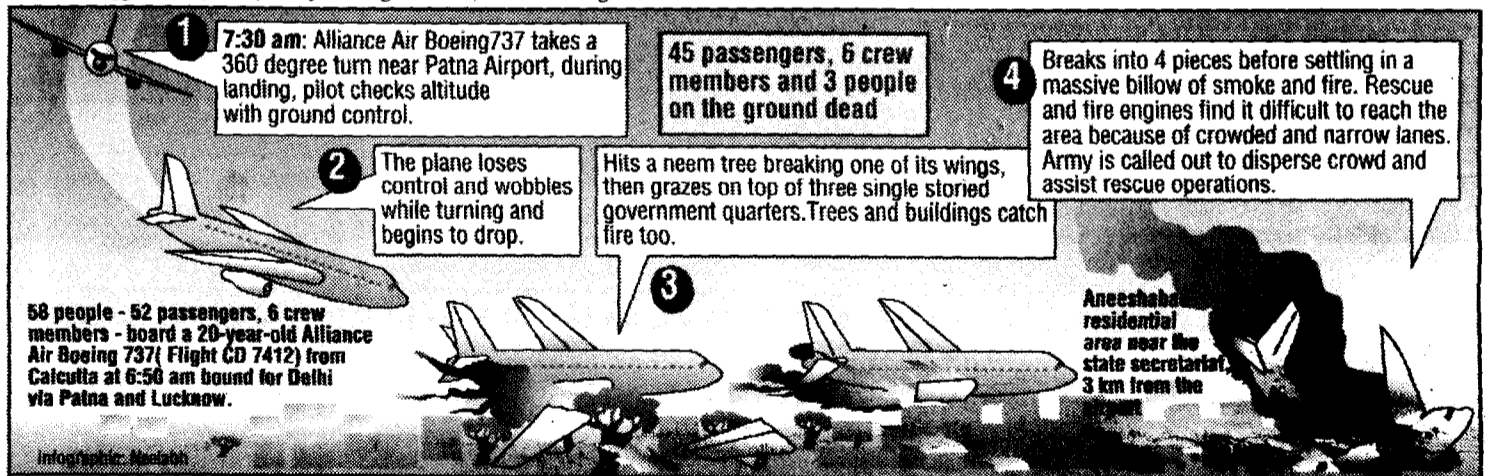
► Last minute decision, Page 8

and started descending, grazed a neem tree and then crashed onto a row of government flats in the vicinity of Raj Bhavan and the state secretariat, he said.

Forty-nine bodies, including those of two pilots and four crew members, have already been extricated from the debris.

Mr Yadav announced a judicial inquiry headed by a sitting judge of the Patna high court and said he would send the request for the inquiry to the chief justice of the court.

The departmental inquiry led by director general of civil aviation H.S. Khola



THE TIMES OF INDIA

18 JUL 2000

W-12 The chronology of major air disasters in India

● July 17, 2000: A Boeing 737 carrying 52 passengers and six crew members crashes near Patna airport killing over 50. The Alliance Air flight was on its way to Delhi from Calcutta with stopover at Patna and Lucknow, when it crashed into residential blocks.

● March 7, 1999: Twenty-two persons were killed when an IAF AN-32 crashed at Papankalan near Indira Gandhi International (IGI) airport in Delhi.

● January 11, 1999: Eight persons lost their lives when an Indian Air Force Avro crashed at Arakonam Airbase near Chennai.

● July 30, 1998: Nine persons were killed when a Dornier aircraft crashed minutes after take off from Naval Airpbrt in Kochi.

● November 15, 1997: Minister of State for

Defence V N Somu and four others, including senior Army officers, were killed when their helicopter crashed into snow-covered mountains near Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh.

● July 3, 1997: Two persons were killed when a cargo Fokker F-27 crashed in Mumbai.

● December 24, 1996: Twenty-two Army personnel on board IAF Avro aircraft were killed when the aircraft crashed in Prakasam district of Andhra Pradesh.

● November 12, 1996: Three hundred and fifty one persons were killed in the biggest air tragedy in recent times when two aircraft, a Saudi Arabian Airlines Boeing and a Kazakh Airways aircraft, collided in mid-air near Charkhi Dadri, Haryana.

● April 26, 1993: Fifty-six persons were killed when an Indian Airlines Boeing 737 crashed at Aurangabad.

● March 25, 1991: Twenty-five persons were killed when an IAF Avro crashed near Yelahanka, Bangalore.

● February 14, 1990: Ninety-two persons were killed when an Airbus 320 crashed at Bangalore airport.

● December 15, 1989: A Vayudoot plane crashed near Pune leaving 11 dead.

● October 19, 1988: As many as 131 people were killed in a Boeing-737 crash near Ahmedabad.

● October 19, 1988: 35 persons were killed when a Vayudoot Fokker crashed near Guwahati.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

18 JUL 2000

Special fund for population projects

HD-1 22/7/79 By P. Sunderarajan

NEW DELHI, JULY 22. The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, today announced the setting up of a special fund exclusively for financing projects aimed at curbing the population growth. The Planning Commission would provide a seed money of Rs. 100 crores for the fund. Contributions can be made by the industry and others and would get income tax rebate.

The Prime Minister announced the setting up of an "empowered action group", attached to the Union Health Ministry, to formulate area-specific population control programmes. The group would lay emphasis on States "lagging behind in containing the population growth to manageable limits and which will account for nearly half the country's population in the next two decades".

The focus would be on Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa, which are expected to account for 55 per cent of the country's total increase in population during the next 20 years.

The group, Mr. Vajpayee said, would concentrate on involving voluntary agencies, community organisations and the panchayati raj institutions and would, among other things, explore the possibility of expanding the scope of social marketing of contraceptives to make them more easily available.

The Prime Minister made the announcements at the day-long maiden meeting of the National Population Commission, which was set up on May 11 to coincide with the country's population crossing the one-billion mark and to quicken the process of population control so that the population stabilised by 2045.

The meeting was attended, among others, by the Leader of the Opposition, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Mr. K.C. Pant, the Chief Ministers of several States, captains of industry and eminent persons from different walks of society. It decided that the release of funds for various population control programmes should be linked to performance, determined by incremental increases in key indicators.

The Centre would clear all arrears due to the States under the family welfare programme by March 31, 2001, and an additional Rs. 150 crores would be provided either through re-appropriation or as extra fund for supplies and equipment. Task forces and working groups, consisting of members of the population commission, would be set up for 'primary and secondary education in relation to population stabilisation', mainstreaming of the Indian systems of medicine and homoeopathy, and methodology for greater involvement of civil society.

Another report, pictures: Page 11

THE HINDU

23 JUL 2000

Magsaysay winner dedicates award to common people

K. S. Tomar
Jaipur, July 26

MAGSAYSAY AWARD winner Aruna Roy was far from thrilled when she found out that she had won the coveted prize.

"Initially, I was reluctant to accept the award as it did not recognise the services of those associated with the movement for social change in Rajasthan. I was persuaded that it has always been given to an individual," she said in an exclusive interview to *The Hindustan Times* today.

Overcoming the initial reluctance, Aruna dedicates the award to the common people, who, she says, have been a great source of inspiration to her.

Aruna Roy stays in a small hut in Rajsamand district's Devdungri village, which doesn't have electricity. In the village yet to come out of the dark ages, Aruna, who works under a kerosene lamp, is the brightest ray of hope. The rigours of fetching water from a hand pump, situated at a distance from the hut, has only steeled her dedication. The well has been leased out to her by a well-wisher.

After taking voluntary retirement from the IAS in 1974, Aruna began doing social work at a research centre at Tiloni in Rajasthan. Till 1983, she was associated with the Social Work Research Centre (SWRC). Thereafter, she worked with different social organisations till 1990. Currently, she is associated with the Majdoor Kisan Shakti

Sangthan (MKSS) which has its office in Rajsamand district. Asked why she resigned from the



Aruna Roy

IAS, Aruna Roy said she could not work in the watertight bureaucratic set up which did not give fair

share to the junior officers. And this ex-IAS officer had some surprise guests recently -- IAS probationers from Mussorie, who had come to have practical knowledge of social work and study the campaign for empowerment of the people. Navdoti Devi of Devdungri, who had raised a banner of revolt against the prevalent social evils, said that they were excited over the nomination of Aruna Roy for the Magsaysay Award. Acknowledging the limitations of a social organisations engaged in the task of bringing social change, Aruna says, "I am neither Mahatma Gandhi nor Mao, who had the charisma to effect social changes. We work in dozens of villages spread over five tehsils in four districts of Rajasthan."

Stating that women had undergone social awakening, Aruna says that women in Rajasthan were still living in a feudal set up. Aruna has pioneered the right to information campaign and the movement for empowerment of the people. She said the Rajasthan Government had implemented the Right to Information Act, but it had not yielded the desired results so far. She blamed the bureaucracy and politicians for this.

She said the movement for empowerment of the people, started by the MKSS, will be meaningful only if the common people were associated with the formulation of the policies at various levels. Magsaysay Award winner felt that the decline in the involvement of the people in policy-making may undermine the democratic system.

People's efforts, ideas, contribute to leadership, says Magsaysay winner

The Times of India News Service

JAIPUR: Rajasthan-based 50-year-old Magsaysay award winning social activist Aruna Roy wanted the \$50,000 award to be given to her organisation rather than her.

A former Indian Administrative Service (IAS) official, Ms Roy has decided to set up a trust with the award money for Mazdoor Kisan Sangathan (MKSS), the organisation with which she is associated with.

Ms Roy studied at Delhi's Bharatiya Vidya Bhawan and at Indraprastha College and joined the IAS with the Union Territory as her cadre in 1968. She gave up her plush job to join her husband Bunker Roy, famous for his Tilonia project, as a full-time social worker.

She "dissociated" herself from the Tilonia project in 1983 "as I wanted to start my own organisation". Tilonia in Ajmer district remained her home and she would visit the sleepy village often to join her husband. The Roys have built a small house there.

Bunker Roy was away in Germany, but he knew the honour was coming his wife's way. Roy had set up the Social Work Research Centre at Tilonia in 1973.

She lives in a small house at Dev Dungari. Navrati Devi and Chunni Singh are her constant companions. The MKSS runs grocery shops in three villages on a one per cent profit concept. While the activist is thankful to the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation, Roy would have liked the award to have "come to the MKSS rather than to an individual". "When recently I got a phone call from Manila announcing the award," she said, "I told them I was hesitant to receive it as an individual. I asked them to give the award to the MKSS, as what ever she achieved was due to a "collective effort".

But the Magsaysay Foundation insisted that "I should receive the award as an individual".

She said, "My fellow workers de-

cidated that I should receive the award as an individual. My co-worker Chunni Singh, who is known as 'Robinhood of Dev Dungari' where the MKSS is based, will go with me to Manila to receive the award".

"I thought political action outside a political party is necessary to bring about social change. Social work and development process would follow the social change and that's how I devoted myself fully to the MKSS," said Roy.

"I would like to say that this honour really belongs to the many exceptional but ordinary people with whom I have had the good fortune to work in Dev Dungari in Rajasamand district. It is not possible for any one person to bring about socio-political change," said Roy.

"Leadership should be redefined to include the collective efforts of ordinary people and the ideas they generate in a country like India. This has been one of the outstanding lessons of my 25 years of work in rural Rajasthan," she pointed out.

She said, "I owe my ideas to the clarity of others and with the people who confront injustice with fearlessness and equanimity". Her marathon effort yielded fruit when she joined the men and women of Sohagarh village in Rajasamand district and managed to get 25 hectares of land belonging to the local people from the local zamindar. This was about a decade ago and since then she never looked back.

She made "right to information" a people's related movement and success came her way when the Rajasthan vidhan sabha passed the bill of right to information three months ago.

"Now my struggle is to get the bill implemented in letter and spirit. I see this award as a recognition of those ideas and an opportunity to take the struggle forward towards the realisation of long dreamed of changes," said Roy.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 JUL 2000

'Flame that burns in every heart'

27/7 By Anita Joshua HD

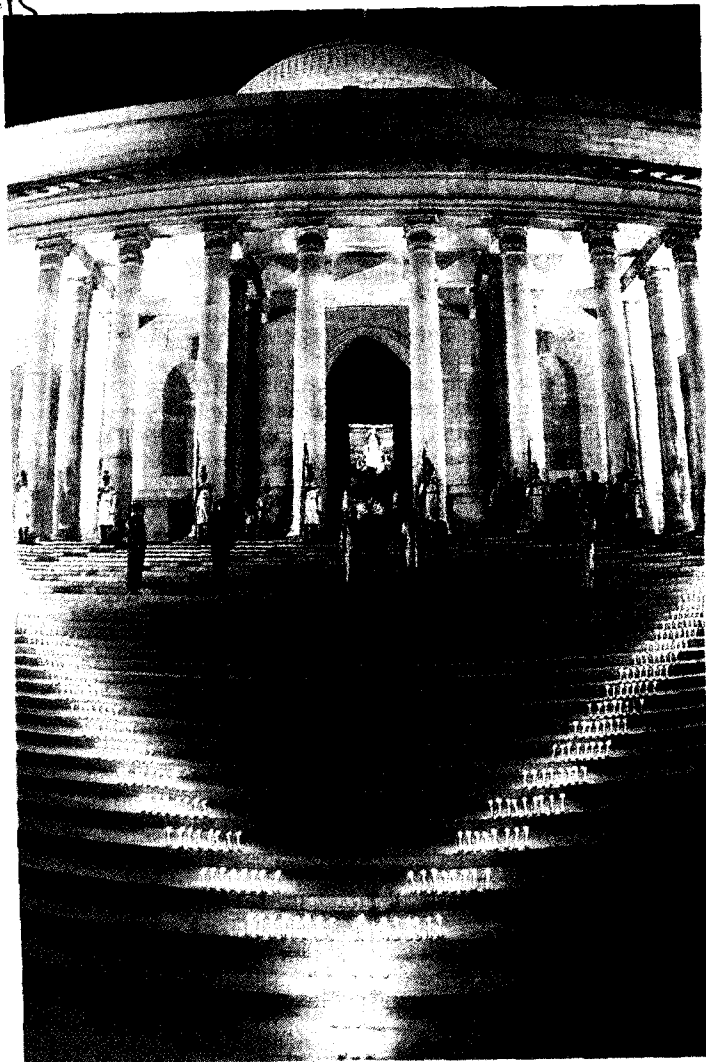
NEW DELHI, JULY 26. It was a day of celebration all right, but every function commemorating the Kargil Victory Day was peppered by memories of the body-bags that kept reaching the capital last summer from the theatre of war in those hostile heights. Where the valiance of the soldiers gave the nation a reason to hold its head high, their supreme sacrifice weighed heavy on every mind.

Delhi, being the nation's capital, was the centre of the celebrations which began early in the day at India Gate where the President and Supreme Commander of the Defence Forces, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, led the nation in paying tribute to the Kargil heroes.

Among the dignitaries to offer tributes at the war memorial were the Vice-President, Mr. Krishan Kant; the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee; the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes; the Chief of the Army Staff, General V. P. Malik; the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Sushil Kumar; and the Vice-Chief of the Air Staff, Air Marshal P. S. Brar.

The day being high on symbolism, the wreath-laying ceremony at India Gate also saw Mi-8 helicopters — used in Kargil — do a fly-past over Rajpath followed by the Jaguars in a "one-man missing formation" with one aircraft less to register a pilot's homage to the slain hero. Though the spotlight shifted from India Gate to the lawns behind — where the Kargil Vijay Diwas exhibition was thrown open to the public by Mr. Fernandes shortly after the wreath-laying ceremony — it returned to the war memorial in the evening when the Prime Minister lit a candle to symbolise the "eternal flame that burns in every brave heart".

Before the evening function, the Prime Minister also made a cultural offering to the nation and its brave soldiers by inaugurating a cultural programme —



VIJAY DIWAS: Five hundred and twenty two candles, one each for the Kargil war heroes, lit in a 'V' shape on the forecourt of the Rashtrapati Bhavan in New Delhi on Wednesday. — Photo: V.V. Krishnan

a mixed bag of poetry, dance and music — at Siri Fort Auditorium.

With Mr. Vajpayee returning to India Gate around eight p.m., the historic war memorial — yet to bear the names of the soldiers killed in Kargil — once again became the centre of activity; only, this time 1,000 children and 500 soldiers lined up along the stretch leading to the war memorial also joined him in lighting candles as did many people

across the city in their homes.

In a synchronised action, the President and the First Lady, Ms. Usha Narayanan, lit a candle down the road on the forecourt steps of Rashtrapati Bhavan at the designated hour.

Thereafter, the senior officials of the President's Secretariat lit candles — in all 522 to mark the official number of those killed in Kargil — to the tune of 'Ae Mere Watan Ke Logo' — in a 'V' formation to symbolise victory.

Euro-zone economy recovering [✓] HD-17

By Batuk Gathani

BRUSSELS, JULY 27. It may be a slow-turning tide, but the euro-zone economy led by Germany is displaying strong signs of recovery. But the consensus view in the financial markets is the U.S. economy is performing better still.

The euro, the common currency of 11 of the E.U. nations, as registered a modest gain against the dollar. There are also reports that with consumer prices rising in Germany and France, the European interest rates may also rise.

Last night, the German Chancellor, Mr. Gerhard Schroeder, presenting the mid-term review of his Government's performance, said the "German disease", marked by low economic growth, high unemployment and resistance to change, had ended.

He said the country's economic motor had restarted and also made warm references to Germany's close ties with France, the other major economic power in the E.U. The two countries account for a major portion of the euro-zone economy. In both the regions, the economic performance is rated as "satisfactory and impressive" with falling unemployment and rising investments.

Mr. Schroeder also condemned the recent rash of "deplorable cases of right wing activity" that has raised fears of a new wave of intolerance and

racist attacks. He called for a crack-down on violence against foreigners, especially in the former East Germany.

More than a decade after its unification and massive investments, many regions in East Germany continue to remain deprived, with high unemployment and it is here that xenophobia has spread. The neo-Nazi organisations continue to whip up anti-foreigner sentiments. With the refugee influx from East and Central European increasing, such propaganda has gained popularity.

Mr. Schroeder made his most forceful statement yet to denounce racist incidents which had "tarnished" Germany's image and spread alarm on the domestic front. At his news conference, Mr. Schroeder said: "I am fed up with reading reports every day about beating orgies by right wing radical mobs against foreigners or minorities. There is no excuse for murder, manslaughter, assault or desecration of graves — we need to show more civil courage".

Half way in his four-year term and strengthened by the recent parliamentary victory for his tax reform plan, Mr. Schroeder is acquiring the reputation as the most reform-minded post-War Chancellor.

The Germans are among the highest taxed individuals and companies in the European Union. This has tended to erode Germany's compet-

itive edge, as companies have been reluctant to make high capital investments. German labour costs are the highest in the developed world with skilled services costing between \$ 35 and \$ 45 per hour in certain sectors of industry. German employers also pay for social security benefits that are rated as the most generous in the Western world.

Mr. Schroeder promised to devote the next two years to make "Germany fit for the century of Internet and dot-com business culture". The country is modernising its archaic immigration laws as it scouts for the services of young technocrats, especially from India and China in the information technology industry. Although this move has attracted much criticism from rightist and conservative politicians, progressive leaders and business circles have welcomed it.

The Chancellor predicted that by the parliamentary elections in 2002, his Government would have created one million new jobs and the number of the unemployed would fall below 35 lakhs compared to the current 47 lakhs.

The Schroeder Government's single biggest achievement has been to reform and reduce personal and corporate taxes. Germany is also trying to end its dependence on energy supplies from nuclear power plants at the insistence of "Greens" or environmentalist coalition partners.

THE HINDU

29 JUL 2000

Best of friends turn best of enemies

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 27

WV 20/7

THEY SHOULD be the best of friends. Both are sophisticated, well-travelled lawyers who have made fortunes from the law. Both love telling stories, love the good life and make excellent dinner companions. And both have been on the same side in many a battle - including the fight against the Emergency.

So why are Ram Jethmalani and Soli Sorabjee at each other's throats? Nobody seems to know. Sorabjee says he is astonished by the vehemence of Jethmalani's attack; as far as he is concerned, it is completely out of character.

After all, say Sorabjee's friends, when the Indian government moved against Jethmalani during the Emergency, Sorabjee took the risk of opposing the all-powerful Emergency-regime and appeared for Jethmalani.

Says Sorabjee "we've known each other for 40 years. We've been on the same side. We've fought for the same causes".

It is not so simple, says the Jethmalani camp. The two men may well have known each other for 40 years but they've never been great friends. They meet only on social occasions. Jethmalani has never gone over for a quiet dinner to Sorabjee's house. Nor has he invited

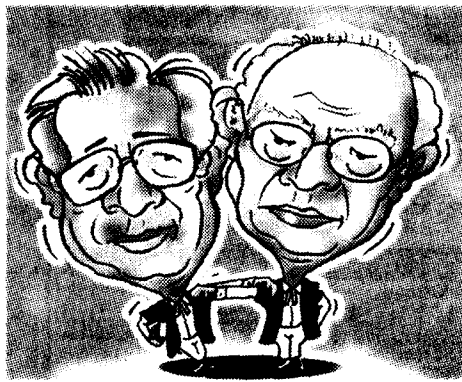


Illustration: Abhimanyu

Sorabjee home.

Part of the problem is a difference of style. Sorabjee is a diplomat by nature; a man who likes making friends, who is well-liked and has an extensive network of contacts. Jethmalani can be one of the world's great charmers and an astonishingly loyal friend but he is not a networker by nature.

Then there is the difference of geography. Despite his national stature, Jethmalani is basically a member of the Bombay bar. He made his name as a criminal lawyer in Bombay and his lawyer friends are still the ones he made in his

early days in Bombay. Sorabjee is a member of the Delhi bar, more at ease with constitutional law.

At least one previous dispute between the two has focussed on one of Jethmalani's old Bombay friends: S. B. Jaisinghani. Jethmalani wanted to make him Solicitor General. Sorabjee put his foot down arguing that Jaisinghani's only credentials were those of a Jethmalani-crony. Ram gave up the battle but he never forgot ---or forgave.

Other disputes related to proximity to the Prime Minister. Jethmalani made various suggestions for the Constitutional Review Commission. Vajpayee listened but ultimately went with Sorabjee's recommendations. Jethmalani was told that Sorabjee was poisoning the Prime Minister against him - hence the reference in his statement to those who have the PM's ear.

Even so, when the explosion came, it left Sorabjee staggered.

How, he wonders, was he involved in a fight between Jethmalani and Justice Anand? Jethmalani's friends have an answer ready: the explosion was a result of months of pent-up anger. Ram believed that Sorabjee was turning the PM and the courts against him. One day, the resentment got too much, the dam burst and the rest, as they say, is history.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

28 JUL 2000

SATURDAY, JULY 29, 2000

MR. JETHMALANI'S FURY

✓ CONSIDERING THE DECISIVE manner in which he was asked by the usually tolerant Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, to put in his papers, it is perhaps natural that Mr. Ram Jethmalani should feel mortified. That he should have chosen to vent his spleen on the Attorney General, Mr. Soli Sorabjee, and the Chief Justice of India, Mr. A. S. Anand, is totally unwarranted and deplorable. The personal accusations he has made are nothing but an attempt to sling mud at the two Constitutional functionaries. The whole exercise was obviously aimed at putting a gloss on his own patently intemperate response to the stinging observations the Chief Justice had felt constrained to make against him (by implication). It was his defiant posture vis-a-vis the apex court that apparently proved to be the last straw, prompting Mr. Vajpayee to secure his resignation in the interest of maintaining the best of relations with the judiciary. By launching into personal attacks, Mr. Jethmalani has side-stepped the larger issues — related to the cardinal parliamentary principle of the Cabinet's 'collective responsibility' — the apex court had raised in the context of a pending matter pertaining to the implementation of the Srikrishna Commission report. One is led to believe that he has no credible defence to offer on the substantive issues highlighted by the court in its adverse comments.

Mr. Jethmalani has made three specific allegations against Mr. Soli Sorabjee — that he had tendered advice to the Hindujas who figured as accused in the Bofors case; that he gave advice on telecom transactions involving matters of policy and charged heftily; and that it was on his advice that the Government transferred the Jayalalitha-related corruption cases from special courts to the regular courts, an act that attracted judicial reprimand. All these accusations have been refuted point by point by the Attorney General. Against Mr. Justice Anand, Mr. Jethmalani could just cite a "misunderstanding" over the appointment of Mr. B. M. Lal as Chairman of the

M RTP Commission, the bone of contention being whether such an appointment could be made without consulting the Chief Justice. He has also spoken of a complaint the President had forwarded to the Law Ministry regarding a Madhya Pradesh land deal case wherein the members of Mr. Justice Anand's family are involved. In saying that he had talked to the Chief Justice about this just a few days prior to the apex court's sharp comments against him, Mr. Jethmalani was evidently insinuating a nexus between the two events and this, on the face of it, appears far-fetched. In fact, he seems to be tilting at windmills when he attributes his self-inflicted exit from the Cabinet to a "carefully orchestrated campaign" unleashed against him.

It is not unusual for the Law Minister and the Attorney General to have divergent and even conflicting opinions on an issue and in such contingencies the Government has inevitably to decide one way or the other, taking the collective view of the Cabinet if necessary. But where the personal equation of the incumbents of the two offices is vitiated by mutual distrust, prejudice, antipathy or clash of egos — as it seemed to be the case between Mr. Jethmalani and Mr. Sorabjee — the entire decision-making process involving crucial points of law will inevitably become stymied, affecting almost the entire gamut of governance. And when one of them happens to be a Jethmalani — a "no nonsense Law Minister" who has the 'gumption' to tell the Chief Justice that he knew "his law as well as anyone else" — the situation could become particularly dicey. Small wonder then that the Prime Minister rightly opted for Mr. Sorabjee. The Government has done well to disown, publicly and without loss of time, the former Law Minister's insinuations against the Attorney General and the Chief Justice of India. Where Mr. Jethmalani has succeeded, however, is in giving the Opposition enough weapons to torment the Vajpayee Government with for some time.

THE HINDU

Drought & deprivation

By Sudhanshu Ranade

14-12
2015

THE WAY politicians rush pell-mell to the site of any disaster, be it a rail accident or a bomb blast or the brutal murder of civilians by armed gangs, with reporters and photographers in tow to record their carefully-posed concern, makes the blood boil. The same sort of posturing is to be seen in Parliament whenever we are hit by a cyclone, earthquake or drought. This is why people find themselves hoping that such crises, at least, will be kept 'above politics'. What is required, above all, is to let harried local officials get on with their job; instead of adding to their problems with all the drama, and placing on them the additional burden of the need to 'keep up appearances'.

But in fact such relief or rescue operations are often beyond the capability of the local administration; they require the quick and coordinated action of a variety of specialised departments at a number of different levels of the State and Central hierarchies. In such cases, even the most cynical and self-promoting shows of 'concern' do help to get things moving, on the scale and urgency required.

To give one instance, even the most dedicated of efforts by local officials would be of no use to people in affected areas if abundant quantities of water, food or fodder are made available to them at prices that are beyond their reach. Droughts, cyclones and earthquakes do indeed wreak some of their havoc by the disruption of supplies. But a more grave problem is the way such disasters abruptly terminate normal sources of income for the masses, even as the realisable value of their already negligible assets drops sharply on account of distress sales.

Supplies at least can be rushed in, at comparatively little cost, from other areas, far or near, that have remained unaffected. All that is required is a sense of crisis and the gearing up of the departments concerned for quick, coordinated action on the required scale. This is not an easy task; but it can be done. The disruption of income sources, however, has to be tackled locally.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has ordered the rushing of supplies of water, fodder and food to the drought-stricken areas; and efforts will no doubt be made to ensure that these supplies are quickly and fairly distributed. Orders have also been issued to begin food-for-work programmes expeditiously, on the required scale. But this is an intrinsically slow and clumsy way of 'rushing' across additional 'purchasing power' to people who have suddenly been deprived of their usual sources of income.

The dispersed incidence of deprivation makes the food-for-work programmes expensive and difficult. Besides, only about

Simply giving away relief money, instead of going in for food-for-work programmes, would help needy people who would otherwise be left out.

half the relief money can be used to cover wage costs, the rest is reserved for material and equipment. This halves the number of people you can cover, and leads to the creation of make-work 'roads' that will get washed away or blown off before they are ever used.

Severe costs are inflicted on beneficiaries, such as commuting to work, foregoing alternate uses of their time, and having to labour long hours in the hot sun; at a time when they are already stressed because even the scanty supplies of water and fodder that are normally available for their own use in summer have dried up. And young, old, sick and disabled people remain beyond the reach of food-for-work programmes; no matter how quickly and efficiently they are implemented.

Why should not relief money, which is specifically intended to be given away, be simply given away? Accountability can be ensured — disbursal on the spot in villages in the presence of panchayat representatives can be monitored. This can be supplemented by a determined effort to

create an 'accountability trail', so as to increase transparency by making the record permanently available for perusal with a fine comb in less stressed times.

Simply giving away relief money, instead of going in for food-for-work programmes, would help critical categories of needy people who would otherwise be left out; would more than double the number of people who can be helped with any given amount of money; would reduce administrative difficulties and costs; would increase the transparency of relief operations; and would greatly reduce the costs that are inflicted on beneficiaries of food-for-work programmes — unintentionally by some people; and de-

liberately by others, who believe that the rich can be kept out of relief programmes only by the deliberate infliction of pain on the poor.

Though such streamlining of policy is necessary, it is unlikely to happen in the near future. But it would help if the Union Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha, at least rolled back prices of essentials supplied through the public distribution system (PDS) in affected areas to pre-Budget levels, with immediate effect.

The Government has announced that to tide over the emergency, 'above poverty line' (APL) families in the affected areas would be entitled to draw rations at rates applicable to 'below poverty line' (BPL) families. It has offered no price cut for BPL families, who are the hardest hit. It seems that Mr. Vajpayee has, against his better judgment, let himself be persuaded by his administrative or financial advisors that this would create a bad precedent, and make it impossible to resist pressures for a general rollback of prices to pre-Budget levels.

Such solicitude for the well-being of

relatively better-off people while turning a blind eye to the suffering of the poor is in keeping with the logic that led to the hike in PDS prices for BPL families in the first place. After all, the hike in PDS prices, 'to reduce the burden of food subsidies', basically passes on to the poor the costs of subsidising the rich: the costs of keeping food prices high in the interests of relatively rich surplus farmers; the costs of maintaining the excessive stocks of food that come into being on account of high procurement prices; and the costs of shoring up the gargantuan Food Corporation of India.

An abundant, reliable and well-publicised supply of food through PDS outlets normally helps to keep prices low, by keeping artificial shortages in check. But passing on the above three sorts of costs to PDS users anyway raises prices, permanently, beyond levels to which artificial shortages might otherwise have raised them, temporarily.

These higher price levels now become the new baseline with reference to which market prices are set. In addition, the sharp and sudden nature of the hike of PDS prices, by something like 50 per cent, right on the eve of the drought, is sure to increase the room for the 'free play of market forces'.

The Congress(I) president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, obviously, is not the only one who has been crippled by the quality of advice that she gets. Mr. Vajpayee too seems to be facing serious problems in this regard. Why else would he have put up with such want of imagination in respect of issues concerning the poor? Why else would he have allowed the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, to sweep him off his feet in quest of 'world glory', instead of limiting our foreign policy objectives to the cost-effective pursuit of issues that are important to us? Why else would he have allowed the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, to pursue the disastrous policy of slowly, steadily and deliberately imperilling the security of the minorities, in order to 'keep them in line'?

HD-1
675

Wheat, rice supply for drought-hit A.P. also

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 5. The Vajpayee Government today formally decided to extend Central assistance, in the form of wheat and rice for drought-affected areas, to Andhra Pradesh also. At present it was applicable only to the drought-hit districts of Gujarat and Rajasthan.

Announcing this, the Union Minister and spokesperson of the Cabinet, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, clarified that the assistance was in addition to the normal allocation and the extra 20 kg foodgrains, being made available to the families in the drought-hit areas, would be at the below the poverty line (BPL) rate, irrespective of whether the recipients were above or below the poverty line.

Consequently, the BPL families would be entitled to 40 kg of foodgrains at the BPL rates, and the APL families to 10 kg at the APL rates and 20 kg at the BPL rates.

The Cabinet also decided to amend the Passport Act of 1920, with a view to increasing the punishment for illegal entry into the country to a maximum of five years imprisonment or a fine of Rs. 50,000 or both. At present, the punishment was only upto a 3 month-jail term or fine or both. Also, the fine amount also not specified.

It decided to withdraw the Pondicherry (Administration) Amendment Bill, which sought to clarify that the Madras High Court was vested with powers to exercise the administrative control over the subordinate judiciary in the Union Territory. The Bill,

pending in the Rajya Sabha from 1995, was being withdrawn as the Law Ministry, after a detailed review, concluded that by virtue of the interpretation by the Madras High Court, the original legislation — Pondicherry (Administration) Act — already provided for the vesting of such powers in it.

The Cabinet also approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with France for cooperation in highway transportation. The MoU is expected to help in the Government project to upgrade the national highway network with private sector participation.

It was decided that the State Trading Corporation import 50,000 tonnes of rice from Myanmar for distribution in the northeast. The proposal was designed to further cement relations between India and Myanmar, without imposing any extra burden on the exchequer as the landed price would be the same as the domestic price.

The Cabinet approved a proposal to amend the Protection of Human Rights Act to ensure that employees of the National Human Rights Commission got the benefits of the Fifth Pay Commission with retrospective effect and to provide 9.2 acres of defence land in Secunderabad to the Army Welfare Education Society for establishing a dental college.

The meeting also decided to take on lease three additional transponders from Shim of Thailand at a cost of Rs. 40 crores and reintroduce in Parliament the Semiconductor Design and Layout Bill, after incorporating amendments as suggested by a parliamentary committee.

MAY 2 1995

KALAHANDI'S WOES

History must not be allowed to repeat itself

THE chronic drought-prone districts of Kalahandi, Bolangir and Koraput continue to suffer from continued neglect despite the existence on paper of a KBK programme. Reports suggest that the current heat wave has triggered a severe drinking water crisis raising the spectre of another calamity. The worst months have begun and it is time Navin Patnaik's government took a major initiative to ensure that history does not repeat itself in an area where more than 3,000 lives were lost in 1998. Obviously the administration is yet to bestir itself even when traditional water sources are drying up and there is not enough water for drinking. It is not enough for the administration to "apprise" state headquarters or complain of lack of funds. Navin does not distinguish himself by pointing an accusing finger at his predecessors. The people of the region have been taken for a ride first by the JB Patnaik government that had extracted a promise of a massive development programme from Narasimha Rao and then by Giridhar Gamang who was expected to demonstrate a special concern for the tribal belt. Both turned out to be false hopes.

Fortunately, non-governmental organisations have entered the scene to create a new awareness. A Western Orissa Development Council has been set up mainly under political pressure. But there is always the reality that politicians have their own constituencies at heart. This is precisely the reason why there is scepticism that Kalahandi will receive the attention it deserves. A citizen's forum has petitioned the PM to shift the KBK project headquarters from Bhubaneswar which is about 500 km from the disaster zone. This sounds reasonable enough. In any case, the chief minister should ensure that political rivalry does not come in the way of coping with a tragedy that is largely man-made. He has a point to prove.

THE STATESMAN

27 MAY 2000

110-1

We are 1 billion today

By Gargi Parsai

NEW DELHI, MAY 10. The countdown has begun for the one-billionth child — officially — to be born at the Safdarjung hospital here. The United Nations Population Fund has sponsored a 'function' to mark the arrival of the one billionth baby. Two or three babies are to be born at the appointed hour of 12.56 p.m. at this hospital. Whoever arrives on time shall become the focus of world media attention.

Earlier the United Nations had bestowed on India the distinction of turning one billion in August last. But, later, the timing and the calculation arrived at by the Registrar General of India in 1995 was accepted by the world body and May 11 was earmarked as the day when India turned a billionaire in terms of population.

Tomorrow, the Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission, Mr. K.C. Pant, will announce the setting up of the National Population Commission, to be headed by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee. The Population Commission shall be set up at the Planning Commission premises for better inter-sectoral coordination.

The day is marked with functions and seminars to focus on issues of population stabilisation, reproductive and child health, gender equity and sustainable development.

"It is time for reflection. The situation is grim but if we behave responsibly we can overcome. But if we delay, things can go be-



New-born babies in a Mumbai hospital on Wednesday even as India is set to cross the 1 billion population mark. — PTI

yond control," the Family Welfare Secretary, Mr A.R. Nanda, told *The Hindu* here.

The projection is that if "nothing is done" India's population

can overtake China's by 2050. India adds about 16 million people, equivalent to Australia's population, every year.

Editorial on Page 12

THE HINDU

11 MAY 2000

THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2000

ONE BILLION

INDIA IS NOW a country of one billion people. If current trends continue, India will in 2045 overtake China as the most populous country in the world only after which will the population stabilise. The world has moved a long way from considering large populations as a major cause of all socio-economic problems to one that sees population stabilisation as an important objective within a larger set of goals encompassing an improved quality of life and an expansion of opportunities for all citizens. The problem with India's population policies in the past has been that the interlinkages between women's empowerment, child survival, maternal mortality, public health and population growth were recognised only belatedly. As the country uses the occasion of crossing the one billion threshold to increase awareness of population issues, it is worth asking what went wrong in the past.

India was the first country in the world to adopt population stabilisation as an explicit national goal. But India also has the dubious reputation of having pushed through 'forced sterilisation' during the Emergency, an act that rivals China's one-child policy in its assault on people's rights and also set back the national family planning programme from which the country is yet to recover. Over the decades the rate of growth of India's population has fallen as improvements have been made in infant and maternal mortality and the availability of reproductive health care services has expanded. But the progress has been too slow to warrant commendation and there have been wide regional variations. Moreover, there are worrying signs in recent years of even a retrogression in some important areas. The States of Kerala and more recently Tamil Nadu have shown what a combination of policies to improve the status of women (in health and education), provide relatively better public health services and expand reproductive health services can do to lower fertility rates. At the other end are the 'BIMARU' States of north and east India where all socio-

economic variables work against an improvement in people's well-being. The result is that the national fertility rates, female literacy, infant mortality and a host of other economic and health indicators that influence the growth and well-being of the population are far below goals that had been set for 2000. And as public health programmes suffer the effects of expenditure cutbacks by the Central and State Governments, there are indications of a deterioration in people's health. In 1998, for perhaps the first time since 1947, the national infant mortality rate showed an increase — instead of falling from its abnormally high levels.

The Government has now formulated the more rounded National Population Policy 2000 which has as its immediate target the attainment of the replacement fertility rate of 2.1 by 2010. The approach is inter-sectoral — covering health, education and social programmes — and requires the involvement of Government and non-government organisations from the local community upwards. An expansion of the availability of contraception facilities is an important instrument of the NPP 2000, but no less important is the recognition it accords to reducing infant mortality and raising the age at which women marry (possible only with the spread of education and an expansion of opportunities for women). Incentives to local bodies and individuals for better care of the girl child, promotion of schooling and a lowering of infant mortality and birth rates form an integral part of the policy — without the threat to use disincentives which in the past has never worked in any way. The country has learnt to its bitter cost that an exclusive use of administrative measures on 'family planning' neither addresses the concerns of the people nor contributes to stabilisation of the population. Whether the new policy will succeed where others before it have failed depends now on the Government agencies at the Centre, State and local levels as also the numerous NGOs which are now active in the field.

THE HINDU

7 MAY 2000

'Virtual bandh' in six States

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 11. Claiming "virtual bandh" in six States and a "favourable response" in rest of the country to its call for a general strike today, leaders of the National Platform of Mass Organisations (NPMO) today asserted that the intensity of the mass action had shown the "depth of crisis facing the country" and the Government should learn a lesson.

Fifty six mass organisations participated in the token strike to protest the "anti-people, economic, industrial and labour policies of the NDA Government". In West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Tripura, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala, it was claimed that normal life was disrupted as all industrial, educational and commercial establishments remained closed and surface transport off the roads.

Demonstrations and dharnas, protest marches and human chains, road blockades, picketing at factory gates and railway crossings, wearing black badges and working under protest or largescale absenteeism from banks and Government offices, gate meetings and distribution of leaflets — all constituted the day's massive action plan.

"Response was more than expected," said jubilant NPMO leaders. Consisting of apex Left and central trade unions, the NPMO members said that people spontaneously joined the strike and expressed their anger against the "saffron misrule."

Railways and airlines services were affected in Kerala and West Bengal while work in banking and insurance sectors came to a standstill in several States. The strike was reported to be "complete" in several districts of Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Orissa, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Manipur.

Minor incidents of violence were also reported from Delhi, Pondicherry and Bihar where workers were prevented from entering factories. A similar strike was held in December 1998. But the Govern-

ment's "refusal to take note of the mounting discontent among the masses against its policies" led to today's mass action.

Buoyed by the success of today's strike, the NPMO has decided to convene a meeting soon to heighten the struggle against the Government policies and decide on the next course of action.

Trade unions owing allegiance to Congress-affiliated INTUC and RSS-affiliated BMS stayed away from the strike. Non-Congress leaders and members of 18 Opposition parties in the Parliament staged a dharna as a gesture of solidarity to the workers' strike.

"Vulnerable sections of the population today are facing problems and challenges owing to the misplaced policies of the present Government," they said highlighting the issues of steep hike in prices of essential commodities, growing incidents of attacks on dalits and minorities and procedure adopted for disinvestment of PSUs without proper re-evaluation.

Total strike in Calcutta

Our Special Correspondent reports from Calcutta:

Normal life was paralysed today as the call for strike by the leftist trade unions evoked total response in Calcutta and the districts. No untoward incident was reported.

Shops, business establishments and educational institutions remained closed and vehicular traffic was off the roads. Attendance in government offices was thin.

"The strike was total and peaceful," the Chief Minister, Mr. Jyoti Basu, said. The strike was called by the leftist organisations against what they said the BJP government's "anti-people" policies.

Banks and financial institutions also remained closed. Work at the Calcutta and Haldia ports was affected.

THE HINDU

2 MAY 2000

7 MAY 2000

100-member panel will review population policy

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Call it a symptom of the national addiction to being in the family way or the ultimate irony of overpopulation: With 100 members, the newly established National Commission on Population is, quite literally, bursting at the seams.

Even as India's billionth infant was born on Thursday amidst squalls of official concern, the government 'delivered' its mammoth commission to "oversee and review implementation of population policy". The commission will be chaired by the Prime Minister, with K.C. Pant of the Planning Commission as his deputy.

Billionth baby is a bonny girl

NEW DELHI: A baby girl, born at 5.05 a.m. on Thursday at the city's Safdarjung hospital, was symbolically selected as the one billionth baby of the country.

Aastha is the second child of Ashok and Anjana Arora, residents of Najafgarh in South-west Delhi. Fair, with a mop of hair and weighing 3.1 kg she becomes sister to four-year-old Munna. The father, Ashok, works for a car accessories' shop. (UNI)

Among those who will provide inputs will be nine Union ministers, chief ministers of all the states, leaders of the opposition in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, presidents of leading political parties, members of Parliament, NGO representatives, health professionals, academics, writers, doctors, mediapersons and, of course, bureaucrats. Some of well-known members are Sharmila Tagore, Shabana Azmi, Vinod Khanna, Quarratulain Haider, Alyque Padamsee and Ratan Tata.

When Mr Pant was asked to explain the reason for such an "overpopulated" and heterogeneous commission, he said, "If such people are included, the projection of ideas (for population control) will be better." As for the size of the commission, Mr Pant said, "It means to involve the whole country. There is representation for states, political parties. If you want it to be a national effort, it is a good way."

THE TIMES OF INDIA

MAY 200

40-12
19/5

The Sahayog affair

By Rajeev Dhavan

Kumaon is in ferment not because of Sahayog's pamphlet, but because of the region's prime political importance. The impending creation of Uttarakhand makes it a political prize.

SAHAYOG IS an organisation working on 'AIDS' education in the Kumaon Hills of Uttar Pradesh. In September 1999, it published a pamphlet called 'AIDS aur Hum' (AIDS and us) which described sexual acts explicitly. It also portrayed, what it, perhaps wrongly, believed to be the licentious social sexual practices of the area. For seven months, nothing happened. Then, all hell broke loose. By April 20, 2000, fuelled by both politics and anger, Sahayog's offices in Almora and Jageshwar were attacked. Members of the Uttarakhand movement, who had themselves been victims of outrage, joined the merciless chorus of indictment. Little was done to protect Sahayog. Instead, 11 staff members and some trainees of Sahayog, who had nothing to do with the publication or its aftermath, were arrested — five for 'breach of peace' and six more substantively for 'obscene publications' and 'public mischief'. After this, nothing was easy for Sahayog or its workers. The Sub-Divisional Magistrate increased the bail amounts for the breach-of-peace arrestees to make it more difficult for them to be 'bound over' on their own recognisance. The Almora Bar Association announced that no one should represent the accused; and jeered at the four courageous lawyers who did so. On April 22, a show cause notice was issued to the organisation. An apology and withdrawal of the pamphlet by Sahayog on April 26 was of no avail — even though this was the equivalent of a self-imposed forfeiture order. Faced with this kind of pressure, on May 1, the application for bail was rejected for the alleged offenders. Then, needless public humiliation was added to the brazen denial of civil liberties. On May 4, the four men in judicial custody were handcuffed and paraded with medieval cruelty through the market along with the women.

Instead of being released the remaining six (including five staff and a visitor), who were accused of substantive offences, were remanded to judicial custody. High Court proceedings continue. But there was no respite for the social worker activists. The Union Minister, Mr. Murli Manohar Joshi, who comes from the Kumaon areas, spoke publicly and angrily against Sahayog and asked for strong

measures to be taken against them. A supine administration obliged. On May 9, the National Security Act was invoked on Jasodhara Das Gupta (Secretary), Dr. Abhijit Das (Coordinator), Ms. Subita Shah and Mr. Surendra Dhapola (both Sahayog staff). All of a sudden, respected activists were treated as goondas, porn-pushing criminals and, to top it all, a security risk and threat to the nation — after being handcuffed, humiliated and jailed.

This sequence of events must give us pause. In 1996, the then Chief Justice of India, Mr. Venkatachalaiah, incisively observed that "(t)he quality of a nation's civilisation can be largely measured by the methods it uses in the enforcement of its criminal law". By this test, Mr. Joshi, the State of Uttar Pradesh, the Kumaon officials and the leaders of the Uttarakhand movement fail miserably. They have been uncivilised. Everything they have done is contrary to law on at least six major counts.

First, let us take handcuffing. In 1980, the Supreme Court (speaking through Mr. Justice Krishna Iyer) categorically prohibited handcuffing unless there was a clear and present danger of violence or escape. This was reiterated in several cases including a remarkable case from Assam in 1995. In 1996, the Supreme Court indicted police and judicial officers of Punjab and Madhya Pradesh of having violated its general directions on handcuffing. In the Sahayog case too, the police and the magistracy of Uttar Pradesh have violated civil liberties and committed contempt.

Second, the rule is 'bail not jail'. In the 'breach of peace' cases, it is difficult to comprehend why the Magistrate did not follow the routine procedure of releasing the detenus on their own recognisance. Instead, the surety amount was increased. There was little reason to deny bail to those accused of 'obscenity' and 'public mischief'. The Supreme Court decrees that bail is to be denied only if the

accused might abscond, tamper with evidence or is accused of a serious offence. None of these conditions exist. The activists continue to languish in jail.

Third, the seven-month-old pamphlet on AIDS may have ruffled sensitivities, but the 'breach of peace' was by the protesters who attacked Sahayog's premises, intimidated the staff and made them feel like hunted animals in a lynch-mob atmosphere in which neither the police nor the magistracy acted with fairness.

Fourth, the local Bar seems to have forgotten the long line of cases — including the Bihar Blinding's cases (1979), Khatri (1978) and later cases — which not only guarantee a right to legal services but repose a proactive duty in the state and providers of legal aid to ensure that legal services are available to all — especially to those who are arrested and incarcerated. For a Bar to deny such legal services, and jeer at the lawyers who did provide them, is in the worst traditions of civil liberties lawyering and violative of the Bar's 'conduct of ethics' rules and its constitutional obligations.

Fifth the 'obscenity' charges seem over-written. Everything that is in bad taste and hurts sensitivities is not obscene. From at least 1951, there are several decisions of various High Courts which pay due attention to the need for not just medical education but also sexual education. In 1970, the Allahabad High Court stressed the importance of family planning and sexual education as long as it did not become pornographic.

The dividing line is delicate — even more so in Hindi and its colloquial variations (as is amply demonstrated by so many legal aid pamphlets on rape and sex offences). In the Sahayog case there was no calculated pandering to the prurient interest, no intent to hurt social sensitivities and no commercial exploitation of sex. On the contrary, there was an apol-

ogetic withdrawal of the pamphlet, precisely because its authors contritely agreed they had made a mistake in their use of language and in the description of local sexual relationships.

Sixth — and, this is the crowning insult to civil liberties — there was the preventive detention order under the National Security Act (NSA). The administration seems to have gone overboard to please Mr. Joshi, who thundered on this subject, and the members of the Uttarakhand movement, who have tried to make political capital out of these incidents. The NSA is meant for terrorists, smugglers and goondas. Even against them, it is to be sparingly used. Ironically, according to cases successfully argued by the Union Law Minister, Mr. Ram Jethmalani, preventive detention has a protective due process of recall and review which the U.P. authorities have not chosen to use.

In the Sahayog cases, the detentions must be cancelled. The activists released. The charges withdrawn. The peaceful and beautiful region of Kumaon is in ferment not because of Sahayog's pamphlet, but because of its prime political importance. The impending creation of the State of Uttarakhand, which is to be carved out of Uttar Pradesh, makes it a political prize. Apart from his ancestral links with the area, Mr. Joshi recognises this as a power base.

The leaders of the Uttarakhand movement are no less ambitious for profile and power. There is a considerable flexing of political muscle — no less from the BJP Governments in Lucknow and Delhi. The result is the scapegoating and humiliation of Sahayog which has gracefully withdrawn its publication and apologised. The Uttarakhand movement which were brutally treated by the administration in its struggles seems to have forgotten Brecht's evocative advice that those who fight for kindness must themselves be kind. They should strive in Sahayog's favour, not against them.

Every little blow to civil liberties hurts democracy. Every political misuse of power is despotic. Every activist who is needlessly jailed is a martyr. But, is this the shape of things to come in India?

Politicians with history of hijack

FROM TAPAS CHAKRABORTY
IN PATNA AND ANAND
SOONDAS IN LUCKNOW

May 19: As politicians scampered to distance themselves from the "hijack" of an Alliance Air flight by a group of MPs, it came to light that the incident is not without precedent.

On May 12, some MPs from Bihar forced a flight from Delhi to skip Lucknow and fly to Patna. Indian Airlines officials said power-drunk politicians often play havoc with routes and schedules. "In the past two years, it

has happened three times," said a senior airline official. "We don't know the exact dates when it happened because, after complaints from airline officials were not addressed the first time, we didn't bother much about it."

He blamed the government's "heavy intervention" in the airline's functioning for the sorry state of affairs. "*Neta log bahut shor machate hain, kya karen?* (Politicians create a ruckus, what can we do?)" the official asked.

The Alliance Air plane on a Delhi-Lucknow-Patna-Calcutta hopping flight was to have taken off from the capital around 6 pm,

but passengers say that 27 MPs from Bihar insisted that the aircraft be first flown to Patna. They had their way after civil aviation minister Sharad Yadav ordered the airline to "drop them (MPs) at Patna first and then go wherever you want to". The plane finally took off at 10.15 pm and landed in Patna around 11.30 pm, after which it went to Lucknow.

The MPs sought to blame Delhi airport authorities, saying the flight was delayed without any explanation. Prabhunath Singh, Samata Party MP from Maharajgunje, who, according to passengers, was the leader of the "hijackers", said:

"We had an important meeting in Patna. So we decided to take the flight to Patna first with Sharad Yadav's permission."

But sources in Patna said no meeting was slated for May 12. "Neither the Congress nor the RJD nor the NDA had fixed any meeting," they added. An airport employee, who was on the aircraft, scoffed at Prabhunath's statement. "The MPs were dozing. They were talking of Bihar's neglect, not of any meeting," he said.

Union water resources minister C.P. Thakur, also on the flight, said it had rained in Delhi that evening, but it was not heavy

enough "to postpone the takeoff". "Prabhunath demanded an explanation and wanted to talk to Sharad. When the minister arrived, it was too late for the plane to land in Lucknow as there was heavy traffic there. So he asked the plane to be taken to Patna."

But officials are wondering how Sharad allowed the aircraft to land in Patna at 11.30 pm, well past the security deadline. M.P. Modi, deputy general manager, Patna airport, said air traffic control had told Delhi that if the plane had to be brought to Patna, it had to be done early. "But our suggestion was not heeded," Modi said.

The hapless passengers to Lucknow were served dinner at 12.10 am. But hardly anyone ate. "Have you heard of a midnight dinner," asked a bemused Shailendra Jain.

A bigger ordeal was in store for the five passengers waiting at Lucknow to go to Patna. When the aircraft finally landed at 1 am, they were taken to Calcutta.

Apart from wasting an additional three hours' fuel, the airline had to put up in Delhi the 10 passengers who refused to take the "hijacked" flight and the five others in Calcutta in five-star hotels. The amount spent: about Rs 10,000 on each of the 15 passengers.

Blame it all on the GOVERNMENT

THE 'population problem' is a bogey. It was devised by economists who believed that the poor of the Third World were not capable of generating wealth in the free market economy and needed government planners and bureaucrats to take authoritative resource allocations on their behalf.

Today, in India and in much of the Third World, it is obvious that the common people have entrepreneurial talent in abundance, while their states are predatory. That is: people are an economic resource; governments are the only problem.

If these people are left free to generate wealth for themselves in any manner they can, and if no state intervention is taken on the population front — they are economically and sexually free — all hell will not break loose. Two things will happen: prosperity and urbanisation. These forces will work to stabilise population — as has happened in the entire developed world. Remember, they were all like us a couple of centuries ago.

Those who believe in the population problem,

ON THE CONTRARY

Humans were a resource before the state stepped in

when told these obvious truths, raise another bogey: the natural resource scarcity argument. That is, the Earth is too small for the human race; it has too few resources, and we are too many; we have 'overpopulated' the planet; Allah has not been bountiful. Julian Simon has effectively demolished this myth. The truth is that, before whale oil finished, human beings discovered mineral oil; and before mineral oil finishes, the human mind — the 'ultimate resource' — will discover alternatives, guided by the price mechanism. This is a huge planet, and resources are bountiful.

As far as physical space to live in is concerned, the world is 50 per cent urbanised today and expected to stabilise at 85 per cent urban in 2050, living off just 7 per cent of the Earth's land. In

India, our overcrowing is on account of faulty urbanisation. Our cities suffer from a disease called primacy: the main city bloats while satellite towns do not develop because of inadequate transport linkages.

India could be a land of 400 great towns and cities if the planners' false vision is defeated. Planners do not look upon densely populated urban centres as wealth generators. They finance a spoils system called 'rural development'. Statisticians also promote this false world view of the planners. Is Aastha not worth anything?

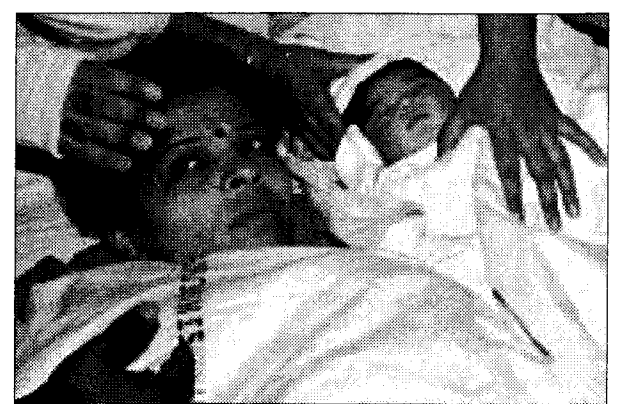
After all, children are our greatest wealth. If you stole my car, I'd shed copious tears; but if you kidnapped my son, I'd die.

Every animal, every bird, every living thing values its children most, above everything. Only we

Indians are different. We celebrate death and we mourn births: like poor Aastha's.

If you were the billionth customer to enter a department store, you'd probably walk off with a grand prize. The Gol cannot celebrate the birth of Aastha. Because the Gol does not serve customers. Whatever we want of the Gol, it under-supplies and extracts monopoly rents: electricity, water, phones, gas, railways... If all these services were privatised, there would be enough for all.

Aastha must be trained in economics. She must read Simon to understand that she is the 'ultimate resource'. She has been born with two hands — and these will produce more than she will consume. She



BABY BILLION: Don't blame Aastha, it's not her fault

has also been born with an innate faculty: the ability to trade.

Because of this ability, she will naturally specialise in the market economy and participate in the division of labour. She will most likely urbanise because the possibility of labour division are maximised in urban areas. She must be trained to see that the stigma attached to her birth is comprehensively removed: she must be trained to see that state intervention in markets makes her poor and unproductive; while it makes our corrupt and ignorant rulers rich and powerful.

She must see her real enemy: the Gol. ■ **Sauvik Chakraverti**

OFFICIAL designate for the billionth Indian, Baby Aastha hit headlines a week before Miss India Universe Lara Dutta did. Only her chances of a charmed existence is roughly about 1:407 million. For those unaccustomed to the mindnumbing stats that proliferate the census rosters, that's the number of women in the country as per the 1991 census. And that is the biting reality for the 927 baby girls born for every 1000 males nationwide — at the rate of 29 babies a minute — a dismal ratio by any imaginable standard.

And notwithstanding the girl child vs boy child debate, this baby boom spells disaster for children in a country where as many as 53 per cent of the 338 million-odd children below 15 years of age are underweight and undernourished.

Does a smiling Aastha represent the smiles of all these children? She will when more than 35 out of every 1000 babies born do not die at birth, 45 out of 1000 babies that do not make it till age 5 survive and more than 100 women per 100,000 do not die at child birth. That, as the population policy spells out, will lead to a decline in birth and fertility rates.

DIVIDED OPINION: There was divided opinion in government circles and health agencies over the timing of the billion benchmark. After all August 1999 to May 2000 is quite a long time on any demographic calendar. The government insisted that by its calculations the billionth baby would be born in May, and the much-ado that followed was probably just an occasion to attract publicity.

Numerically, we must be far from the truth. Quite honestly, India must have crossed the billionth baby mark long ago because we have the highest rate of unregistered births according to official estimates. Every year some 40 million births in India go unregistered. In other words that many children are born without birth certificates and therefore do not appear on official records.

And what can the government say for the future of all the children it happily represented through Aastha? Is it prepared for the increasing number of potential mothers with the reproductive ages of 15-49 years expected to go up to 24 per cent by the end of the year 2000?

With literacy levels still stuck at 60 per cent of the total population — and where 40 per cent among women — how many of these expectant mothers are in good health to produce healthy babies for whom a good education and

healthcare system is in place? Least of all the government is not prepared or equipped to handle the 'educated literate urban' mothers-in-law who are sure that a grandson to carry the family name forward is what it takes, no matter how many babies are produced in the process.

These women are sure that babies are not the govern-

CRY BABY

India's population boom is no resource — it is a drain. Posing enormous health, education and infrastructure problems. So why, pray, are we celebrating the birth of the billionth baby?

ment's concern at all as newspaper reports last week reflected. Quite obviously, the government has failed in its promise to reduce the birth rate. Experts meanwhile are quick to point out that the "key to India's sustained economic growth and poverty reduction is a simultaneous reduction in population growth rate".

HOW ABOUT SOME STATS?: To that end, India's annual population growth rate has fallen below the dreaded



rapidly under pressure from the burgeoning population. Forest cover is down to 19 per cent from over 22 per cent in 1988. Deteriorating water tables and plateauing food crop yields add to the bleak scenario. The average crop land per person has shrunk by half to 0.10 hectare per person in 1999 as against 0.21 hectare in 1960. The average farm-size has shrunk to 1.6 hectare, reducing by more than 40 per cent in the last three decades. The point is, the stats notwithstanding, the socio-economic implications of whenever India crosses the billion

mark will be the same, according to Michael Vlassoff of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). "If the Indian population programme had been more successful, with India's population pegged at say 800 million, think of the thousands of crores saved in terms of investments, infrastructure, schooling and health," says Vlassoff. Looking back on all these years, he says, even Bangladesh, which started later, got much further. What India needs is political commitment and decentralisation without which things won't improve.

DEPLETING RESOURCES: Yet our resources seem to be depleting

must start looking at people as a resource instead of predicting doomsday scenarios," says Anjali Nayyar, communications specialist at the Population Council of India.

two per cent. And fertility rate is down to 3.5 in the 90s from 4.5 in the 1980s. But the BIMARU States (Bihar, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and UP) — which account for 40 per cent of the increase in the Indian population — still have mind-bogglingly high fertility (between 4.2 and 5.2) and

Here are some gulp-and-sutter worthy stats. There are only four countries in the world that have a population exceeding that of Uttar Pradesh's 156.95 million. India adds roughly 18 million people — the 18 million population of Australia — every year.

Esa at a targeted total fertility rate of 2.1 by 2010, when India would have achieved what are called 'replacement fertility levels', the population will stabilise at the end of this century at 1.8-2.1 billion.

Yet all analysts are worried about those stats. "We

child labour or simply drop-out much before they reach the age of 10. This is against 92 per cent in China, 98 per cent in Sri Lanka and 99 per cent in the US.

Clearly the population problem is deep-rooted with varied socioeconomic and political repercussions. A bill to block candidates with more than 3 children from contesting elections was put down by Parliamentarians themselves. There is also strong resistance to the revision of Parliament seats expected in 2001, after the 2001 census, on the grounds that it will encourage BIMARU states to produce more and gain more representation.

India was the first country in the world to launch a family planning programme as early as 1951. Much to the frustration of health planners and policy makers, the reported rise in practice of family planning has not been matched by a significant fall in the estimated birth rate.

As of now, only 50 per cent of the population uses contraception. The next census, scheduled to begin in 2001, will give us more realistic figures as opposed to the conservative estimates and projections made by demographers so far.

TALK RESOURCE: But population, says Nayyar, is also a resource. "It's no doomsday scenario," she says. "We should start looking at it as a resource. Research shows that people don't want large families, but still it's happening. Incentives and disincentives won't help. It is a social reality and we should tackle it from that angle. We need to target the woman in the village and understand her need for helping hands. It is more about adequate food,

drinking water and health facilities. Then her first 2-3 children will survive and she won't produce more." That's definitely in tandem with the guru of Indian socio-economic development, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's so-called 're-a-billion-strong line'. At a projected fertility rate of 2.1 we are expected to stabilise population. "Doctors suggest that spacing of birth more than sterilisation would be useful to

Family, Yes Planning No

Percentage of eligible couples using contraception

Total %	Start-up	Injectable	Condoms	Diaphragm	Coitus Interruptus	Other
1989/90	40	27.40	3.00	1.20	4.00	0.000 0.000 4.40
1990/91	41	27.61	3.20	1.43	4.10	0.000 0.000 4.46
1991/92	42	27.82	3.40	1.66	4.20	0.000 0.000 4.52
1992/93	43	28.03	3.60	1.89	4.30	0.000 0.000 4.58
1993/94	44	28.24	3.80	2.12	4.40	0.100 0.030 4.64
1994/95	45	28.45	4.00	2.35	4.50	0.225 0.063 4.70
1995/96	46	28.66	4.20	2.58	4.60	0.375 0.100 4.76
1996/97	47	28.87	4.40	2.81	4.70	0.575 0.150 4.82
1997/98	48	29.08	4.60	3.04	4.80	0.800 0.200 4.88
1998/99	49	29.29	4.80	3.27	4.90	1.150 0.300 4.94
1999/00	50	29.50	5.00	3.50	5.00	1.325 0.400 5.00

Percentage of users, by method

propagate fertility control among eligible couples. The reluctance to use the pill and oral contraceptives is shown by the 50 per cent figure for couples using contraception methods in the first place.

On an economic note, of the 10-odd international brands that wanted to introduce the pill, only 3 remained owing to poor consumer response.

So it's time the political leadership realised that the population problem is not so much about the birds and the bees as it is about basics, not instincts silly but infrastructure — good roads, schools, agricultural growth, health-care and access to education and contraception. ■ **Radhika Singh**

Projected Population Upto 2016

Population size in thousands	2001	2006	2011	2016
Population size in thousands	1,012,388	1,094,126	1,178,889	1,263,543
Implied annual growth rate (%)	1.58%	1.44%		

Population Size And Growth Rate

Population size in thousands	1901	1951	1971	1991	1996
Population size in thousands	238,396	361,088	548,160	846,303	934,218
Annual growth rate	0.83%	2.09%	2.17%	1.98%	

INDIA IS one sixth of humanity living on a fraction of the world's land mass with even less resources to draw upon. No, it's nothing to smile about. But how have we come to such a pass? Have population awareness and stabilisation programs implemented in this country for the past fifty years or so failed?

"No," says Saroj Pacharia, director south and south east Asia, Population Council. "The fertility rate and infant mortality are declining, life expectancy has gone up... all these are indicators of success." Eminent demographer Prof Ashish Bose also agrees that family welfare programs have not been unsuccessful. "The south Indian states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and AP have been very successful," he says. "It is only the Bihar states which haven't. And they are 40 per cent of the population."

They are also the places where female literacy is the lowest, early marriages are prevalent and social pressures for production of

because of good administration along with political back-up. For example, the mid-day meal program started by the late MGR ensured an increase in school enrolment with a positive effect on population figures in the state. The third example is the Andhra Pradesh model in which, in spite of illiteracy, says Bose, 85 per cent of the reproductive age group gets exposure to the media. "They dress up and go to cinema theatres at least twice a week and watch TV

— mobilisation of educated people and students to participate in local matters in another form of the panchayat system. This model, recommends Bose, can successfully be replicated in Bihar states. Despite the success of some states, however, experts agree that the major failure has been to take primary education to all, and to promote women's education. "Education makes the difference. When women understand, fertility rates and infant mortality

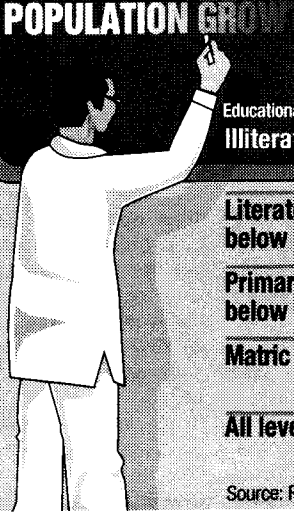
does the woman actually take decisions? No, says Raju. "Because in reality, women have no voice in family dynamics. NGOs now find they have to address the question of 'who makes the decisions.'" Pacharia agrees that men must be brought into the family welfare education program. Not just for vasectomy but for "supportive partnership," says Pacharia. Says Bose: "After the Sanjay factor and body snatching which brought down the Indra Gandhi govern-

ment in 1977, men have walked out of the family planning program." But he too agrees that they should be brought back into it. Adolescents are targeted for reproductive health education. Says Prof D S Muley, consultant to CBSE's Project on Population and Development Education: "There is a lot of reservation about giving sex education at the school level. So far, such education has only been sporadic, not systematic." Unfortunately, families that do prefer to have a larger number of

It's the class thing

Without education, family planning programs won't work

POPULATION GROW



Chalking Out The Trend

Age specific fertility and marital fertility rates by educational level of the woman

Educational level	AGE GROUPS						
	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	35-39	40-44	
Illiterate	Rural	103.9	270.3	254.9	189.4	118.1	61.6
	Urban	112.1	270.5	240.6	160.4	93.3	40.2
Literate but below Primary	Rural	71.1	258.9	236.5	151.8	84.5	41.1
	Urban	74.2	256.7	219.3	128.2	57.4	25.7
Primary but below Matric	Rural	31.1	219.6	224.4	127.9	62.8	30.3
	Urban	31.2	211.2	189.1	80.9	33.7	13.4
Matric & above	Rural	15.4	131.1	195.1	116.3	44.6	31.5
	Urban	16.4	133.3	167.4	87.3	31.1	9.1
All levels	Rural	80.1	257.2	247.8	179.4	110.6	58.5
	Urban	54.2	218.9	207.9	123.9	65.3	29.5

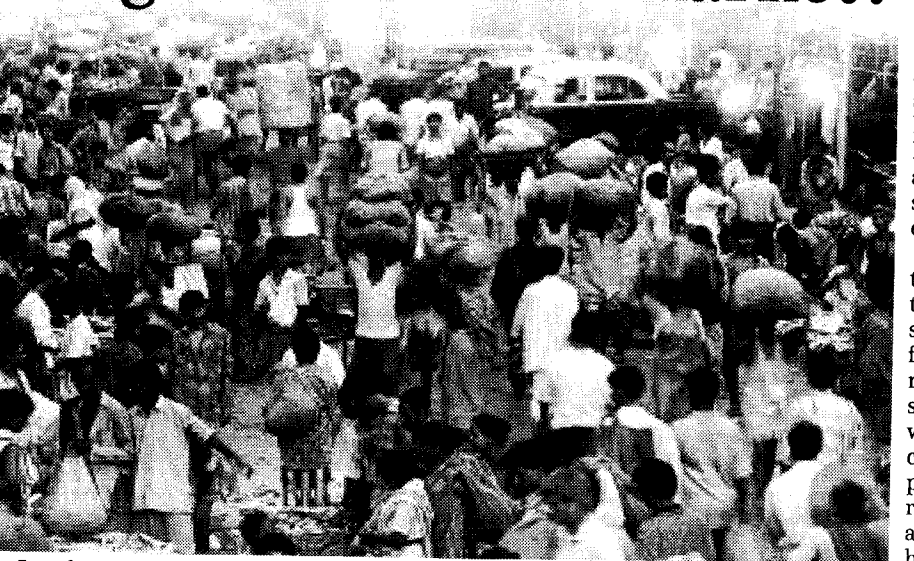
Source: Registrar General India

How big is the Indian market?

JUST HOW big is the Indian market? That's one conundrum that has confounded many marketers ever since India opened its doors to MNCs in the early 90s. Ten years on, many of those rosy stats andied around have fallen by the wayside. As have companies that used their product strategies on em.

Of course in the first couple of years after liberalisation, it seemed the stats were going to be proven after all.

According to a Gallup pole, consumer disposable income rose a nominal 47 per cent between 1991 and 1993. For MNCs used to double digit growth in the developed markets of west Europe and North America, the prospect of a 40 per cent growth that I offered seemed like a good omelette.



Population does not drive growth here, income does

ore long, the Indian elephant being serenaded alongside a Chinese dragon. But India is China. Quite apart from the dramatic differences like literacy (which also impact consumption behaviour), Indian consumption patterns are vastly different from China. Indian

effect. In China, those born under the single child per family policy are now the biggest drivers of consumption. This is a sophisticated consuming population, discerning and educated. India does not have a corresponding consuming class that's growing at that speed though recent research has proved that aspiration levels may be pushing people up the consumption ladder.

The problem with many MNC marketers, says NCAER (National Council of Applied Economic Research) chief economist I Natarajan, is the tendency to equate population growth with

growth in India is income which drives increased "usage even among existing consumers so the market automatically expands," says Natarajan. "Right now, in India, population weight is very low in growth. And then again it all depends on where the population growth is — is it at the lower end of the purchasing spectrum or at the higher end? Besides the stats would differ according to the kind of products too."

But even for fast moving consumer goods, the initial dreams and targets have been hard to live up to. That's why, circumspection, says a Pepsi spokesperson,

areas like the satellite townships like Nirul in Mumbai. Rural markets are still a grey area. Of the 5 lakh villages in India very few are touched by soft drink makers," he says.

The reason for this circumspection is understandable. To foray into the rural market a soft drink maker would need competitive pricing, non-returnable packaging and distribution infrastructure. Till that's built up, the rural market won't generate feasible volumes. Pepsi isn't alone in looking outside metros but not quite at the countryside. Car companies from Maruti to Daewoo and Hyundai are pushing dealerships in SEC B and C town in search of volumes.

Not that this means India is doomed to take the consumption boom in small doses. According to the NCAER report on market demographics '98, the number of households with annual income of over Rs 500,000 (at 1995-96 prices) shot up from 200,000 in 1993-94 to 350,000 in 1995-96, a 33.8 per cent jump. Indeed the

SHARAD:

(Continued from page 1)

Airport Authority of India to take a decision on flight schedule or re-routing of the flights.

Mr Yadav said he had already asked the IA commercial director to hold preliminary inquiries. The minister said it was wrong to say that at Patna airport, the ATC staff abandon the ATC tower after 11 p.m. "They have to remain on duty till the arrival and departure of the scheduled flights even if the flights are delayed", he said.

However, in Patna, a couple of the ATC staff were suspended or faced disciplinary action for dereliction of duty and since then they had been on a agitation, he said.

The Prime Minister's Office when asked about the Samata demand for a government inquiry, said only the minister concerned can decide on this.

The Samata Party Press conference today can turn out to be an embarrassment for it ally, JD-U, the government and the Indian Airlines.

Breaking the silence ruling parties had maintained over the issue the Samata Party demanded a high level inquiry and a public apology from Mr Yadav, provided "he is found responsible for the forced diversion of the flight".

Samata has also termed IA's version of the incident, released yesterday — 10 days after the event — as "untenable".

The party has also asked Mr Prabhunath Singh, a Samata MP, who allegedly led the MP's in their decision to call for Mr Yadav's intervention, to explain his conduct. The order has come from the acting party president, Mrs Jaya Jaitley.

Sharad denies role in diverting flight

MOHAN SAHAY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 23. — While refusing to comment on the Samata Party's demand to tender a public apology for the diversion of the Alliance Air Flight on 12 May, the Minister for Civil Aviation, Mr Sharad Yadav, today denied having played any role in re-routing the scheduled flight CD-7411.

Speaking to **The Statesman**, Mr Yadav, however, admitted to having boarded the aircraft at the tarmac after he was informed by the crew that Patna-bound passengers were agitated over the delay in the departure of the flight.

"You can understand the position. I was also worried about the air hostesses and other members of the crew inside. I went there for a few minutes only to pacify the passengers who were demanding refreshments, cold drinks etc and were asking the pilot to take off in bad weather conditions at Palam", the minister added.

When reminded that a Samata MP from Bihar is on record stating that he contacted the minister over his cell phone, Mr Yadav said: "Yes, he did speak to me, so did four or five other MPs who were stranded at the airport since many flights were delayed due to bad weather".

"How can I direct the pilot to change route or force him to fly", he asked, adding, "It is the joint responsibility of the flight captain, the ground engineers, the Air Traffic Control and the duty officer of the

■ See SHARAD: page 8

THE STATESMAN

2 MAY 23 1991

CBI expresses concern over Karnataka Govt. stand

By Mukund Padmanabhan

CHENNAI, MAY 23. The CBI is extremely unhappy over the Karnataka Government's refusal to grant general consent for investigating cases in the State. Karnataka is the only major State which has refused to grant such consent.

The lack of general consent means the CBI cannot register any case (that is, file an FIR) without obtaining the State Government's specific consent on a case-to-case basis. This has hampered the agency's work in Karnataka, where it has to seek specific consent even when investigating a case relating to a Central Government employee. Seeking such case-wise consent invariably robs the agency of surprise and speed, elements which are indispensable in "trap cases", where the culprit is caught out by a set-up.

The CBI has been repeatedly requesting the Karnataka Government to change its stance. Last year, the CBI Director, Mr. R. K. Raghavan, himself wrote to the Chief Secretary, Mr. B. K. Bhattacharya, stating that the Karnataka Government's position had "a deleterious effect on the anti-corruption campaign of the CBI and is also likely to embolden delinquent public servants." Obtaining consent on a case-wise basis, he noted, "is not feasible and practicable".

On April 13 last, the Karnataka Home Department formally communicated to the CBI that it had examined the request for what it referred to as "blanket permission" and stated it was "not in favour of granting such a permission to the CBI".

Karnataka had withdrawn general consent via a notification on December 15, 1998 issued by the State Home Department which "rescinded with immediate effect" an earlier notification granting such consent on November 11, 1992. The withdrawal, which was made during the reign of the J. H. Patel Government, was accompanied by unconfirmed

whispers that it was done to forestall a possible CBI investigation against a senior member of the ruling Janata Dal.

It was expected that this position would be reversed after the Congress Government came to power but it has been surprisingly unwilling to relent despite the fact that general consent is granted routinely by State Governments to the CBI.

Although 22 case-wise consents have been granted by Karnataka since the 1998 notification, the CBI feels restricted by the position adopted by the Government. Apart from "trap cases", an extremely important method in the operation of the CBI, all other investigations where secrecy is important are affected (for example, a case where it is imperative to register a case and conduct a search almost simultaneously).

General consent is sought and received under Section 6 of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act 1946, the statute under which the CBI functions. The pattern of granting general consent may vary slightly from State to State. In Tamil Nadu, the CBI need not seek prior permission of the State Government before registering a case "involving either Central Government servants or officers belonging to PSUs."

The CBI had requested the Karnataka Government for general consent on the lines of that granted by Andhra Pradesh. Here, the CBI is empowered to proceed without case-wise sanction against even State Government employees (below a certain rank) if suspected of committing offences "along with or in conjunction with private persons or Central Government employees."

Given the readiness with which other States have granted general consent, the reluctance of a major State such as Karnataka is puzzling. The only other State to have adopted a similar position of intransigence is Manipur.

UNWORTHY & CONTEMPTIBLE!

Sharad Yadav's defence of official hijacking

A DESPERATE man will clutch at straws and Sharad Yadav is a very desperate man indeed. On the mat for his outrageous intervention on behalf of his precious friends, the Bihar MPs, in the official hijack of an Alliance Air flight scheduled to fly Delhi-Lucknow-Patna, he seems to suggest that it did not happen at all and if it did, he had nothing to do with it. He admits that one of the MPs spoke to him on his cell phone. Wishing to appear credible he volunteers the fact that several other MPs also spoke to him. This gets him nowhere. He did go to the airport in response to the summons. He found the MPs in an agitated mood but only for soft drinks and refreshments! On his instructions, which he had no business to give, the flight takes off for Patna whereas it is scheduled to go to Lucknow but denies that he had anything to do with this change of plans, treating us to a dissertation of how flights are organised. It is the responsibility of the captain, ground engineers and ATC, intones the minister, not his responsibility. That, Mr Yadav is the point! No one suggests ministers be given the responsibility, no one is trying to make sure accidents happen. None of this helps him to disown responsibility for his conduct. The charge against you, minister, is that you interfered in outrageous abuse of power you did not have so we are really back to square one again: Do not ask how you could do such a thing. It is for you to explain. Also consider the minister's tactics. Ten days after the event, he gets the airline authorities to deny that it ever happened, to prepare the ground for his own denial of responsibility for misconduct.

And what pray is the minister's response? He says he has asked the commercial director of Indian Airlines to make a preliminary inquiry! When will the real inquiry start? After the large number of witnesses are spoken to and fixed to echo the minister's line that it was all bad weather and a request for soft drinks and refreshments. If that was the only request, is it the minister's case that a ministerial order is necessary? Even a not so polite request to cabin crew would have been accepted. Or does the minister wish to change the rules to provide that even normal service on board must, in future, be withheld until the minister has given his permission. Sharad Yadav should be reminded that his most unlikely story has no takers except perhaps by the image in his bathroom when he stands before a mirror.

Only one question survives. Now that the minister has admitted that he has virtually nothing to say in his defence — that is the import of his valiant but farcical attempt — what is he proposing to do? Our guess would be — nothing. The preliminary inquiry ordered points that way. The relevant question therefore is will the Prime Minister take some action; at the very least to demote to him to a ministry where he can do no damage, it will be difficult to find such a ministry — or will Atal Behari Vajpayee succumb to the line of least resistance. Wait for public memory to fade and let Sharad Yadav go on spiking all plans to disinvest in Air-India and Indian Airlines so that there is no let or hindrance in such things happening again.

THE STATESMAN

26 MAY 2000

Cabinet committee clears 60% disinvestment in Air-India

Foreign partner to get 26%, financial institutions another 20%

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, May 26

THE CABINET committee on disinvestment today decided to disinvest 60 per cent of Air-India's equity, bringing down the government's stake in the flag carrier to 40 per cent.

A strategic partner (which could be a foreign airline) will hold 26 per cent and an Indian partner will hold 14 per cent of the disinvested equity.

Civil aviation secretary Ravindra Gupta told *The Hindustan Times* that the strategic partner will run the airline.

Another 20 per cent of the equity is to be off-loaded to financial institutions, public and employees. The employees will, however, not hold more than 10 per cent of the equity.

The Cabinet committee also decided to appoint a global advisor to the government on the modalities of the Air-India sell-off.

Sources said that the Cabinet decision was almost entirely based



Disinvestment Minister Arun Jaitley (left) and Civil Aviation Minister Sharad Yadav



on the proposal by disinvestment minister, Arun Jaitley.

Significantly, the Ministry of Civil Aviation in its note to the Cabinet had suggested up to 51 per cent of the equity be disinvested. The Ministry agreed to capping foreign equity at 26 per cent after much difficulty. Sources say that Mr Jaitley had to enlist all his persuasive power to get Civil Aviation Minister Sharad Yadav to agree hand over management of the airline to a foreign strategic partner.

Sources said Mr Yadav had stuck to a 25 per cent cap on foreign equity, which would have denied the strategic partner management control. Apparently, Mr Jaitley hardsold the 26 per cent proposal to Mr Yadav by saying, among things, that it would get Air-India a far better price.

Today's decision will pave the way for foreign airlines such as Singapore Airlines which has long shown interest in picking up equity in the loss-making Air India and

turn it around.

Singapore Airlines is widely perceived as the frontrunner for Air India's disinvestment cake. It is currently on a buying spree, having picked up 50 per cent of Branson's Virgin Airlines and a significant part of Air New Zealand. It also attempted, without success, to buy part of Taiwan's China Airlines.

Airlines such as Jet and Sahara are expected to stake a claim for a slice of the 14 per cent equity that is to be disinvested to an Indian company.

The Cabinet also decided to disinvest 74 per cent equity of the Chennai-based Hindustan Teleprinters Ltd instead of the 50 per cent decided upon earlier.

Though more than a dozen public sector companies were up for similar disinvestments, the Cabinet could only decide on Air India and HTL.

It remains to be seen whether, following today's decision, the Finance Ministry will accede to Air India's demand for a Rs 750 crore revival package.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 MAY 2000

'In-laws cannot be held guilty in all dowry cases'

NEW DELHI, MAY 1. The Supreme Court has held that for the fault of the husband, the in-laws or other relatives cannot, in all cases, be held to be involved in dowry death.

"In cases where such accusations are made, the overt acts attributed to persons other than the husband are required to be proved beyond reasonable doubt. By mere conjecture and implications such relations cannot be held guilty of the offence relating to dowry deaths," the court observed.

The observations were made last week by a three-judge bench, comprising Mr. Justice G.H. Patanaik, Mr. Justice R.P. Sethi and Mr. Justice Shivraj V. Patil, while partly allowing an appeal against a verdict of the Punjab and Haryana High Court in a dowry death case.

Subita Kumari, married on July 9, 1985 was found dead in mysterious circumstances on October

23, 1988 at the residence of her in-laws at Batala in Punjab.

An additional sessions judge, Gurdaspur, vide his judgment dated August 28, 1990 convicted Rakesh Kumar, husband of the deceased, Ram Piary, mother-in-law, Ramesh Kumar, brother-in-law, and Bharati, sister-in-law, under Section 304 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and sentenced them to 10 years rigorous imprisonment.

They were also convicted for offences under Sections 306 and 498 A of the IPC and sentenced separately. The HC by the impugned judgment acquitted all the accused of all charges.

The SC, in the light of the evidence in the case, found substance in the submission of the defence counsel that the mother-in-law, brother-in-law and sister-in-law of the deceased were roped in the case only on the ground of being close relations of her husband.— UNI

THE HINDU

MAY 2 1990

Much more lethal terrorism awaits India

NEWSWATCH



M.K. NARAYANAN

The hijacking on December 24, of the Indian airlines flight 814 operating on the Kathmandu-Delhi sector, by six armed militants belonging to the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, an ordeal which has now mercifully ended with hostages being released at Kandahar in exchange for three militants, adds yet another chapter to the saga of militancy and terrorism in J&K which has now been going on for a decade. The struggle is currently orchestrated by radical Islamic elements, who have constituted a kind of "Islamist Internationale" and makes extensive use of mercenaries from as many as 14 Islamic countries. The guiding spirit is the Pakistan-based Markaz Dawa-ul-Irshad, with strategy and tactics being dictated by Pakistan's Inter Services Intelligence Directorate.

The principal demand of the hijackers had all along been the release of Maulana Masood Azhar, a leading ideologue of the Harkat-ul-Ansar (now renamed as Harkat-ul-Mujahideen) who had been in an Indian jail since February 1994. This has now been conceded. Three attempts had been previously made to secure his release which were not successful. The July 1995 kidnapping of six foreign tourists by the Al Faran was one such attempt in which the militants offered to set free the tourists in exchange for Maulana Masood Azhar and a dozen other militants.

The hijacking vividly highlights the extent of India's vulnerability in regard to Kashmir. Despite the release of the hostages in exchange for the release of Maulana Azhar and two other militants, it will unfortunately have the effect of severely denting the image of the present BJP-led National Democratic Alliance government and reinforce the soft state image of this country.

It will also strengthen the presumption which is widely held — that in the critical hours immediately following the hijacking, the government failed to act decisively and did not know what to do. The media, specially the electronic media, has a great deal to

answer for in fuelling this impression, yet it must be admitted that in the initial period the response from the mandarins in Delhi was inadequate. India is not unused to the use of terror tactics, which is extolled by the theologians of radical Islam, but inexplicably, the officialdom apparently failed to get its act together. It was this, more than the hijacking *per se*, that seemed to reinforce the nation's sense of vulnerability. Otherwise, inured as India is to the pandemic of violence, there should not have been this

groundswell of hurt and agony, much of it directed at the Government.

Political terrorism is a complex phenomenon. India's internal and external security environment has increasingly become captive to terrorist threats of every variety, much of it is linked in some way to radical Islam. For India, terror has been a frontline issue for several years. Organisations like the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen that regularly employ terrorism as a strategic weapon have been in the cross wires of intelligence

It will also strengthen the presumption — widely held — that in the critical hours immediately following the hijacking, the government failed to act decisively and did not know what to do. The media, specially the electronic media, has a great deal to answer for in fuelling this impression, yet it must be admitted that in the initial period the response from the mandarins in Delhi was inadequate. India is not unused to the use of terror tactics, which is extolled by the theologians of radical Islam, but the Indian officialdom failed to get its act together

agencies who possess detailed information about the structure, the leadership, the roles assigned to members of such organisations, the functional differentiation that exists

among the members, the processes they follow, and their collective goals. Despite this, the inability demonstrated to effectively deal with a crisis of this kind is a blow to the national psyche.

Those in charge of security are fully aware that the image of a government is dependant on many intangible factors. Also, that terrorism exploits and feeds on the vulnerability of nations and societies that succumb to such pressures. Nothing should be done or seem to be done that would encourage this. A vital aspect would be proper information management but unfortunately this was not properly handled. The manner of the release of the militants and the attendant publicity will adversely affect the credibility of the government.

A great deal of criticism has already been directed at the apex level Crisis Management Group headed by the cabinet secretary for lack of proper directions when the aircraft had an enforced halt at Amritsar. This is likely to intensify in the coming days and will be seen as a missed opportunity with grave consequences for the nation. It is difficult for outsiders to judge what the CMG should have, or should not have done in those crucial hours immediately after the hijacking. The CMG can perhaps be faulted for lack of anticipatory planning, but hardly for allowing the hijacked plane to take off from Raja Sansi airport. For the record, it would appear that the CMG did not "permit" the hijacked plane to take off; rather the hijackers compelled the captain to do so. At this stage of the hijacking, when the identity of the hijackers was not known, knowledge of the weapons in their possession was unclear, and their demands yet to be made, resorting to drastic steps to keep the plane on ground may well have invited a violent response from the hijackers leading to the death of many hostages. Only those who have sat through a crisis of this kind as members of the CMG, are familiar with the kind of "hot-house" that prevail

inside the meeting chamber debating the various courses of action to ensure the least number of casualties, can possibly understand the trauma of the CMG on December 24. It is easy for publicity-hungry "experts" to mouth inane platitudes, never having had to make fateful decisions.

Perhaps, more than the lack of proper direction by the CMG, it is the absence of holistic thinking that ails India's security apparatus and lies at the root of our problems. Since Kargil, political leaders, senior members of the Armed forces and strategic analysts have consistently harped on the magnitude of the threat India faces. Addressing the combined commanders' conference at the end of November, the Prime Minister himself cautioned the defence forces about the possibility of an escalation in the "proxy war" in Jammu & Kashmir. The three service chiefs at the same conference shared a similar perception of future threats. For its part, the newly established military regime in Pakistan had announced the adoption of a five-point policy on Kashmir which envisages the stepping up of support to Kashmiri militants. General Musharraf himself made secret of his intention to intensify the campaign in Kashmir and bring about a radical change in the status quo. Pro-Pakistan and pan-Islamist outfits like the Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, the Lashkar-e-Taibiyaba, the Al-Badr and the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen themselves threatened to launch many more operations of the Kargil type.

Yet, there must have been something missing while catering to this eventuality. One lesson, that terrorism appears in many guises and in unlikely locations, seems to have been overlooked. The proliferation of groups and sophistication of training should have led the security bureaucracy to consider the possibility that the war would be fought as much in the air as on land. In place of routine alerts, the more vulnerable and sensitive segments such as

the airline industry, should have been viewed as potentially prime targets of terrorists. Security procedures should have been fully refurbished, vigil tightened and the infrastructure for security improved. This is an era in which Islamist fundamentalism has replaced Sunni Arab nationalism as the new focus, and it was inevitable that Kashmir would emerge as the top-drawer target for Islamist radicals.

The role of the media during the hostage crisis could also have been more positive. In the

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name of openness and transparency, the media seemed at times to favour sensationalism. Admittedly, terrorists, governments and the media see the function, roles and responsibili-

ties of the media when covering terrorist-related events from very different and competing perspectives. Nevertheless, where the media does not act with restraint, misplaced perspectives hamper anti-terrorist operations and result in tactical and strategic gains for the terrorists. Governments need more understanding from the public as well as cooperation and restraint while trying to limit terrorist activity. The media should be their accomplice in this rather than unwittingly get manipulated into denigrating the government and promoting the cause of terrorism or its methods. Voluntary media coverage guidelines are hence important in instances such as the present one. Coverage is important, but it should be ensured that terrorists or their cause do not gain as a result. The electronic media needs to consider whether in place of the procession of arm-chair analysts — who possess no experience whatsoever of dealing with crisis situations of this kind — they should put in place mechanisms in cooperation with the government by which proper information is made available to accommodate the citizen and the media's need for proper and honest coverage. This would prevent wrong impressions being conveyed, unnecessarily incensing the public.

World opinion to the hijacking appears to have been relatively insensitive and this is mystifying. The US, which is committed to fight the scourge of terrorism, made some appropriate noises, but neither the US President, his secretary of state, nor even Strobe Talbott have condemned the hijacking in categorical terms. The UN secretary general, Kofi Annan, who has been a knight in shining armour insisting on intervention in the affairs of nations for humanitarian reasons, also remained silent even though the UN general assembly only very recently condemned terrorism as criminal and unjustified and in the strongest terms. The British Prime Minister has similarly been tongue-tied, though the UK has just rushed through with the second reading of its Anti-Terrorist Bill following the Omagh massacre, which contains several draconian measures to deal with terrorism.

The West should not forget that quite a few Islamist religious networks exist in the UK, which recruit, fund and train "Islamist warriors" for doing battle in J&K. The West, further, cannot afford to close its eyes to the role of radical Islamist organisations in spreading terrorism, or wish away the danger posed by organisations such as the "Islamist International" — an organisation of Sunni *jihadist* groups. The wanton manipulation of Muslim angst by Islamist fundamentalists, with Pakistan acting as the pointsman, has grave implications for the West as well. They need not think that Pakistan's obsession with India insulates them and the rest of the world from radical Islamist pressures. The West would do well to remember that the new breed of terrorists employ weapons which are more lethal, they have become more capable, and are now wide-ranging in their choice of targets.

M.K. NARAYANAN is a former chief of the Intelligence Bureau

THE ASIAN AGE

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