

# Manipur cloud over Marandi ministry

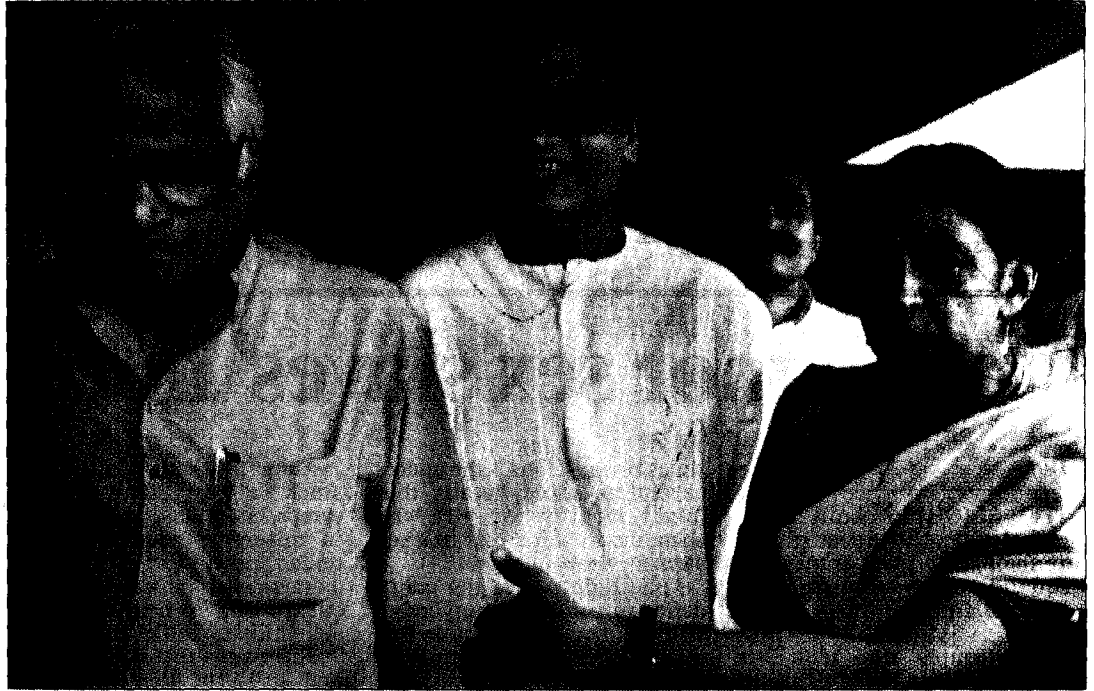
Gautam Mazumdar  
Ranchi, May 21

THE SIX-MONTH-old Babulal Marandi Government seems to be edgy over the development in Manipur where the Radha Binod Koiyam ministry lost the trust vote today. Though there was no immediate threat to the Marandi ministry, misgivings about a possible Samata Party retaliation could not be ruled out.

If the Samata Party manages to pull out J P Gaulsten, its nominated member, it will ring the death knell of the Marandi Government. In the event of the Samata snapping ties with the NDA, the coalition strength will come down to 41 including the nominated member and the Speaker, Inder Singh Namdhari of JD(U). The Marandi Government in that case will teeter on the brink of disaster.

Currently the Government has the support of 45 MLAs. Besides, 33 BJP MLAs, there are three MLAs from JD(U), and four Independents (two from Jharkhand Vananchal Congress and two belonging to AJSU supported UGDP-United Govan Democratic Party). The Government also enjoys the support of the nominated member J P Gaulsten.

The Samata Party ministers in Jharkhand are apprehensive of losing ministerial berths if the party decides to pull out of the Vajpayee Government snapping ties with the NDA. There



Samata Party leaders George Fernandes, Digvijay Singh and Jaya Jaitly on their way to a working committee meeting in New Delhi on Monday.

are five Samata MLAs in the 82-member House, all of which were made ministers in the Marandi Government to keep the NDA coalition going in Jharkhand.

The speculation over any dramatic development has kept the Samata Ministers on the tenter-

hooks. Ram Chandra Keshri, Minister of Water Resources and Parliamentary Affairs, has left for Delhi. Party leaders said Ramesh Singh Munda, Minister of Supplies and Prohibition, too, dashed off to the capital.

Jaleshwar Mahto, the PHED Minister, too, is jittery over the

developments. Mahto had contested from Baghmara three times in succession on JMM ticket and was trounced every time. Bachcha Singh, the Urban Development Minister from Jharia, however, seems to be unruffled. He said if the party decides so, he would not hesitate to quit.

AFP PHOTO

HI-8 2/12 ✓

## Split in Chhatisgarh <sup>of ST Chhatisgarh</sup>

THE SPLIT in the BJP legislature party brings the 'small-state syndrome' to Chhatisgarh barely a year after the state's formation. It is safe to assume that no point of principle had driven away the 12 BJP MLAs from the parent party. This appears to be an open and shut case of defection. Of course, technically speaking, the departing legislators have set up a new party. But indications are that they may soon join the ruling Congress. If local factors prevent them from doing so right away, the former BJP MLAs — who now pass under the banner of Chhatisgarh Vikas Party — may be expected to aid the Congress on the floor of the state assembly. Needless to say, return favours will be forthcoming through the established mechanism of governmental patronage.

Small states are more vulnerable to such games being played because the defection of a relatively small number of MLAs can torpedo a party's position. Simply put, the buying and selling of legislators is made a lot easier. In the case of Chhatisgarh, the Congress led by Ajit Jogi enjoyed a fairly comfortable

majority and did not have to resort to engineering a split in the main opposition party for reasons of survival. But more being merrier, it chiefly serves to further weaken its principal rival.

For some years in the composite state of Madhya Pradesh, the BJP had grown in strength in the Raipur region. But lately, all has not been well with the Chhatisgarh BJP. Indeed, shortly after the state was formed, it was a BJP MLA who had resigned his seat to allow Mr Jogi to enter the state assembly. The local BJP, thus, has a tradition of coming to the rescue of the Congress — especially if its leader happens to be Mr Jogi. The BJP split is also likely to lend the Jogi faction within the Congress an edge over its rivals. It is noteworthy that 10 of the 12 breakaway MLAs belong to the SC, ST and OBC communities. That should give the Jogi group a further advantage. Being no model of political rectitude, as the UP experience so dramatically shows, the BJP is hardly in a position to cry foul over what has happened. But there can be no question that a pernicious precedent has been set. ✓

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 DEC 2001

# Siege in Laloo's Camelot

1675

**T**hey invaded the city like an army of phantoms and marched down the thoroughfare in a silent show of defiance. Hordes of them, swathed in dark robes of terror, wielded their Kalashnikovs — chilling the asphalt with their footprints of death. The helpless “defenders” of law stood by, watching the spectacle unfold in all its “macabre glory”.

The hypothesis generated by the chain of events is the worst nightmare of the Bihar chief minister, Rabri Devi. The sequence haunts her like a doomsayer's tale — it is an uneasy peek into her “Laloo-less” future.

Laloo Prasad Yadav may have been granted a temporary reprieve but all's not well at 1, Anne Marg. There is a sense of disquiet as Rabri's *sahab* braces for a summer of discontent while Patna heaves with nuances of the “unknown”. The fodder battle is expected to peak when court resumes next month after the summer break. A jail term for the “showman” cannot be ruled out.

Barely a stone's throw from the chief minister's posh bungalow, a cramped room in an adjacent neighbourhood recently bustled with activity — of a slightly different kind. Gun-toting militia cordoned off a single-storeyed government quarter on the periphery of a dense green scrub. Entry was restricted and visitors frisked. The high-security hideout was the venue of a media conference hosted by the chief of the Ranbir Sena, Brahmeshwar Singh, last week.

This is the first time Singh has surfaced in public since he went underground six years ago after the bloody mayhem in Kophira village in Bhojpur district. The Patna police, reportedly hot on Singh's trail, does not even have a file picture of Bihar's “most wanted”.

Official circles in Patna dubbed the event “epochal” because of the Brahmin ganglord's temerity in holding court in the heart of Laloo's fiefdom, throwing caution to the winds. It was a blow to the police and an open challenge to the ruling Rashtriya Janata Dal, whose “covert” sympathy for the left — and all its variants — is an open secret.

For the past six years, Singh has been an enigma. Some call him the “thakur with the golden gun”, the guardian angel of the upper caste Bihari landlords, while others brand him a brigand, a *khooni* (murderer). Bloodthirsty and ruthless, he is every Dalit peasant's nightmare and the Achilles heel of the Bihar police.

**A**s the state administration napped, Singh waxed eloquent about his future plans in the full glare of the media spotlight. The don, who carries a reward of five lakh rupees on his head for his “direct involvement” in 12 carnages, justified his crimes, imbuing them with moralistic overtones: “Arms and scriptures have an age-old affinity. Vishwamitra could not have completed his *yajna* without Lord Rama's protection.” The wiry, bespectacled “fifty-plus” Brahmin *mukhya*, clad in a crumpled *kurta-pyjama*, quoted extensively from the *Bhagwad Gita* and other holy books. He likened the Sena's struggle against the Naxalites to Arjun's “*mahayudh* (holy war)” against the Kauravas.

The Sena, he claimed, had retrieved 35,000 acres of farmland from the Naxalites in central Bihar and pledged to rid

The surfacing of the Ranbir Sena chief in Patna is a frightening portent for Rabri Devi, who has enough reason for worry, writes **Madhushree C. Bhowmik**



A field of guns

the state of the “red vermin”. “We have stockpiled arms over the past six years and have skilled manpower,” Singh flaunted. The Sena, comprising mostly Bhumihar landlords, is controlled by ex-servicemen from central Bihar who often lend their expertise in lieu of security for their land.

Denying reports of political patronage, Singh hit out at the Rabri Devi government, describing it as an “unholy amalgam of thugs and killers”. “We have an equally inept government at the Centre,” he adds in the same breath to allay “notions” about Sena's upper-caste political support base.

As reporters scrambled for their notepads and television cameras for their “coveted footage” — no profile, only side faces and back of the head — Singh wove his manic charm across two states.

He swung with ease from the flaming fields of central Bihar to the pristine slopes of Jharkhand, where a fledgling

Sena unit is gearing up to take on the Naxalites in the forests of Gumla and Lohardaga. “Most of them have fled Bihar after bifurcation and we intend to flush them out,” declared Singh.

The task may not be tough keeping in mind that a particular “constituent” of the National Democratic Alliance government in Jharkhand has been overt in its support to the Sena. The Aamir Das commission, which is probing the outfit's political links, has come out with damning evidence.

Singh also plans an “ideological rehaul” — almost on the lines of the Shiv Sena in Maharashtra. “No sex, no sleaze, no corruption,” is the new Ranbir Sena motto. Any deviation would entail swift “retribution” in the form of death, warns the militia chief.

The hour-long briefing was a public affair. Curious faces thronged the windows and people gathered on rooftops to get a glimpse of the elusive hero. Singh was a

**‘ Brahmeshwar Singh hit out at the Rabri Devi government, describing it as an “unholy amalgam of thugs and killers”. He swung with equal ease from the fields of central Bihar to the slopes of Jharkhand, where a fledgling Sena unit is gearing up to take on the Naxalites ’**

celebrity in the Yadav capital. Elected the mukhya of Kophira at the age of 26, Singh went underground in 1995 following a clash with the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation at Belaur in Bhojpur.

The CPI(M-L) Liberation, which was redistributing surplus Bhumihar land in adjoining Saher and Sandesh villages in Bhojpur, was repulsed by Singh and his select group of fighters when it tried to wrest their land and distribute it among the Dalits in a *jan adalat*. Singh, a university graduate, was perhaps the most qualified man to take up the challenge.

**H**is ratings soared and he was placed next to the legendary Ranbir Baba, alias Captain Ranbir Chowdhury, an ex-armyman of Belaur who had fought the Rajputs in 1971. The Ranbir Sena, named after the “local legend” was formed in 1995 after the Bhumihars realized that their land required protection.

Singh, who was picked up twice by the Patna and Dhanbad police, had to be released following political intervention. Since then, the outfit has been involved in 14 carnages, including those in Laxmanpur Bathe, Bathani Tola, Sankarbigaha and Narayanpur. To further political ends, the Sena also floated an overground front — the Rashtriya Kisan Sabha — which fielded candidates in the recent *panchayat* polls.

Singh's entry into the capital was well-timed, designed to send ominous signals to the vulnerable Rabri Devi government. Though her “high-profile” husband maintains that the crisis has blown over, indications do not suggest that. The stay on Laloo's arrest warrant is likely to be challenged next month.

Patna is seething with intrigue. The dissident RJD leader, Ranjan Yadav, flew in from New Delhi with all the six members of parliament in tow just a couple of days after Singh's publicity blitz. His ranks seem to have swelled considerably since his departure last month. The “welfare man”, as he is being referred to these days, oozed confidence. The whistle-stop visit of the Samata Party chief, George Fernandes, also added to the “nuances”, with which the city resonates. The party, which according to the grapevine, is a Sena well-wisher, sharpened its knives at a press conference yesterday.

Where does all this place Rabri Devi, already beleaguered by an eroding support base among the minorities and certain backward caste groups?

In Laloo Yadav's absence, she will have to fall back on a rickety triumvirate — Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, a Rajput, Shivanand Tiwary, an articulate and wily Brahmin and Ramchandra Purve, a self-effacing backward caste man.

**T**iwary, a former Samata Party defector who had spilled the fodder beans, will waste no time in switching sides despite all his show of loyalty if Rabri totters. The same goes for Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, while Purve may buckle under extreme pressure. An aloof Mohammed Shahabuddin, the maverick MP from Siwan, adds to the Yadav couple's woes. Laloo Yadav is desperately short of troubleshooters now that his Camelot is under siege. There is no Launcelot in shining armour to “protect his fair princess”.

# Laloo gets bail for another three months

Patna, May 16

PATNA HIGH Court on Wednesday extended by another three months the period of provisional bail granted to Laloo Prasad Yadav in a disproportionate assets case.

So, the Rashtriya Janata Dal President remains on bail till August 18 in the case in which he is accused of amassing assets worth over Rs 46 lakh that cannot be accounted for by his known sources of income.

The case will be heard again on August 14.

Chief Minister Rabri Devi, who is a co-accused in the case, has already been granted regular bail.

Laloo has ruled out taking over the reins in Bihar again. He says he has a "bigger role" to play in throwing out the Vajpayee Government.

"I am not unemployed... I have a bigger role to play to dislodge the communal and fascist forces at the Centre," he said.

He accused the Centre of trying to implicate political opponents in corruption cases. "I have been targeted by the NDA government because I protested against their devastating policies of liberalisation and communalism."

The DMK leader, M Karunanidhi, has reportedly remarked that after Jayalalitha's taking oath as Chief Minister, the decks have been cleared for Laloo to become the Bihar CEO



again.

Laloo said that there was no question of replacing Rabri Devi since she enjoyed the people's mandate.

On Jayalalitha's conviction, he said: "What is conviction? Jayalalitha scored a landslide victory with the people's support ... She became CM."

"I had asked Jayalalitha to help unite the secular forces in the country to counter the Sangh parivar. And she has succeeded in defeating the communal and fascist forces," he added.

PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 MAY 2001

# Chattisgarh calls off talks to resolve Balco impasse

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 16 APRIL

THE CHATTISGARH government, on Monday, called off the talks, involving the state, Centre and unions, to resolve the Balco standoff.

Talks on resumption on work at Balco had started only on Sunday. The unions had struck work to protest the sell-off of 51 per cent stake in Balco by the Centre to Sterlite. The Chattisgarh government was represented by industry minister Mahendra Karma.

Union mines minister Sunderlal Patwa, who had accepted the role of a mediator, blamed the rigid stand of the unions and the state government for the failure of talks. "My informal role is over. You can say that the talks have failed," Mr Patwa said.

Pointing an accusing finger at the chief minister, he said: "The talks have failed because of non-co-operation by Mr Jogi. Today he went back on his word. I am pained by it."

Mr Patwa said Mr Jogi suddenly called him up on Monday afternoon, expressing helplessness



Jogi: Facing the music

in supporting the new initiative, since a government sponsored resolution against the Balco deal had already been passed in the state Assembly.

Mr Patwa made it clear that he had accepted the role of a mediator at the request of Mr Jogi and the unions. Mr Patwa said both the unions and the state had also promised not to challenge the disinvestment process. "Disinvestment is an irreversible process. I was only keen to find a

solution to safeguard labour interest," he said. He indicated that once it became apparent that the two parties (the state and unions) were unwilling to budge from the demand of rolling back the disinvestment deal, it was not possible for the talks to continue.

Mr Patwa said unions stuck to their demand for a change in the equity pattern of Balco. The most lenient proposal was to whittle down private equity by two per cent and bring it down to 49 per cent. The other proposal pegged private participation at 40 per cent while giving 10 per cent to workers and the remaining to the central or state government. A third proposal was to make Balco a joint venture between the Centre and the state.

Emerging from the meeting, Baleshwar Jha, convenor of the Balco Bachav Samyukta Abhiyan Samiti (a co-ordination committee of seven unions) said they were returning back to Korba to chalk out a future plan of action. "Unions will be willing to resume negotiations with the Centre only if they are willing to accede to our demands," he said.

The Economic Times

17 APR 1981

# MCC massacres volunteer force

FROM RUDRA BISWAS

**Ranchi, April 14:** Maoist Communist Centre (MCC) extremists today gunned down 14 people of the Gram Raksha Dal of Belthu village.

Police have launched combing operations in the bordering districts of Chatra and Palamau as senior officials, including Jharkhand director general of police T.P. Sinha, rushed to the village under Keradari police station in Hazaribagh district.

The Gram Raksha Dal, which was set up in 1992-93, is part of a village volunteer force to prevent infiltration of MCC extremists. The MCC had taken serious affront to the formation of the force and there were regular skirmishes between the extremists and the Gram Raksha Dal.

Sources said more than 100 MCC extremists surrounded the village around 4 am. They sealed off all entry and exit points and took hostage all the 14 members of the Gram Raksha Dal.

The incident took place when the members were sleeping at one end of the village after a night-long vigil.

The extremists tied up their hands and made them walk across to the other end. Later the hostages were made to stand in a single file after which the MCC opened fire, killing all of them on the spot.

The extremists fired 250 rounds in the air to scare off the villagers who had woken up by the sound of the gunshots. They also raised slogans against the Gram Raksha Dal and set ablaze parts of the village before fleeing into the neighbouring forest.

The rebels armed with sharpened weapons chopped off their heads before setting their houses on fire, a PTI report from Hazaribagh quoted Hazaribagh police superintendent Dipak Verma as saying. Thirteen gram raksha dal volunteers including three belonging to the same family were butchered while an 18-year-old girl perished in a blazing hut, Verma said.

As day broke, more than 500 villagers began a sit-in around the 14 corpses and refused to allow the police to remove them. They were protesting against the persistent refusal of the state government to provide firearms to the Gram Raksha Dal.

The angry villagers were demanding that Jharkhand chief minister Babulal Marandi visit the site of the incident. In the evening, after senior police and district officials intervened, the bodies were shifted to Sadar Hospital for post-mortem.

Hazaribagh deputy commissioner Amrendra Pratap Singh said the district administration had decided to provide an immediate

compensation of Rs 20,000 to dependents of each of those killed in the attack.

Today's massacre comes as a severe blow to the state government which soon after assuming power in November had called upon all extremists to surrender their firearms and give themselves up to the police. Earlier this month, chief minister Babulal Marandi announced a rehabilitation

package of Rs 500 to Rs 1 lakh for extremists who would surrender with their firearms. None of the groups have responded so far.

On the other hand, People's War Group extremists set ablaze several vehicles belonging to Hindalco at Lohardaga on April 11 and at Chatra, at least 18 MCC extremists were arrested while they were trying to execute a person at a *jan aadlat* on April 2.

## *Chhattisgarh govt. offers to match Sterlite stake*

By Our Legal Correspondent

NEW DELHI: In a move to belie the Union government's claim that it had sold the public sector Bharat Aluminium Company Ltd (BALCO) to Sterlite Industries at the most competitive price, the Chhattisgarh government on Monday told the supreme court that it was ready to pay more to buy the Centre's 51 per cent share in the company.

Chhattisgarh government counsel Kapil Sibal said that the state was ready to pay Rs 552 crore to buy the central government's 51 per cent share which was sold to Sterlite for Rs 551.5 crore. The state government also assured the court that it would provide water and electricity to the BALCO plant, security to its workers and new management, and maintain law and order in and around the plant.

As Mr Sibal made the Rs 552 crore offer, attorney-general Soli Sorabjee reminded him that the state government had earlier valued the firm at Rs 1,500 crore. "What has happened to that?" asked Mr Sorabjee, who was assisted by solicitor-general H. Salve, additional solicitor-general K. Raval and a few other counsel. Mr Sibal charged the Centre with resorting to litigation on behalf of a "private party" and said that the deal did not appear to be a "transparent one". However, he did not identify the "private party" for which the NDA government was allegedly litigating. Mr Sorabjee retorted, "All these things are nice to be said outside the court." He challenged the Chhattisgarh government to make these allegations on oath so that the necessary consequences could follow.

The 40-minute proceedings in a crowded courtroom were a sequel to the earlier orders of the apex court on the Centre's petition by which it transferred to itself the two petitions pending before the Delhi and Chhattisgarh high courts challenging the BALCO sale to Sterlite, and also its application for a direction to the state government to provide security, water and electricity to the workers of Sterlite at Korba.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

13 MAR 2001

# Uproar in Chhatisgarh House over BALCO

By Aarti Dhar

HO - 9  
RAIPUR, MARCH 8. The Chhatisgarh Assembly was today adjourned until March 13 without transacting any business, for the second consecutive day, following pandemonium over the controversial Bharat Aluminium Company Limited (BALCO) issue.

The House was adjourned twice this morning as the Opposition insisted on a debate on the matter even as the ruling party MLAs refused to concede. When all efforts to pacify the members failed, the Speaker, Mr. R. P. Shukla, adjourned the House until next week.

Trouble began when the Kathghora MLA, Mr. Banwari Lal Aggarwal (BJP), rose to read a statement on the deteriorating law and order situation at Balco Nagar after visiting the site on Wednesday evening, along with his colleagues. However, his request was turned down by the ruling party members, which led to a fierce argument resulting in an adjournment. When the House reassembled another argument ensued leading to a second adjournment. Things did not change even then and the House was adjourned till March 13.

## Workers enter plant

At Korba, the striking unions started sending workers inside the plant to prevent a total shutdown. The first batch of 35 workers was sent in early this morning, and by evening the necessary 73 men would report at the smelting plant, as demanded by the management. However, the staff going in did not punch their cards and said they would not take any wages

for this duty as the work was being done voluntarily to keep the plant running which was their first priority. The unions even appealed to the officers inside the plant to participate in the strike and also keep the plant running.

The decision to send in people was taken on the appeal made by Mr. C. W. Devras, general manager (works), saying irreparable damage would be caused if action was not taken within 12 hours. Though the men were to be sent in yesterday itself the arrival of the BJP MLAs from Raipur had delayed the process.

Meanwhile, a move by the BJP MLA, Mr. Nanki Ram Garg, to ensure the entry and exit of "willing workers" to resume duties under police protection failed to take off as he himself went off to Raipur to attend the House, and no one volunteered to take a vehicle, provided by the police, across the campus to transport the men. Mr. Garg had yesterday sought a written assurance from the Superintendent of Police that they would provide security to the workers wanting to resume work. Similar directions had been issued by the Supreme Court to the Chief Minister.

## Submit or quit, BJP tells Jogi

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8. The BJP today said the Chhatisgarh Chief Minister, Mr. Ajit Jogi, should either submit to the rule of law on the BALCO disinvestment issue or step down from office.

Party spokesman, Mr. V.K. Malhotra, said

that it was highly improper for the Chief Minister to abet and encourage lawlessness, disregarding his Constitutional obligations.

He said Mr. Jogi knew the Centre's limitations in invoking Art. 356 of the Constitution as the NDA Government lacked majority in the Rajya Sabha and that was why he was encouraging activities which tend to disturb law and order. The Chief Minister, Mr. Malhotra said, should not forget that by doing so he could render himself liable to contempt of court as the Supreme Court has already expressed its views on the issue.

Mr. Malhotra also assailed the Opposition for criticising the Supreme Court's directions to Mr. Jogi to provide full security to workers and the management of the strike-hit aluminium plant and said this exposed their "duplicity". The spokesman said "on Ramjanambhoomi-Babri Masjid issue they insist that everybody should abide by the court verdict while in this case they are criticising the court instead of appreciating its directive".

Mr. Malhotra said his party was not in favour of interference by the judiciary in the domain of the executive, but in this case, the court was justified since the person who is encouraging lawlessness was none other than the Chief Minister of the State.

Referring to Budget proposals, he said some members had made certain suggestions with regard to reduction of excise duty on ready-made garments as also giving some relief to the salaried class. The members could meet the Finance Minister to discuss the matter, he said. — PTI

THE HINDU

9 MAR 2001



## Chhattisgarh to move SC on Balco

New Delhi, March 3

CHHATTISGARH WILL soon move the Supreme Court against the Balco deal, Chief Minister Ajit Jogi said today. He promised to reveal before a Parliamentary Committee the names of the beneficiaries of the alleged Rs 100-crore kickbacks.

"Let the Centre constitute a Joint Parliamentary Committee and I undertake to disclose the names of the kickback beneficiaries before it... I accept the challenge of the Disinvestment Minister, Arun Shourie," Jogi said.

He said the deal flouted the Supreme Court's verdict, given in 1996 in the case of Samatha vs Andhra Pradesh, that tribal land cannot be handed over to a private party.

He maintained that the transfer of the majority stake in Balco to Sterlite violated tribal land laws too, and said the State Government had sent a legal notice to the Disinvestment Secretary Pradeep Baijal.

PTI

## CMs, Centre strike deal on power reforms

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, March 3

THE GOVERNMENT has finally decided to get down to the business of reviving sick State Electricity Boards (SEBs).

At the end of a day-long Chief Ministers' conference that was inaugurated by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, a consensus on a one-time settlement of the Rs 26,500 crore dues was clinched.

The Chief Ministers agreed to set up an expert group headed by Union Power Minister Suresh Prabhu to recommend in three weeks the ways for clearing the arrears while committing themselves to reforms in a time-bound manner.

Power Minister said "all Chief Ministers unanimously resolved to achieve breakeven stage of their SEBs within two years as part of the power sector reforms." Mr Prabhu assured all assistance to states undertaking time-bound reforms.

Many states have already signed memoranda of understanding (MoU) with the Centre for achieving milestones as part of the reforms, Mr Prabhu said, adding that other states would be entering into similar agreement

in the presence of Mr Vajpayee in the next few weeks.

The conference also resolved to complete rural electrification by the end of 10th five year plan and full coverage of all households by end of 2012.

Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha proposed three steps to revive the electricity boards. He said the Centre was willing to allow states to float fresh bonds to meet the existing liabilities. This will be linked with a one-time settlement of all dues by the boards to central power utilities and fuel suppliers.

To facilitate the redemption of the bonds, the Centre will adjust 15 per cent of the state plan funds against repayments on maturity of these bonds. This could be achieved within two years, the Sinha said.

Sinha said that since the Government was initiating steps to revive the SEBs, no further central guarantees or counter-guarantees would be given to private power producers.

In his address, the Prime Minister urged "all political parties to set aside their differences and arrive at a consensus on this issue, since it will benefit both the nation and each of our states."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

4 MAR 2001

# Jharkhand House thrice adjourned

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

RANCHI, March 1. — The Jharkhand Assembly witnessed noisy scenes for the third consecutive day today. Opposition members shouted slogans demanding government clarification on Doranda and Tapkara police firing incidents. They also demanded scrapping of the ambitious Koel-Karo hydel power project. The House was adjourned four times and the entire Opposition walked out twice during the day.

Opposition members rose to their feet even before the proceedings could begin, displaying placards and shouting slogans demanding that the government spell out its stand on the Doranda and Tapkara police firing and scrapping of the Koel-Karo project.

Mr Babulal Marandi said the Koel-Karo hydel power project will come up only when people living in the project area want it. Mr Marandi said that the implementation of the hydel power project depended on the will of the people living in the area.

"Negotiations are on with the people who are living in the project area and if they do not want it to be implemented it will not come up," the chief minister said, adding that he also did not want its implementation at the cost of the people living in the region.

People in the Koel-Karo project area have long been opposing its implementation fearing large-scale displacement in the region.

When repeated requests from Speaker Mr Inder Singh Namdhari failed to make Opposition members including Mr Stephen Marandi (JMM), Mr Furkan Ansari (Congress), Mr Girinath Singh (RJD), Mr BP Mehta (CPI) and Mr Mahendra Prasad Singh (CPI-ML) return to their seats, the House was adjourned for 10 minutes.

After the House was resumed, Mr Stephen Marandi insisted on

a judicial probe into both Tapkara and Doranda firing and asked the government to move a proposal on the floor of the Assembly recommending scrapping of the Koel-Karo project.

He also demanded an all-party meeting on the burning issues confronting the state.

The Speaker requested the Opposition leader not to waste the time allocated for Question Hour and agreed to hold a two-hour debate on these issues in the second half.

But this also failed to pacify the

Opposition forcing the namdhari to adjourn the house again for 10 minutes before the break for lunch.

After the resumption of the House, Mr Mahendra Prasad Singh said during the lunch break he, accompanied by Mr

Marandi, Mr Ansari, Mr Girinath Singh and Mr BP Mehta, had gone to Birsa Chowk after hearing that CPI-ML national general secretary Mr Dipankar Bhattacharya was injured in a lathi charge by police while leading a rally towards the Assembly.

The Opposition leaders further alleged they were also manhandled by the police there and Mr Mahendra Prasad Singh was beaten up too.

They shouted slogans in protest against the lathi charge on "peaceful rallyists".

CPI member Mr Bhuvaneshwar Prasad Mehta demanded that an all-party inquiry be ordered into the lathicharge.

The Speaker said an inquiry by the home secretary had already been ordered into the incident.

But Opposition members refused to budge and sat on a dharna in the well of the House in protest against the lathicharge.

When they did not withdraw even after the speaker's admonitions, he adjourned the House for the third time.



Mr Babulal Marandi

THE STATESMAN

2 MAR 2001