

No NDA pressure to reject Pak invite: PM

By Rajaram Satapathy
The Times of India News Service

BHUBANESWAR: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Sunday denied that he was under pressure from the National Democratic Alliance not to visit Pakistan and asserted that he did not work under pressure.

"There is no pressure on me. I don't work under pressure. Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf had invited me and I have accepted the invitation. But when I will go has not yet been decided, nor where we will meet and what will be discussed," Mr Vajpayee told mediapersons here after his survey of the flood-affected districts in the state.

Despite repeated demands from the Orissa government, Mr Vajpayee refused to commit any special financial package to help



Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee makes an aerial survey of flood-hit areas of Orissa on Sunday.

the state overcome its acute funds torium on loan repayments. He constraints. Nor did he give any merely said the matter would be assurance on any waiver or mora- examined by the Union govern-

ment.

Mr Vajpayee claimed that the funds that had already been released and that which was being processed would together form a good package for the state.

Referring to the report of the Central team that visited Orissa on July 19, Mr Vajpayee said he was satisfied with the rescue and relief operations.

The Union government has already given an ad hoc grant of Rs 100 crore to the state from the natural calamity contingency fund. And keeping in view the state's financial crisis, it has also allowed the state to draw an overdraft to the tune of Rs 220 crore. If the state required further assistance, the Centre would consider that after receiving the detailed memorandum from the state government on the flood situation, the Prime Minister said.

FROM SPEAKEASIES TO SHARECAFES: DAY-TRADING COMES OF AGE

BJP flexes muscles, charts out govt's course of action

By Smita Gupta

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: For the first time



L.K. Advani

since the BJP came to power at the Centre as the head of a coalition in 1998, the party has asserted itself, virtually setting the agenda for the government. If party president K. Jana Krishnamurthy did not mince words in his address and proved he was no rubber stamp, the national executive's three resolutions at its three-day session — on the economy, the Agra summit and the north-east — were all strongly worded and critical of many aspects of the government's functioning.

Also, after many years — maybe after L.K. Advani's presidentship (when the party grew enormously) — there appeared to be a serious effort to tackle the organisational weaknesses that had crept in. Mr Advani, who gave the concluding address, focused on building an organisation equipped to cope with

the needs of the 21st century.

He said the party should modernise itself, work in a scientific manner and ensure that the workers were given necessary intellectual inputs. The BJP, including its earlier avatar Jana Sangh, will complete 50 years in October. The party had spent so many years in the opposition that it now needed

SOME HARDTALK

- BJP is critical of government's functioning
- Entry into the NDA doesn't mean ministerial berths
- Advani focuses on building the party stronger

to make an effort to acquire the mindset of a ruling party, Mr Advani said.

Later, responding to criticism from some quarters in the government that the party president had been too harsh, Mr Krishnamurthy stressed, "We are not just the ruling party. We are a democratic party. If we don't express the feelings of the people and the cadres, how will the government know the reactions of the people?"

He was also at pains to explain that the BJP's criticism of the government was different from that of the opposition as the party's feedback and suggestions, particularly on the economy and the north-east, were intended to help the government. He said the ministers concerned had responded positively, and without resentment, by explaining governmental decisions and that this had helped in developing a better understanding between the party and the government.

If the party hawks had forced the Prime Minister to make a strident speech against Pakistan on Saturday, he was pushed by Mr Krishnamurthy's oblique criticism of allowing the re-entry of the PMK into the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) into saying there indeed should be norms for re-joining the coalition and that the PMK's entry would be confirmed only after an NDA meeting.

On Sunday, Mr Krishnamurthy added to his earlier comment by saying that an entry into the NDA should not be regarded as being synonymous with ministerial jobs.

30 JUL 2001

Vajpayee blames Musharraf, silences BJP hardliners

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 28. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today blamed General Pervez Musharraf for the failure of the Agra summit and claimed credit for exposing the Pakistani design on Kashmir before the entire world. He reportedly revealed many aspects of his one-on-one talks with the general.

The world would know that the talks failed on the issue of cross-border terrorism even as the failure facilitated better understanding about the importance of the issue in Indo-Pak relations, he told the party's national executive which was reportedly emotionally surcharged during the course of his address.

Mr Vajpayee blamed Gen. Musharraf's inexperience in attending international conferences and little awareness about Indian sentiments for the last fifty years as the principal reasons for his failure to put the issue in proper perspective and the cause for his unifocal approach.

In the conclave's morning session, BJP hardliners criti-

cised the Centre for giving Gen. Musharraf an opportunity to become a hero and for sending a soft message about India's commitment. Even Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, considered to be close to the Prime Minister, had spoken against the government for holding an "unstructured" summit. India must cancel unilateral confidence building measures unless they were reciprocated by Pakistan, he had added.

But the conclave's mood changed to complete surrender as Mr Vajpayee picked up from his Agra talks and tried to establish that Gen. Musharraf didn't get anything that he wanted and India stood firm on its commitment to Kashmir and the issue of

cross-border terrorism.

Many leaders looked triumphant after the meeting. Mr LK Advani reportedly told some of BJP leaders that this should be the party's focus on the summit.

Perhaps the party leaders' criticism had forced Mr Vajpayee to go on the "offensive". The party general secretary and spokesman, Mr Narendra Modi, who gave a graphic account of Mr Vajpayee's address, said the Prime Minister spoke of Gen. Musharraf's inexperience.

Mr Vajpayee reportedly said he had known on the very first day that the talks wouldn't yield results. The Pakistani President hadn't come for talks but for achieving a task and wasn't willing to accept

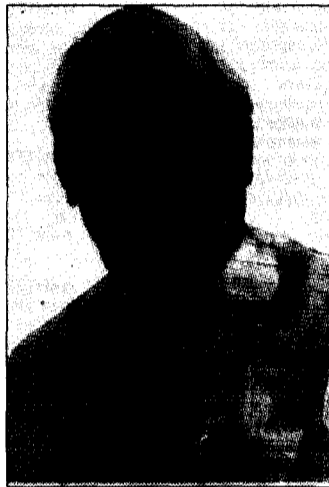
the Shimla agreement and the Lahore declaration.

On the second day, Gen. Musharraf was desperate as the talks weren't going as per his plans and he would have to return empty handed. When Gen. Musharraf referred to Kashmir as the core issue, Mr Vajpayee asked jokingly if there was a core issue within the core issue. However, Gen. Musharraf was silent when the Prime Minister referred to the 1947 situation and the attack by Pakistani army in the guise of locals.

To Gen Musharraf's question on how he came to politics, Mr Vajpayee highlighted the Kashmir issue. His experience as a journalist while covering the movement launched by Shyamaprosad Mookerjee to save Kashmir inspired him to join politics, Mr Vajpayee told Gen. Musharraf and focused on India and his own commitment to Kashmir as an integral part of the nation.

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■PM may not visit Pakistan this year
■BJP wants probe into UTI affairs



PM: Tough-talking

THE STATESMAN

29 JUL 2001

Accord on most issues, insists Pak

Vajpayee blames it on Islamabad

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 19. — The Prime Minister was more forthright today in blaming Pakistan for the failure of the Agra summit. He addressed an all-party meeting today.

The leaders were unanimous that any future talks with Pakistan should be based on a "structured" agenda to avoid the Agra experience.

The Centre hasn't decided when Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee will pay the return visit to Islamabad, Mr Pramod Mahajan said after the meeting. The Prime Minister, however, told the leaders that since he had accepted the invitation, he would visit Islamabad for talks.

The external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, has accepted an invitation by his Pakistani counterpart, Mr Abdul Sattar, to visit Islamabad.

(Pakistan tonight said Mr Vajpayee and Gen Pervez Musharraf had disagreed on only one of the paragraphs of the draft declaration, agencies report from Islamabad.)

(The leaders had agreed on several issues signifying that they had taken a big step forward, the foreign ministry said. "Pakistan believes these understandings should be preserved and expanded in the interest of peace, security and development.")

(Yesterday, India had rejected Pakistan's view that the draft declaration could be a "valuable foundation" for future talks.)

Mr Vajpayee told the meeting that India had sent its summit agenda to Pakistan much in advance and had even suggested that some pre-summit talks be held among officials. But, Pakistan rejected the proposals and insisted that the talks be held without any agenda.

"This was a situation where India couldn't withdraw its

invitation to the Pakistani President, nor could we insist for a structured agenda," Mr Vajpayee said.

It's not true that Mr Vajpayee was only a passive listener while Gen Musharraf did all the tough talking at Agra.

The Prime Minister told the General not to compare Kashmir with Palestine. "If you insist on making Kashmir the core issue, then Pakistan would have to look back to 1947 when it occupied parts of Kashmir," Mr Vajpayee told the Gen Musharraf.

Mr Vajpayee also objected when the General compared Kargil with Bangladesh, and reminded the guest how Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was not allowed to take office after being elected.

India was ready to discuss Kashmir, but not as a "dispute" between the two countries.

According to India's assessment, two things were foremost in the General's mind.

First, he wanted to re-write the history of the bilateral ties by opening a new chapter. Second, he wanted to use the summit as a propaganda tool to buttress the Pakistani stand on Kashmir.

The Prime Minister told the leaders that Pakistan's stand that bilateral ties couldn't become normal unless the Kashmir issue was resolved had blocked the discussions. "I don't consider the Agra talks as a failure," Mr Vajpayee said. He was looking forward to meet the General at the United Nations.

Barring the Shiv Sena, all other leaders — including Mrs Sonia Gandhi, Mr Ajay Chakraborty (CPI), Mr PA Sangma (NCP) and Mr Ramchandran (CPI-M) — said the bilateral talks should continue.

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Simi-ISI link worries Centre

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 29: The government may have used the Osama card to push through the ban on the Students' Islamic Movement of India, but the real reason appears to be the organisation's covert connections with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence.

Intelligence sources said the government was afraid that the ISI might have used certain elements within Simi to foment trouble in the country.

While they admit that the ban can send wrong signals in the country and abroad, it was better to play safe at this juncture.

The Terai region in Uttar Pradesh is regarded by these

agencies as a hotbed for ISI activities. With Assembly elections scheduled in the state, the atmosphere is already volatile. The entire state could erupt in flames if communal passions are fanned.

North Block officials said while it was not fair to club all members of Simi together, there was a small section which the ISI could influence.

There was much debate within the government about the timing of the ban. But finally it was felt that the Centre must go ahead with this. Even now, some within the government believe the ban should not have been imposed.

This section feels the government could have cracked down on the potentially dangerous section instead of banning the

whole outfit.

But it was finally decided that an overall ban would be better than going after the few culprits. The organisation could then use its resources to make the point that India was harassing its minority students.

Former Prime Minister I.K. Gujral wants the Centre not to wait for the prescribed 30 days before presenting its arguments to the tribunal. The government claims to have enough hard evidence against Simi. "Let them present it fast," he said.

"I would suggest to the government that it keep in mind that interested parties can fan already inflamed feelings. All evidence collected should be placed before the tribunal so that a decision is taken quickly. If there is enough evidence to ban Simi, no

one can raise questions. In case there is not enough proof, the ban can be lifted," Gujral said.

150 activists arrested

The nationwide crackdown on the outlawed Simi continued for the second day with over 150 activists being arrested today, taking the total number to 450, reports PTI from New Delhi.

However, secretary-general Safdar Nagori and some state-level leaders remained elusive as bank accounts of some its units were frozen.

Offices of the radical outfit, banned on Thursday, were sealed across the country amid reports that some of its leaders had gone underground to evade arrest. No incidents of violence were reported today.

Rajnath rules out Sangh outfit ban

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 29: Uttar Pradesh chief minister Rajnath Singh today ruled out banning Hindu organisations such as the Bajrang Dal, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Shiv Sena.

Giving a clean chit to these outfits, Rajnath said they were "not anti-national" but added that if anybody violated the law, the transgressor will be punished.

Rajnath, who came here to discuss with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee the economic situation in Uttar Pradesh, dismissed reports which said the timing of the ban on the Students' Islamic Movement Of India (Simi) was dictated by the need to consolidate Hindu votes for the coming Assembly elections.

He blamed the Samajwadi

Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party for trying to make political capital out of the ban.

Rajnath, along with his ministerial colleagues Lalji Tandon and Harishchandra Srivastava, briefed the Prime Minister on the situation prevailing in the state in the wake of the imposition of the ban.

After the meeting, the chief minister told reporters that he had sought additional companies of the Rapid Action Force to maintain law and order in the volatile heartland. He also briefed home minister Lal Krishna Advani on the situation in the state.

Rajnath said the situation was under control barring a few incidents in Lucknow and alleged that Thursday's violence was provoked by Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav's brother Shivpal Yadav

and local party leaders such as Raj Kishore and Ravidas Mehrotra.

He claimed they spread the rumour that certain Muslim religious leaders had been arrested, triggering the unrest. But despite attempts by certain people, the ban, he said, had not acquired a communal colour.

To a question, the chief minister said he did not view all madrasas with suspicion and asserted that his government will not be partial to any particular community.

Reiterating that there was no motive behind the timing of the ban, he said the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party were trying to create fear in the minds of the minorities with an eye on the elections.

Rajnath said the polls, according to the Election Commission, could be held on April 20

next year.

The chief minister sought the release of Rs 1,800 crore Central assistance to meet the cost of ongoing projects in the state in view of the financial burden imposed on it following the implementation of the pay commission's recommendations. Finance minister Yashwant Sinha and food minister Shanta Kumar were present when Rajnath met Vajpayee.

The chief minister also sought an assurance that the Food Corporation of India would lift food-grain from the godowns of Uttar Pradesh as they were overflowing.

The food minister, Singh said, had assured him that the foodgrain would be lifted soon to create space for fresh crop. Kumar is scheduled to visit Lucknow on October 4 to review the situation.

THE TELEGRAPH

30 SEP 2001

Lucknow burns as Centre bans Simi

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, September 27

THE CENTRE today banned the Students' Islamic Movement of India (Simi), branding it a fundamentalist organisation that has links with the ISI and terrorist groups in Jammu and Kashmir.

In Lucknow, there was violence after the arrest of Simi leaders, which was further fuelled by the news of the ban. Four people died and one was injured when the police fired to control the violence. Curfew was imposed on the Chowk, Thakurganj, Saadatganj and Bazar Khala areas, where the situation was tense till late in the evening.

Earlier, acting on a tip-off that some Simi activists were holding a secret meeting, the Saadatganj police raided a madrasa in the Wazirbagh locality around 3 am and arrested Simi city president Humam Ahmed, general secretary Obadur-rehman and another activist, Ashfaque Ahmed.

Some 83 Simi activists were arrested in UP following the ban on the outfit. The State Government beefed up security in the sensitive areas following the violence in Lucknow.

The Centre's ban order, to be effective for two years, was issued by the Union Home Ministry under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. Over the past few months, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh had been pressing for the ban following investigations which revealed that Simi activists engineered communal violence in Kanpur, Pune and some other places. A tribunal will now be set up to review the ban, which it will confirm if the Centre's evidence on Simi's activities is convincing enough.

Union Home Minister L K Advani said the Simi's activities were "apparent" from the reports that various State Governments had sent. Defending the decision, Advani said his Government would "deal with the situation firmly".

Two Congress-ruled states,



Mob pelts stones as the police fire tear-gas shells in the Old City area of Lucknow on Thursday.

AJAY K SINGH/HINDUSTAN TIMES

Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra, were the most vocal in seeking a Central ban on Simi. One of the main reasons why the States wanted the Centre to impose the ban instead, was to prevent it from spreading its activities to new areas. It was also felt that the Centre would be able to defend the ban, even in a court of law, more effectively than a State.

The States were perturbed with Simi's phenomenal growth and intensified activity, which included public fund collection, advocacy of jihad and the recruitment of volunteers. Sources said Simi members were particularly active in MP and Maharashtra.

The issue of imposing a ban

was discussed at a recent Chief Ministers' conference as well as the conference of State police chiefs in Delhi. Sources said it was felt that Simi's activities should be kept under a close watch. During the Chief Ministers' conference, Advani was repeatedly asked to initiate action against the Simi, sources said.

Home Ministry sources said preparations had been on for several months to "make a fit case" for the ban. Documents and investigation reports from various State Governments where the Simi is active had been sought. North Block officials said Intelligence reports suggested that the ISI had "penetrated" the "radical outfit" which also

allegedly has links with the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba and the Hizbul Mujahideen.

The arrest of a Hizbul Mujahideen militant, Gulzar Ahmed Wani, with some of his associates in Delhi in July revealed the links between Kashmiri outfits and the Simi.

The Centre also has information that Simi activists distributed pro-Osama bin Laden posters in the Aligarh Muslim University and the Jamia Millia University in Delhi. Recently, Simi's organising secretary was arrested in the capital on the charge of conspiring to plant a bomb on a train in Maharashtra.

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Simi offices sealed, eight held

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, September 27

THE SPECIAL Branch of city police arrested eight members of the Simi today and sealed its city offices, including the State headquarters at Taltola.

The string of arrests was confirmed only late at night, though nearly 12 persons had been detained since the afternoon. DC (Special Branch) Gaurav Dutt said eight persons, all active members of the outfit, were arrested from Benia-

pukur, Taltola and Ikbalpore.

Police Commissioner Sujay Chakraborty had said 10-12 people who had close connections with the outfit were picked up for interrogation. "We will arrest them only after we find evidence on their direct involvement with the outfit," he said.

The raids started at 2.30 pm at the Simi's Lenin Sarani headquarters and an office in Beniapukur. "Some members were detained from the office while others were arrested from other places," Dutt said.

US GETS READY

Murmurs of dissent strike Cabinet

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 18: Union ministers and NDA ally Samata Party today echoed the Opposition sentiment voiced earlier cautioning the Central government against "acting in haste" in support of the US.

Some ministers had advised the government to practise caution, Union minister Pramod Mahajan told the media after a Cabinet meeting to discuss the fallout of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington on September 11. Mahajan, however, did not specify who these ministers were or what they said.

The government was also warned, at a press conference or-

ganised by the Samata Party today, against getting sucked into the war without assessing the fallout, as Pakistan is trying to effect a trade-off with the US.

The party wants New Delhi to clearly and publicly tell the US that unless it addresses Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, there was no meaning in the talk of fighting global terrorism.

India has been hoping that the US would rein in Pakistan from sponsoring terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. On Sunday, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee spoke to US President George W. Bush on phone and both countries agreed that the only way to weed out terrorism would be by tackling it at its root.

Vajpayee had assured Bush "fullest cooperation" between the two countries, though the Opposition was cautioning against an all-out move to assist the US.

Some sections had, however, felt that the Indian government was going out of its way to support the US.

The Left parties had even said they were against the US using India as a "base" for an attack on Afghanistan. The Congress, too, maintained that the government should not make any move without weighing the pros and cons.

Now a section within the Cabinet and the government does not want India to rush to the US' aid and prefers a "wait and watch" policy.

The Samata Party expressed similar views at its press conference. "If we are getting into the war, the cost-benefit must be properly assessed. Does it benefit India? In fighting terrorism, the US should be told that Islamabad should root out terrorism. We should be part of the global effort only if our battle against terrorism (Pakistan-inspired) can be strengthened."

Party general secretary Shambhu Shrivastava lambasted the US for "selectively" fighting terrorism and said Pakistan has been exporting terrorism into India for the last 12 years. Islamabad has been offering not only an ideological boost but also shelter and weapons to the terrorists, he said.

"Making Pakistan a partner (in fighting the Taliban), you cannot fight global terrorism," Shrivastava said.

The Samata leader said if the US is sincere in rooting out terrorism, it should actively involve countries such as India, Russia, China and the Central Asian republics, including Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

Shrivastava also lambasted the US administration for not doing anything to stop the attack on Indian minorities, including Sikhs, some of whom were mistreated for Arabs and beaten up.

There is, however, some hope in Indian political circles that the US' strident tone with Pakistan will lessen the latter's cross-border activities.

19 SEP 2001

Don't link terrorism to Islam: Jaswant

By Our Special Correspondent ¹⁴⁹⁻⁸

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 15. Terrorism should not be linked to Islam, as it will result in dividing, instead of uniting, the world community against terrorism, the External Affairs and Defence Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, said today at the two-hour all-party meeting, convened here by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, in the wake of the recent terrorist strikes in the U.S. This was disclosed by the Parliamentary Affairs and Communications Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, who briefed presspersons after the meet.

Mr. Singh had said that the fight against terrorism should not be confined to the NATO countries but involve democracies, including India and the Arab nations. New Delhi was in touch with Washington and the Indian agencies were extending cooperation to the U.S. agencies. India was also in contact with several countries, including Russia, China, France and England. If required, Mr. Singh could travel to these countries in the next two weeks, Mr. Mahajan said.

Indicating that the U.S. could target Afghanistan, which it considered the hotbed of ter-

^{161 a}rorist activities, in retaliation to the attacks on New York and Washington, Mr. Singh said the Indian subcontinent would have to bear the maximum impact of the action. The fight against terrorism would be a prolonged affair and the Government was alive and alert to the developing situation. It was taking all steps to ensure the safety of its citizens and vital installations.

Some party leaders, Mr. Mahajan said, had suggested that India should take advantage of the world opinion against terrorism in its fight against Pakistan-backed militancy in Jammu and Kashmir.

While backing the Government in its effort to deal with the situation arising from the attacks, the Opposition had suggested that, considering the possible fall-out on the economy, the Government should ensure that the impact was minimum on the poor. (The CPI(M) general secretary, Mr. Harkishen Singh Surjeet, said later that he had suggested that the rich be taxed since the poor were already suffering).

The Congress had extended cautious support to the Government. Its representatives, Dr. Manmohan Singh and Mr. Shivraj Patil,

urged the Centre to ensure that "any strategy to combat terrorism is credible, effective, sustainable and defensible in the eyes of international law and world public opinion." Dr. Singh also urged the Government to consider the likely impact of the proposed action since it was important to anticipate the likely fall-out and consequences of international action on India.

The Union Ministers, Mr. L. K. Advani and Mr. Vijay Goel, attended the meeting. Others included Prof. Vijay Kumar Malhotra (BJP), Mr. K. Yerran Naidu and Dr. Alladi Rajkumar (TDP), Prof. Ram Gopal Yadav (SP), Mr. P. N. Siva (DMK), Mr. Digvijay Singh (Samata Party), Mr. Birbhadra Singh (BJD), Dr. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh and Mr. Prem Chand Gupta (RJD), Mr. Sudip Bandhopadhyaya (Tribhuvan Congress), Mr. P. A. Sangma (NCP), Mr. Ajoy Chakraborty and Mr. Gaya Singh (CPI), Mr. Devendra Prasad Yadav (JD-U), Mr. Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa (SAD), Dr. Sush Kumar Indora (INLD), Mr. Abani Roy (RSP), Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan (Lok Janshakti), Mr. P. D. Elangovan (PMK), Mr. Ali Mohd. Naik (NC), Mr. Chandravijay Singh (ABLC), Mr. Debabrata Biswas (AIFB) and Dr. C. Krishnan (MDMK).

Powell confirms Pak. support

By Sridhar Krishnaswami

WASHINGTON, SEPT. 15. The U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, has confirmed that the Pakistan Government had agreed to "all" items of a specific list that had been put forward by the U.S.

"We've put before the Pakistan Government a specific list of things that we would like cooperation on, and they have agreed to all those items. I am not prepared to announce today what those specific items are, but the Pakistan Government was very forthcoming and we're appreciative," Gen. Powell remarked at a media conference in Camp David along with the President and the Attorney-General.

Even if both Pakistan and the Bush administration have remained quiet on what the "list" is all about and what it is that Pakistan has signed on to, speculation is that the Pakistan Government has agreed to close the country's borders with Afghanistan, allowed use of its airspace for operations and the stationing of a multinational force.

Centre wasn't rushing labour reforms: BJP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 10. — The NDA government wasn't rushing through the labour reforms promised in the budget and it might wait for the report of the second labour commission set up after a gap of 33 years, the BJP said today.

There are indications that the labour reforms might not be pushed through until the Uttar Pradesh Assembly polls slated for early next year.

Senior BJP leaders from Uttar Pradesh are scheduled to meet in Delhi on 17 September to chalk out the party's strategy for the crucial polls and Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee is also scheduled to attend the meeting.

It may focus on various issues that might impact the electorate. In this context, it's possible that the government might delay the labour reforms despite

the industrial sickness facing the state. An easy hire policy could lead to closure of many of these industries and there will be a political impact.

The BJP general secretary and spokesman, Mr Sunil Shastri, said the labour commission was already looking into the various issues concerning labour reforms and it was likely to place its report by the end of this year. He said the Centre would then consider the various proposals of the commission which is already seized of issues such as amendments in the Industrial Dispute Act.

Mr Shastri's statement has come in the context of reports that some of the NDA allies were likely to gang up against the proposed labour reforms. After all the amendments would be discussed in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, he said, while indicating the need for consensus.

The BJP favoured protecting the interests of the workers.

The proposed amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act, whereby the employers will have the right to fire workers in companies employing less than 1000 workers, has become controversial as the move may not find political or social support. At the present level this right is given to companies with 100 workers.

The RSS spokesman, Mr MG Vaidya, said he hoped that some compromise would be reached on this limit.

He said the RSS didn't want labour unrest as trade union strikes hurt production.

Cong opposition: The Congress has decided to oppose the proposed reforms of 'hire and fire' for those units having less than a thousand workforce, the party spokesman, Mr S Jaipal Reddy, said today.

THE STATESMAN

11 SEP 2001

Disgruntled MPs explain stand to PM

By Sujay Mehndua

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 8. The three disgruntled Delhi BJP MPs — Mr. Madan Lal Khurana, Mr. Sahib Singh Verma and Prof. Vijay Kumar Malhotra — met the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today to express their "deep sense of anguish" over reports that they were responsible for Mr. Jagmohan's ouster from the Union Ministry of Urban Development in the latest round of Cabinet reshuffle.

The three veterans have also been reported to be unhappy that a relatively junior colleague, Mr. Vijay Goel, had managed to get himself posted as Minister of State in the Prime Minister's Office. There has been speculation since the reshuffle last week that the troika was planning to raise the banner of revolt.

The sulking MPs, along with the East Delhi MP, Mr. Lal Behari Tiwari, called on the Prime Minister around 1 p.m. During their hour-long interaction, the MPs are understood to have impressed upon Mr. Vajpayee the need to put the party machinery in place for the coming Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) elections as they were crucial and had national implications. "The MCD polls are as important for the party as the elections in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Uttaranchal," they are believed to have told Mr. Vajpayee. They clarified that the elevation of the Chandni Chowk MP, Mr. Vijay Goel, had nothing to do with their resentment.

It is understood that Mr. Vajpayee, while giving a patient hearing to the MPs, was unhappy with them for resorting to pres-



The BJP MPs (from left), Mr. Sahib Singh Verma, Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra, Mr. Lal Behari Tiwari and Mr. Madan Lal Khurana, coming out of the Prime Minister's house in New Delhi on Saturday. — Photo: Rajeev Bhatt

sure tactics by going to the media with their grievances.

Prof. Malhotra, party spokesman and South Delhi MP, said they impressed upon the Prime Minister the need to initiate steps to implement the Malhotra Committee report, take steps to regularise thousands of commercial establishments which had come up in residential areas and the need to implement the Union Cabinet decision on regularisation of unauthorised colonies. This, they pointed out, was part of the party manifesto for the 1997 MCD elections and should be fulfilled without delay.

Expressing happiness with the outcome of the meeting with the Prime Minister, Prof. Malhotra said that at no point had they threatened to resign from party posts. "This is all speculation and we never contemplated any such move. We only met (the party

president) Mr. Jana Krishnamurthy and Mr. Vajpayee to convey our point of view and explain our position on various issues. Nothing else was discussed during the meeting."

The MPs also underlined the need to gear up the party machinery in view of the adverse results of the Delhi University Teachers' Association and Delhi University Students' Union elections.

The troika had met the party president on Friday evening, triggering off reports that they had submitted their resignations from the party posts in protest. At the meeting, they also protested against the manner in which they were being held responsible for Mr. Jagmohan's removal from the Urban Development Ministry. They expressed the same views during their meeting with the Prime Minister. Mr. Krishnamur-

thy told reporters today that he had not received any resignations; so the question of accepting them did not arise. "The three MPs met me to discuss issues and problems relating to Delhi and the coming MCD polls. No other matter was discussed and they did not show any resentment against anybody."

Mr. Vajpayee told the MPs that he would soon hold discussions with the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, to put in place a mechanism for better coordination between the party and the Government. He also asked the MPs to get in touch with the new Union Urban Development Minister, Mr. Ananth Kumar, to discuss various issues, including implementation of the points mentioned in the party manifesto.

SEP 10 1998

9 SEP 1998

Disgruntled leaders want to meet Vajpayee to air grievances over reshuffle BJP faces resignation threat

SANJAY SINGH & ARUN ANAND
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 7. — A group of senior BJP leaders has sought an appointment with Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee tomorrow. They want to petition the Prime Minister with their grievances on the recent Cabinet expansion and to demand "natural justice".

The disgruntled leaders, led by the two former Delhi chief ministers and party vice-presidents, Mr. Madan Lal Khurana and Mr. Sahib Singh Verma, spokesperson Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra and Mr. Shatrughan Sinha have threatened to resign from their party posts if they fail to get a

sympathetic hearing from Mr. Vajpayee. Sources said Mr. Sinha is coordinating the move and the number of dissidents could go up if the Prime Minister gave an audience to them.

A section of party MPs from other states, particularly UP, is waiting for the outcome of tomorrow's meeting and would decide their move accordingly. This could be a major embarrassment for the party as it could be construed to be a challenge to the Prime Minister's authority and send an adverse signal to people before the Assembly polls in UP, Uttaranchal and Punjab where the BJP's stakes are very high. Loyalists and RSS functionaries

looking after BJP affairs have, however, begun "operation salvage". They are putting all kinds of pressure on the dissidents to withhold their move. The dissidents have been told that "injustice has been done to them but they should put party and the country above their narrow personal interests. Power was only temporary but the party was forever and their identity in the public was because of the party they belonged to and not the other way round", sources said.

The disillusionment of some senior party members was complete after they were left out in the recent Cabinet expansion even though it was limited to the

BJP. Sources said junior party leaders like Mr. Vijay Goel were promoted at the cost of senior leaders. Even the shifting of Mr. Jagmohan from urban development ministry to tourism was blamed on three Delhi BJP leaders, indirectly suggesting their links with the builders' lobby.

Sources said it was a calculated move on the part of the dissidents. There was nothing much for these leaders to lose. There was no scope for a future Cabinet expansion, at least for the BJP members. They have threatened to quit from their party posts and not from the party or Parliament thus saving their present perks. Since they are leaders of

strength, denial of party ticket in the next elections whenever they are held is unlikely.

Mr. Sahib Singh had recently written to the Prime Minister and reportedly said that even though he represented the biggest electoral constituency in the world he was consistently ignored. The letter said his supporters were reprimanding him for sticking to the chair at the cost of self-respect. The way a Delhi MP was included in the ministry has angered them even further, he said. Though he is trying to convince them that it was the Prime Minister's prerogative, they are unwilling to see reason, Mr. Singh said.

Vajpayee tries to put economy back on rails

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 4. - The Prime Minister is trying to brush off the charges of inactivity against his government to get the economy back on the rails.

First he detailed a 14-point agenda for "urgent action" to the chief ministers at the National Development Council meeting. Today, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee called a meeting of all economy-related ministries to review, among other things, specific project implementation (over 20 projects worth Rs 100 crore and above) to figure out how to overcome the time and cost overruns of non-performing projects.

Mr Vajpayee is also scheduled to hold talks with the Council of Trade and Industry on Friday (with representatives of leading companies) and his Economic Advisory Council (culled from economists and experts from outside the government) on 10 September. Some of the broad guidelines emerging from today's talks will be conveyed to these representatives, to help them raise the levels of industrial activity.

Today's meeting involved 14 ministries, including finance, commerce and industry, railways, power, petroleum, surface transport (highways and roads), shipping, agriculture, urban development and poverty alleviation, water resources, rural development, health and family welfare and education (elementary and secondary). A crucial infrastructure ministry, telecom and information technology, went unrepresented because the minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, is on tour.

The RBI governor, Dr Bimal Jalan, was a special invitee. He presented a detailed report on the health of the economy with suggestions to better things, officials said. This was followed by Mr Yashwant Sinha's presentation on the fiscal situation.

PM FOR NOBEL PRIZE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 4. - Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's name has been recommended for this year's Nobel Peace Prize by the capital-based International Awakening Centre.

The centre's president, in his letter to the Nobel Institute's director, drew similarities between Mr Vajpayee and other world leaders like Mr Mikhail Gorbachev and Mr Yasser Arafat.

These leaders have brought peace to their countries. Mr Vajpayee should be compared with them for trying to bring peace to the Indian sub-continent, the letter said. - UNI

The meeting, which lasted almost three hours, appears to be a first-of-its-kind exercise, where secretaries of some key departments were not called, sources said. There were no briefings afterwards. Mr Vajpayee tried to ensure that the political direction of the government's economic reforms agenda was not diluted, or investments held up for lack of clear project-specific guidelines.

Ministers made brief presentations before the discussion became more general, with the thrust on how to improve coordination between ministries to cut costs.

The power minister said Rs 7,000 crore worth of investments had been "lined up". The investments were for schemes that were part of the central sector. An additional Rs 1,200 crore of investments has been identified.

Mr Suresh Prabhu said the Ramagundam and Rihand project authorities would place orders for equipment for generating 1500 MW.

There was also talk of encouraging the private sector. The Cabinet is deciding on the pay-

ment security mechanism for private sector power projects, six of which are being readied with foreign help. These add 2200MW of power, and once the payment security mechanism scheme is cleared, such investments would go up. There is also a possibility, he said, of the Hirma and Ennore projects, that amount to about 6000 MW, placing orders for equipment.

The petroleum minister, Mr Ram Naik, spoke of the pending refinery projects at Bhatinda (involving HPCL), Paradeep (IOC), where joint venture partners have opted out, Bina (BPCL), where environmental clearances are awaited although a JV partner was available, and the IOC's Panipat refinery, which had become unviable after the state levied an entry tax of four per cent on crude oil.

NDA ally questions PM: Cracks within the NDA surfaced today when an Independent MP, supporting the coalition, questioned the Prime Minister's prerogative to select his team in a coalition, adds UNI.

Expressing unhappiness over the manner in which the allies were divested of high-profile portfolios like communications and civil aviation, Mr Dayanand Sahai, said the choice of a Cabinet colleague was a prerogative of the Prime Minister when a party had "absolute majority" and not in a coalition, where power and decision making had to be shared.

Vajpayee on PMs' tenures: For the second consecutive day today, Mr Vajpayee spoke of the short tenures of Indian Prime Ministers, adds PTI.

Addressing national award winning teachers at his residence, he said: "Becoming a Prime Minister is not a big thing. Every two years, the PM... is changed and I am waiting for the change. That is the reason I am welcoming you at my temporary residence."

THE STATESMAN

- 5 SEP 2001

NDA partners join Buddha sermon

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, September 2

AFTER SONIA Gandhi decided to boost Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's efforts to build up a front of non-NDA Chief Ministers against the Centre's education policy, it was the turn of two partners of the ruling coalition today to join the chorus of condemnation against "saffronisation of education".

Jammu and Kashmir's National Conference and Meghalaya's United Democratic Front joined the meeting that rejected the Centre's controversial initiatives on education and endorsed a formal resolution asking the Centre to withhold all decisions, orders and circulars in this regard.

Congress-ruled Kerala and TDP-ruled Andhra Pradesh were not represented. But the presence of Meghalaya Chief Minister EK Mawlong and Jammu and Kashmir Education Minister Mohammad Shafi Urs made up for that.

Meghalaya's denunciation of saffronisation of education is particularly significant since Mawlong's Education Minister is a BJP leader.

Neither Mawlong nor Shafi Urs minced words as they joined the others in demanding that the Centre immediately withhold all decisions, order, circulars and documents issued and published in this regard.

The three-point resolution will be sent to President KR Narayanan, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Human Resources Development Minister Murl Manohar Joshi. The resolution has demanded parliamentary approval before any major change in education policy is announced.

It stresses the need for a consensus on education policy and says that this should be consistent with the secular, sci-

CHORUS OF CONDEMNATION

RESOLUTION ADOPTED AT CONFERENCE:

- ◆ Education policy should be consistent with the Preamble to the Constitution
- ◆ Attempts to undermine education system, through measures that do not reflect a national consensus, should be thwarted
- ◆ Govt should withhold all circulars and orders on education and convene a conference of State education ministers

RESTORING TRENDS NOTICED BY THE STATES:

- ◆ State Govts not consulted on education policy
- ◆ Circulars issued by UGC to introduce new subjects
- ◆ Parts of NCERT's National Curriculum Framework for School Education go against democratic and secular values
- ◆ Introduction of *gyotirvigyan* (Vedic astrology) and *pourohitya* (Vedic rituals) in college curricula

entific and democratic values enshrined in the Preamble of the Constitution.

The resolution calls upon academics and secular forces to thwart the Union Government's "covert and overt" attempts to undermine the value system in the education system. It objects to the introduction of subjects such as *gyotirvigyan* and *pourohitya* in college curricula.

It calls for steps to reconstitute the Central Advisory Board of Education and for a conference of State education ministers.

Buddhadeb has described the conclave as "a good beginning". He told reporters that he would continue with his efforts to rope in other NDA allies to beat back the BJP's attempts to impose a saffronised agenda on the education system.

But he was unwilling to spell out his next course of action. "Let us wait and see whether the Centre calls a meeting of State education ministers," he said.

Congress leader and Delhi Chief Minister Sheila Dixit complained that "a particular religious ideology was being surreptitiously, overtly and covertly followed by the Centre." She said State Governments would not follow the HRD ministry's directives on education till a national consensus was evolved.

Bihar and Tripura were represented by their Chief Ministers. Assam, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, sent their education ministers.

The Jammu and Kashmir Education Minister said the new education policy was not part of the NDA agenda and the National Conference would not have any of it.

He said that his Chief Minister had already taken up the matter with the Prime Minister. "After this meeting, the Centre shall have to think. This policy is not going to be accepted by three-fourth of the country," he said.

■ Paswan shifted to Coal, Sharad Yadav to Labour ■ Jagmohan moved to Tourism

BJP grabs key economic portfolios

SUDESH K VERMA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Sept. 1. - The Prime Minister today shifted two Cabinet ministers from the allies, Mr Ram Vilas Paswan and Mr Sharad Yadav, and put BJP ministers in their place.

Refusing to induct the Trinamul Congress and the PMK, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee sent out a strong message that the NDA would, henceforth, run as per his diktat and the allies would have to follow the code of a waiting period. There would be no more inductions, he said. Asked till when, he quipped: "Till I decide." The Prime Minister seemed eager to convey the message that he wanted his government to perform and that none would be spared even if he/she belonged to the allies.

Now, BJP has almost all the major economic ministries and the incumbents are reportedly close to Mr Vajpayee, thereby indicating a more coordinated approach on economic reforms. Four BJP leaders took oath as Cabinet ministers

- two new (Mr Karia Munda and Mr Ved Prakash Goyal) and two elevated from ministers of state (Mr Arun Shourie and Syed Shahnawaz Hussain) - and four as ministers of state, Mr Rajiv Pratap Rudy, Mr Ravi Shankar Prasad, Mr Anna Sahib Patil and Mr Vijay Goel.

The fifth, Mr Ashok Pradhan, could not take oath as he got stuck in Dubai on his way back from Durban. A small ceremony would be held to induct him later, a BJP minister said. While filling the vacancies, utmost care was taken to reward performance and give opportunities to the younger generation, Mr Vajpayee told journalists after the swearing-in ceremony.

The lone exception was Mr Jagmohan. He has been shifted from urban affairs to tourism for political reasons. Mr Ananth Kumar has replaced him. Mr Jagmohan is the new minister for tourism and programme implementation.

The Chandni Chowk MP, Mr Vijay Goel, has been brought into the PMO as a MoS. The PM has obviously tried to change the face

bour minister. Taking a political stand on Air India, he had reportedly derailed its disinvestment. The shake-up might result in a sobering effect on him. Mr Satya Narayan Jatiya, who was reportedly opposed to labour reforms, has been shifted to social justice and empowerment.

Syed Shahnawaz Hussain, who tried to bring a semblance of discipline in the coal ministry, has got civil aviation. Mr Ram Vilas Paswan is the new minister for coal and mines. He has a deputy in the new minister of state, Mr Anna Sahib Patil.

Mr Pramod Mahajan has made a comeback to centre stage by replacing Mr Paswan as the communications minister. The information technology ministry is now likely to merge with telecommunications and prepare the ground for the Convergence Bill. Mr Vajpayee had lauded Mr Mahajan's role as parliamentary affairs minister.

Mr Ved Prakash Goyal, hailing from Maharashtra, has been given shipping. Mr Karia Munda

is the new minister for agro and rural industries - one which affects the Swadeshi lobby the most. The minister of state (independent charge), Mrs Maneka Gandhi, has been made minister for culture and animal care.

Mr Rudy, a new entrant, has been given commerce and industry as his senior, Mr Murasoli Maran, is reportedly not doing the job well. The commerce portfolio has been taken away from Mr Digvijay Singh (Samata Party). He is now only the minister of state for railways.

Four ministers of state, including one of the allies, resigned from the Union council of ministers. They are the three BJP ministers, Mr Debendra Pradhan (agriculture), Mr Sriram Chauhan (consumer affairs, food and public distribution) and Mr Jaisinghrao Gaekwad Patil (mines). They have been dropped for their non-performance. Mr Chaoba Singh (agriculture) of the Manipur State Congress Party has been dropped for his non-cooperation during the political crisis in Manipur.

MAIN CHANGES

- Pramod Mahajan - Communications in addition to IT
- Ananth Kumar - Urban affairs
- Shahnawaz Hussain - Civil aviation
- Ved Prakash Goyal - Shipping
- Karia Munda - Agro and rural industries

More reports on page 10

of the PMO, which has been in the eye of controversy. The Sangh Parivar has criticised the functioning of the PMO, saying it was being run by bureaucrats. Mr Goel's easy access might keep Mr Vajpayee informed of developments and the political feedback.

Mr Sharad Yadav is the new la-

SHOURIE MAY BE ELEVATED, PATWA RESIGNS

Cabinet berths likely for Goel, Karia Munda

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 31. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, is all set to expand his Council of Ministers as well as reshuffle the portfolios of some of his ministerial colleagues. A swearing-in ceremony is planned for tomorrow evening at the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

According to indications, there are likely to be two new Cabinet rank additions to the Vajpayee team. The names suggested for induction are Mr. Ved Prakash Goel (the BJP treasurer) and Mr. Karia Munda. The possible induction of Mr. Goel is addressed to the sense of deprivation in the Vaishya community in Uttar Pradesh, which has recently lost a prominent spokesperson when Mr. Naresh Agrawal was sacked from the Rajnath Singh Ministry.

A Cabinet Minister, Mr. Sunderlal Patwa, has resigned on health grounds. He met the Prime Minister today and requested that in view of his poor health he be relieved of his responsibilities.

Two Ministers of State, Mr. Arun Shourie, Minister of State for Disinvestment, and Syed Shahnawaz Hussain, Minister of State for Coal, are reported to be in for a promotion to full Cabinet rank. Mr. Shourie's proposed elevation is meant to send out a signal that the Vajpayee Government was fully committed to the second generation of economic reforms, while the proposed promotion for the young Syed Hussain is attributed to the Prime Minister's desire to reassure the minorities that the NDA remained mindful of their concerns.

5 new Ministers of State?

Besides, it is believed that the Prime Minister is planning to induct five new faces at the Minister of

State level. Those being mentioned include Mr. R.P. Rudi, Mr. Ravi Shanker Prasad, Mr. P.K. Anna Patil, Mr. Ashok Pradhan and Mr. Vijay Goel. Among those likely to be shown the door include Ms. Rita Verma, Dr. Raman Singh, Mr. Ram Chauhan and Mr. Jaisingh Rao Gaikwad Patil. All the departures and the arrivals belong to the BJP, with the Prime Minister feeling uncertain about sacking any of the Ministers belonging to the NDA coalition partners.

Sinha may not be disturbed

The sources also rule out the possibility of Mr. Yashwant Sinha being moved out of the Finance Ministry. The manner in which a number of corporate houses and their spear-carriers in the media have carried on a campaign against Mr. Sinha seems to have put up the Prime Minister's back. It has also helped Mr. Sinha's cause that a section of the Sangh Parivar has also spoken against him.

The idea, according to sources, is to convey, once again, the Government's commitment to the reforms process. In this vein, serious thought is being given to change the portfolio of two Cabinet Ministers — Mr. Ram Vilas Paswan who presides over the Sanchar Bhavan and Mr. Sharad Yadav, Civil Aviation Minister — who have earned the reputation of being the reluctant reformers. It is also possible that Dr. Satyanarayan Jatiya may be moved out of the Labour Ministry, while Mr. Jagmohan, Minister for Urban Development, could find himself dealing with a different subject.

Above all, the man who probably triggered this half-hearted reshuffle — Mr. M. Venkiah Naidu — stays put in the Cabinet, most probably with his portfolio remaining unchanged.

- 1 SEP 2001

THE HINDU

Opp questions RSS member as envoy

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 30

AGITATED OPPOSITION members belonging to the Congress, Samajwadi Party, BSP, Left parties and the Indian Union Muslim League, today staged a walk-out in the Lok Sabha following the Government's refusal to scrap the controversial appointment of RSS ideologue B K Agnihotri as Ambassador-at-large for NRIs in USA.

Responding to an impromptu debate on the issue, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan said there would be no change in the appointment. Following this, Opposition members trooped out of the House, charg-

ing the Vajpayee Government of trying to saffronise the country's diplomatic circles.

Defending Agnihotri's appointment, Mahajan said there was no crime in being an RSS member. There was no harm in such a political appointment if the Prime Minister and the Union Home Minister could be RSS members, he said.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, Somnath Chatterjee (CPM) described Agnihotri's appointment as unprecedented since a functionary of a political organisation had never been appointed as Ambassador-at-large before. The Government should clarify its role since the country already has an Ambassador in Washing-

ton, he said. He termed it as an "open partisan appointment" effected by the Government in "gross misuse of power".

Deputy Leader of the Congress in the House, Madhavrao Scindia said the NDA Government had started a dangerous trend of making political appointments in foreign countries. Such a move was fraught with dangerous consequences and could seriously harm the country's image.

Criticising the Government for the "objectionable action", Scindia said it was bound to weaken the Ambassador's position. At the same time, such multiplicity of authority would also create confusion

in the US administration.

Scindia said a large number of NRIs had written to him questioning the Government's action. One writer had described Agnihotri as a "communally biased" person, he said.

Former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar said the entire nation was unaware about the credentials of Agnihotri. "I do not know in which direction the nation will go if the Government is hell-bent to propagate Hindutva in this manner," he said.

Samajwadi Party member Mulayam Singh Yadav said the Government owed an explanation on the compulsions behind such an appointment.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

31 AUG 2001

New rates to take effect from October 1

Fare hike gift on Mamata return

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 29: Two days after stonewaller Mamata Banerjee rejoined the NDA coalition, the railways raised passenger fares across the board by tacking on a distance-cum-class-linked safety surcharge ranging from Re 1 to Rs 100.

The new fares will come into effect from October 1 (see chart).

The proceeds from the surcharge — expected to garner Rs 5,000 crore over six years — will be used to replace the ageing assets of the railways, which has a blighted record of safety.

As railway minister, Mamata had resisted pressure from the finance ministry to raise fares when she presented her second railway budget in February this year. The political compulsions of fighting a state election in May had prompted Mamata to cobble a populist budget that had no fare hikes.

But successor Nitish Kumar — appalled by the gaping hole in railway finances — has been less squeamish about a fare hike.

Mamata, who has a penchant for resigning on price increases, was not present in the House today and her party reluctantly indicated that it had little option but to

SAFETY CATCH

Class	Hike up to 500 km	Beyond 500 km
Sleeper	10	20
AC chair/ 1st class	20	40
AC 3-tier	30	60
AC 2-tier	40	80
AC 1st class	50	100
2nd class (ord)*	1	-
2nd class (mail, exp)*	2	-

*Irrespective of distance (Figures in Rs)

Monthly season ticket surcharge

accept Nitish's surcharge. The Trinamul Congress, however, said it would have been better if the hike were avoided at this stage.

But the CPM, which was unable to criticise Mamata's soft budget in an election year, made up for the lost opportunity today. "This NDA government gave time to its partner to participate in the West Bengal polls with a popular move and then allowed her to crawl back into its fold," Dipankar Mukherjee of the CPM said.

Nitish told the Lok Sabha that the Cabinet had decided to set up a Rs 17,000-crore non-lapsable fund "to promote safety of travelling with the railways in a big way".

The surcharge will contribute

Rs 5,000 crore to the safety fund — the remaining Rs 12,000 crore will come in the form of additional assistance from the finance ministry. "Only the replacement arrears, as approved by the expanded Railway Board, will be charged to this fund and will be incorporated in a separate book of sanctioned projects called the Green Book," Kumar said.

During the standoff between Mamata and finance minister Yashwant Sinha in the run-up to the railway budget, the finance minister had suggested that the railways should introduce a safety cess to raise additional resources because the government was strapped for cash.

Mamata had rejected Sinha's suggestion and used a little financial legerdemain to create a Rs 831-crore surplus budget through the expedience of deferring payment of Rs 1,000 crore dividend to the government — a ploy she had used the previous year too.

Sinha had rejected Mamata's demand for cash to bail her out of a tough situation. So it seems a little odd that when Kumar has bitten the bullet, Sinha should suddenly dip into his coffers to provide a Rs 12,000 crore largesse to the railways.

■ See Page 6

THE TELEGRAPH

30 AUG 2004

30 AUG 2004

'FERNANDES NOT KEEN ON RETURNING NOW'

PM hopeful of solution to Ayodhya issue by March

By J. P. Shukla

LUCKNOW, AUG. 26. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today expressed the hope that a solution to the Ayodhya issue would be found by March next year. Negotiations were being held by different people at different levels. The issue was very much under the attention of his Government and "hopefully some thing positive will emerge by March".

Mr. Vajpayee also clarified that he had never stated that religious conversions in general were unconstitutional. In fact, conversions had been guaranteed by the Constitution. But there was one aspect which did not have the sanction of the Constitution and this was the conversion of people taking advantage of their poverty. He had only disagreed about this aspect.

Mr. Vajpayee said the National Democratic Alliance convener, Mr. George Fernandes, was not interested in returning to the Union Cabinet until the allegations levelled against him in the Tehelka episode were proved false. The Prime Minister expressed the hope that Mr. Fernandes would soon be acquitted of all the charges against him.

Mamata to be reinducted?

He, however, hinted that the Trinamool Congress leader, Ms. Mamata Banerjee, might be reinducted into the NDA in the near future. "Mamata ke liye mere dil men vishesh mamata hai" (I have a soft corner for Ms. Mamata Ba-



The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, addressing a press conference at Raj Bhavan in Lucknow on Sunday as the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh, looks on. — Photo: Subir Roy

nerjee), he said adding the issue would be discussed and a decision taken in due course.

Rejecting the Opposition charge that efforts were being made to saffronise education by his Government, he said, "these allegations are being deliberately raised to defame the BJP. And as the elections come closer more such allegations will be raised." When the issue was raised in Parliament, the Minister for Human Resource Development, Dr. Murlu Manohar Joshi, gave a detailed reply to the charges. When Dr. Joshi sought proof of the allegations being made, the Opposition failed to respond convincingly, Mr. Vajpayee said and claimed that his

Government was trying to make education completely free from bias.

He said the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, had got an assurance from the Nepal Government that it would not allow its territory to be used for anti-Indian activities. Mr. Singh had raised the matter before the King of Nepal and other leaders, and after his return had briefed the Cabinet about his discussions.

Asked if it was fair for various leaders to assail *madrasas* which had been in the forefront of the freedom struggle, Mr. Vajpayee said the situation before Independence was quite different. The Government now wanted the *ma-*

drasas to become true centres of knowledge and learning.

The Prime Minister stressed that the economic situation was not as bleak as it was made out to be. The country had huge stocks of foodgrains and adequate foreign reserves. Some of the financial problems were because of global problems. The Government was, however, alive to the issue and was taking steps to resolve them.

The Government had decided to bring in a legislation to control the functioning of non-banking finance companies, many of which had been responsible for swindling public money in the past. There were failures but action was now being taken to protect the interest of investors, Mr. Vajpayee said.

The Prime Minister, who arrived here shortly after noon, received a number of delegations in the Raj Bhavan and in the evening participated in a function organised to felicitate Prasar Bharati artistes.

PM meets Muslim leaders

PTI reports:

Mr. Vajpayee held separate meetings with prominent leaders of the Shia and Sunni sects of the Muslim community tonight and is understood to have discussed the Ayodhya issue with them.

A 15-member delegation of the All India Muslim Conference comprising Sunni leaders and a delegation of the Shia National Front met Mr. Vajpayee at the Raj Bhavan here, official sources said.

'Ask Sushma': Page 13

THE HINDU

Old code of conduct in new register

FROM MONOBINA GUPTA

New Delhi, Nov. 25: Lok Sabha Speaker G.M.C. Balayogi is "purifying" the institution he has under his jurisdiction—Parliament, and also a little beyond his direct jurisdiction—Assemblies.

If he is successful, MPs and MLAs will have to disclose their assets and income in registers which will be maintained by both Houses of Parliament and state legislatures.

At the end of a day-long conference on Discipline and Decorum in Parliament and Legislatures of States and Union Territories organised by the Lok Sabha, political leaders and 10 chief ministers passed a resolution which, if implemented, will clean the institutions and put its representatives on the right track.

"We will soon begin a process by which a register can be maintained which will contain all details about the financial status of MPs and MLAs, their association with private and public companies, if any, and even their shares in the stock market," said the Speaker's office.

Earlier in the day, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee stressed on evolving a code of conduct for MPs and MLAs that would ensure true democracy inside Parliament and state legislatures where divergent views can be expressed freely. "In a coalition era, it is essential that parties cooperate with each other to improve the image of legislators and strengthen parliamentary democracy," he said.

Nothing was said that was not said before. And the code of conduct that was finally drawn up had no new inputs. The punishments for breaching the code also read much the same: admonition, reprimand, censure, withdrawal or suspension from the House. But rarely have these been enforced.

MPs getting close to fisticuffs over the women's reservation Bill have got away; wild gesticulations and intemperate language are mostly ignored.

By hosting this conference, Balayogi seems to be following the footsteps of his predecessors—Shivraj Patil and P.A. Sangma. Both tried the "impossible"—to implement a code of conduct. "Are we just indulging in rituals by holding this conference?" asked Vajpayee.

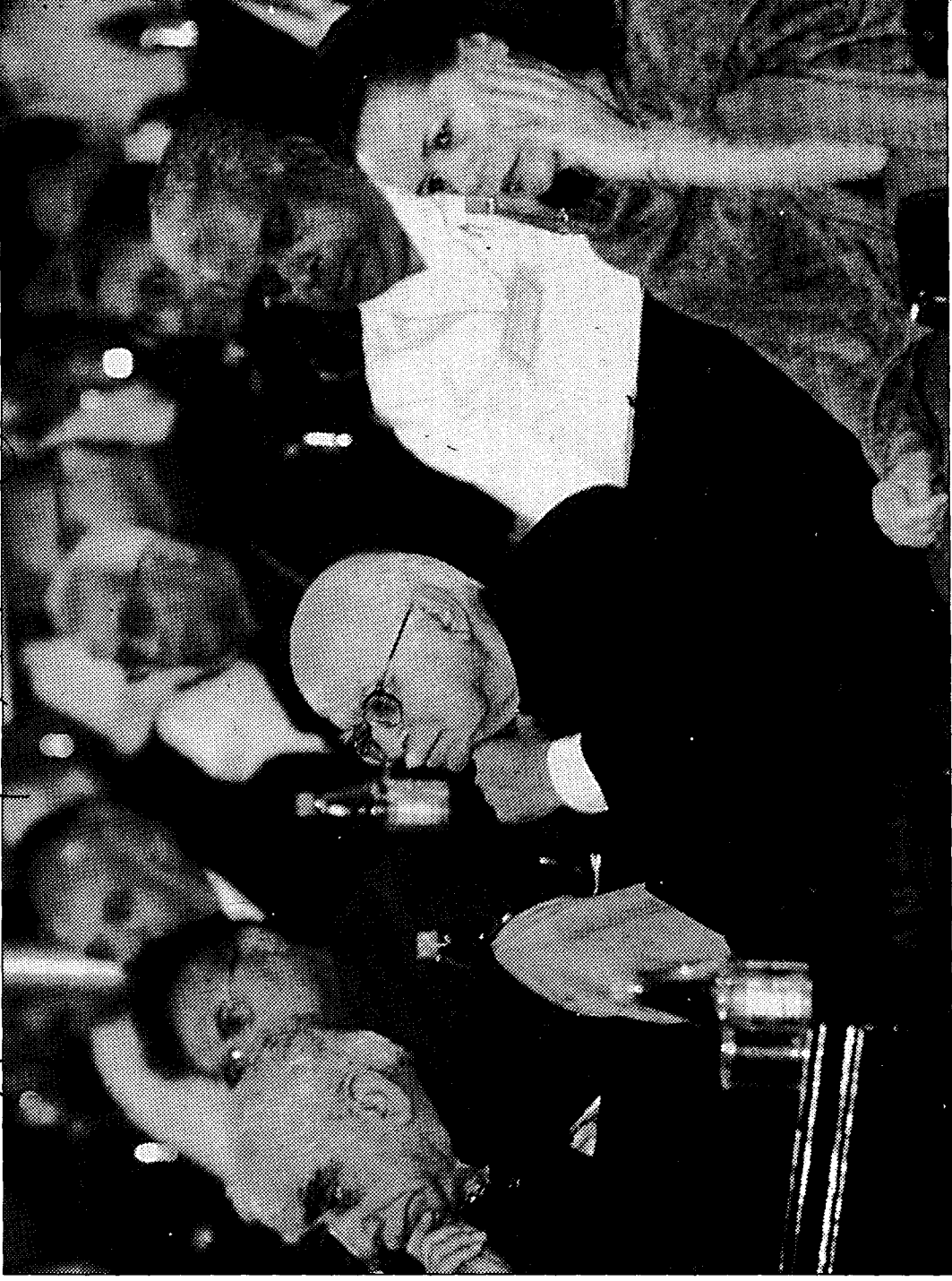
Recently when Balayogi tried to put in place a rule forbidding members to move to the well of

Ten commandments

Excerpts from the code of conduct for legislators

- ✓ Members on study tours shall not accept costly gifts. They can, however, accept inexpensive mementos
- ✓ No member shall take any other person on official tours. An attendant or family member may accompany only on medical grounds. In such cases, the member shall bear the extra charges
- ✓ Members must avoid intermediate journeys during tours. Government transport should only be used for official work and not private visits
- ✓ Committees should not undertake tours unless an on-the-spot study is absolutely necessary
- ✓ In case of a conflict between personal and public interest, the member must subordinate personal interest
- ✓ Members shall not unduly influence government officials or ministers in a case in which he has personal interest—financial or otherwise
- ✓ Information given to members in confidence shall not be divulged to anyone or used by them directly or indirectly
- ✓ A member who interrupts or obstructs the President's address will be proceeded against
- ✓ Since the proceedings of the House are considered confidential, a member of a committee should not reveal to the press any information of committee reports
- ✓ A member should not take action on behalf of his constituency or some insufficient or baseless fact

the House, he met with resistance from Opposition parties. The Prime Minister and the Speaker drew the attention of the House to the number of working days lost because of the MPs' "unruly" behaviour. The resolution made it clear that the intention of today's conference was not just to apply the rod to peoples' representatives but also to restore their honour and prestige.



Jaswant Singh, I.K. Advani and Sonia Gandhi in Parliament during the conference on legislators' decorum. (PTI)

Sonia fires decorum gun at Atal

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Nov. 25: This was not Sonia Gandhi, a great stickler for discipline inside Parliament, speaking. This was Sonia Gandhi, leader of the Opposition, who wanted to rub the government's nose into the ground.

"We can certainly try and legislate discipline and decorum, but I feel the fundamental requirement is for a government that seeks consensus and cooperation," the Congress president said at today's all-India conference to work out a code of conduct for legislators.

Interestingly, it was Sonia who had put her party colleagues in Parliament on a leash,

urging them not to rush to the well of the House and to behave with dignity.

She did speak on the need to maintain discipline inside the House even today. But made it clear that the Vajpayee government had much to blame for when it came to triggering unruly scenes inside Parliament.

As far as discipline is concerned, there must be no compromise, Sonia said. "To minimise disruption there must be an absolute ban on entering the well of the House and an automatic enforcement of strict disciplinary action against any breach of this rule," the Congress president added.

But the government has to introspect, went the underlining

message from Sonia.

"It is when governments behave arbitrarily and try to impose their will without discussion, it is when governments consider dissent as 'antination-al' and approach the House with a closed mind that serious problems arise in the functioning of the legislatures," Sonia said.

The Congress has been blaming the NDA, particularly the BJP, for riding roughshod over consensus. Sonia, while ruling the lack of discipline and debate, blamed the government for trying to bulldoze the Opposition to push through unpleasant decisions without much discussion.

"We have a collective responsibility, but that extra responsibility lies with the government,"

the Congress president said. The Congress president reminded the gathering that her party has offered "constructive support" to the government.

"Although many believe that the basic rule of parliamentary democracy is 'where you stand depends on where you sit', we have not followed this rule in the national interest," she added.

Members would like to air their grievances before Parliament or legislative assemblies. But often there is not enough flexibility, Sonia said.

"There ought to be enough flexibility for members to vent their genuine feelings in the House on highly emotive issues or else these emotions will spill out on the streets," Sonia added.

Tussle between PM's men bursts into open

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Aug. 22: After maintaining a "cold, but civil" relationship for nearly a year, the rivalry between Brajesh Mishra and Jaswant Singh over foreign and security-related matters appears to have raised its head.

The latest tussle between the two seems to be over the appointments of Arun Singh and B.G. Verghese, both brought in by Jaswant to help run the defence ministry of which he has additional charge.

Arun, who had also served as defence minister in Rajiv Gandhi's government, was appointed as consultant to the ministry of defence to head the higher defence management, set up in the wake of the Kargil Review Committee.

Verghese, a veteran journalist and former editor, was appointed as a consultant to the ministry to revamp the information machinery a few months ago following the Tehelka exposé.

Mishra, national security adviser and the Prime Minister's principal secretary, whose relations with Jaswant have been less than cordial, has managed to bring the issue of the appointments to the centre stage.



Jaswant and Brajesh

The Opposition parties — the Congress and the CPM — have raised questions in Parliament about their status, describing Arun as a "de facto defence minister" and Verghese as a "super spokesman".

Jaswant, however, stoutly defended the role played by the two in the Rajya Sabha yesterday. But there are indications that both have completed the tasks they were assigned and may now be on their way out in about two weeks.

However, the resurfacing of the controversy at this juncture is a clear indication of the continued rivalry between some of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's key advisers.

The on-off rivalry between Mishra and Jaswant exploded in the open during the Pokhran blasts in 1998. It was again evident after the Agra summit with

Jaswant tilting towards home minister L.K. Advani.

The closeness between the two has started worrying Mishra, who has been under considerable pressure after the Tehelka exposé and the UTI fiasco. There are indications that though Mishra continues to enjoy the Prime Minister's confidence, he was marginalised by the Jaswant-Advani duo during the Agra summit.

However, there is nothing to suggest that the foreign minister has lost the confidence and trust of Vajpayee. But his closeness with Advani is being highlighted by his adversaries to drive home the point that Jaswant is building new bridges, his recent visit to an RSS camp being an example. There have been reports that Jaswant is positioning himself as a potential successor in a post-Vajpayee scenario.

But Jaswant has been criticised by senior foreign ministry officials who have started expressing displeasure over the way in which "outsiders" are being brought in to South Block. The reference is to some retired IFS officials, including Sati Lamba and K.V. Rajan, who had been drafted in as "advisers" to look after key areas in the ministry.

THE TELEGRAPH

23 AUG 2001

Atal, Sangh exchange healing touches

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Aug. 18: When RSS sarsanghachalak K.S. Sudarshan, right arm in a plaster, arrived this evening at 7 Race Course Road to fill in for his deputy Mohan Rao Bhagwat as the chief guest in a book release function, his intentions were evident.

Sudarshan wished to clear the air of suspicion and misunderstanding between him and Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and signal that despite the rough patches over the WTO, the Agra summit, the Prime Minister's Office and the Ram temple, all was well within the Sangh parivar.

Vajpayee appeared to be so overwhelmed by Sudarshan's gesture that he ended his speech fast, saying: "I wish to say a lot this evening, but I have decided not to because I want the press to focus exclusively on the RSS chief's speech."

The last time the Prime Minister and the RSS leader had shared a platform — at a function organised Sangh's mouthpiece immediately after the Tehelka disclosures — the frigid undertone was palpable. Shortly after that, Sudarshan shifted base from Delhi to Nagpur reportedly because his candid criticism of the NDA government — especially the PMO — ruffled feathers in the capital.

Today, it seemed Sudarshan

was determined to mend fences with the Prime Minister. Sources said Sudarshan had taken the initiative to attend this evening's function after a bereavement forced Bhagwat to cancel his engagements. The RSS chief then offered to stand in and Vajpayee readily agreed.

In a reciprocal gesture, Vajpayee went one step ahead from his "once-a-swayamsevak-always-Statesan Island, the US, last year.

Showering fulsome praise on the RSS, the Prime Minister said: "People can have their reservations about the RSS' ideology but they must also reflect on one point: how do so many individuals get bonded to the RSS for a life-

time? This art can be perfected by others only by learning lessons from the RSS. It is not accomplished through a miracle or gilded words. It is a bonding of one heart with another. The feeling is conveyed through *mamta* and concern for others."

Vajpayee said he did not spend sleepless nights pondering over ideological compulsions before joining the RSS. "I went to the Sangh for *khet kood*. I did not spend sleepless nights before joining the Sangh. But once the *silsila* started, it went on."

He urged the opponents of the RSS to change their attitude. "I wish to tell them that if they want to criticise the Sangh, let them first look at how its members be-

have towards one another. Ideologies can differ but let not the differences become so deep that it is not possible to build a bridge."

Conversion frown

Vajpayee also took potshots at the press for being "unfair" to the RSS. "Four swayamsevaks were martyred recently in Tripura. The news was sent to the press but not used. Christian missionaries also work in tough conditions in jungles, although their aim is conversion. I appreciate their spirit of social service but not the conversions. But if there is any news about these missionaries, it gets promptly printed. Why does the RSS have to put through this test as well?" he asked.



Sudarshan with Vajpayee. Picture by Jagdish Yadav

Sudarshan stressed on the ability of the swayamsevaks to "rise above themselves and view the entire society and nation as their family".

The parivar's bonhomie was in full display as its members, including VHP hardliners Vishnu Hari Dalmiya and Acharya Giriraj Kishore and RSS veteran-turned-MP Nanaji Deshmukh, seemed to savour every moment of Vajpayee's speech.

Later, Vajpayee made it a point to chat with them over tea, and a lavish spread of snacks was laid out in the lawns of his residence. The evening at 7 Race Course Road has ensured that the RSS-Vajpayee bonding has been restored, at least for the moment.

Atal exposes Advani's anxiety

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Aug. 16: In the Lok Sabha, while narrating the substance of the Agra summit, Atal Bihari Vajpayee had burst out of his sickly mien, speaking extempore and cracking jokes. At Red Fort yesterday, he clenched his fist with a *jai hind*. Today, from that fist streaked out a guided missile.

Speaking in the Rajya Sabha on his meeting with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf, the Prime Minister spilled a secret about his deputy and home minister L. K. Advani.

He said: "*Hamaare baat ke beech unko chinta ho gayi ki andar ho kya raha hai*" (The home minister was getting anxious while I was closeted with Pervez Musharraf). He thought I was chatting so he sent someone inside to find out what was going on.

Advani sat with an inscrutable expression amid the rumble of laughter that swept the House. As Vajpayee's disclosure set off a flurry of speculation, the home minister's camp held its silence.

The Opposition was still weighing the implications of the Prime Minister's statement that believers in the Vajpayee-Advani rivalry immediately saw as evidence of their view.

The display of Advani's anxiety, as revealed by the Prime Minister, rekindled memories of the Colombo meeting between Vajpayee and the then Pakistan Premier, Nawaz Sharif. As the one-to-one went on beyond the scheduled 15 to 20 minutes, Sharif's foreign minister, Gohar Ayub, paced up and down in nervous energy. Ayub had lost his job soon after.

Vajpayee's speech was meant not so much to provoke Musharraf as to silence his detractors within the BJP and the Sangh parivar. In the process, he may have added fuel to the Pakistani charge that hardliners led by Advani had scuttled the summit.

Why did Vajpayee bring up the role played by his obvious successor? A whisper campaign in the party had started immediately after the summit, according to

sources close to him. The majority of the BJP's office-bearers are still Advani loyalists and the party line on important policies and events is largely shaped by the home minister. Post-Agra, the BJP's refrain was that had it not been for Advani's presence, Musharraf would have "armtwisted" India into signing an agreement.

Such an agreement, sources presupposed, would have entailed a "drastic compromise" of India's own interests. The hint was: Vajpayee cannot be "trusted" with Kashmir. Advani saved the honour and dignity of the BJP and the nation by being more alert than all the others who were present with him. BJP sources had claimed.

Sources close to Vajpayee said the Prime Minister was hurt and angered by what was seen as an "orchestrated campaign" against him by his BJP detractors.

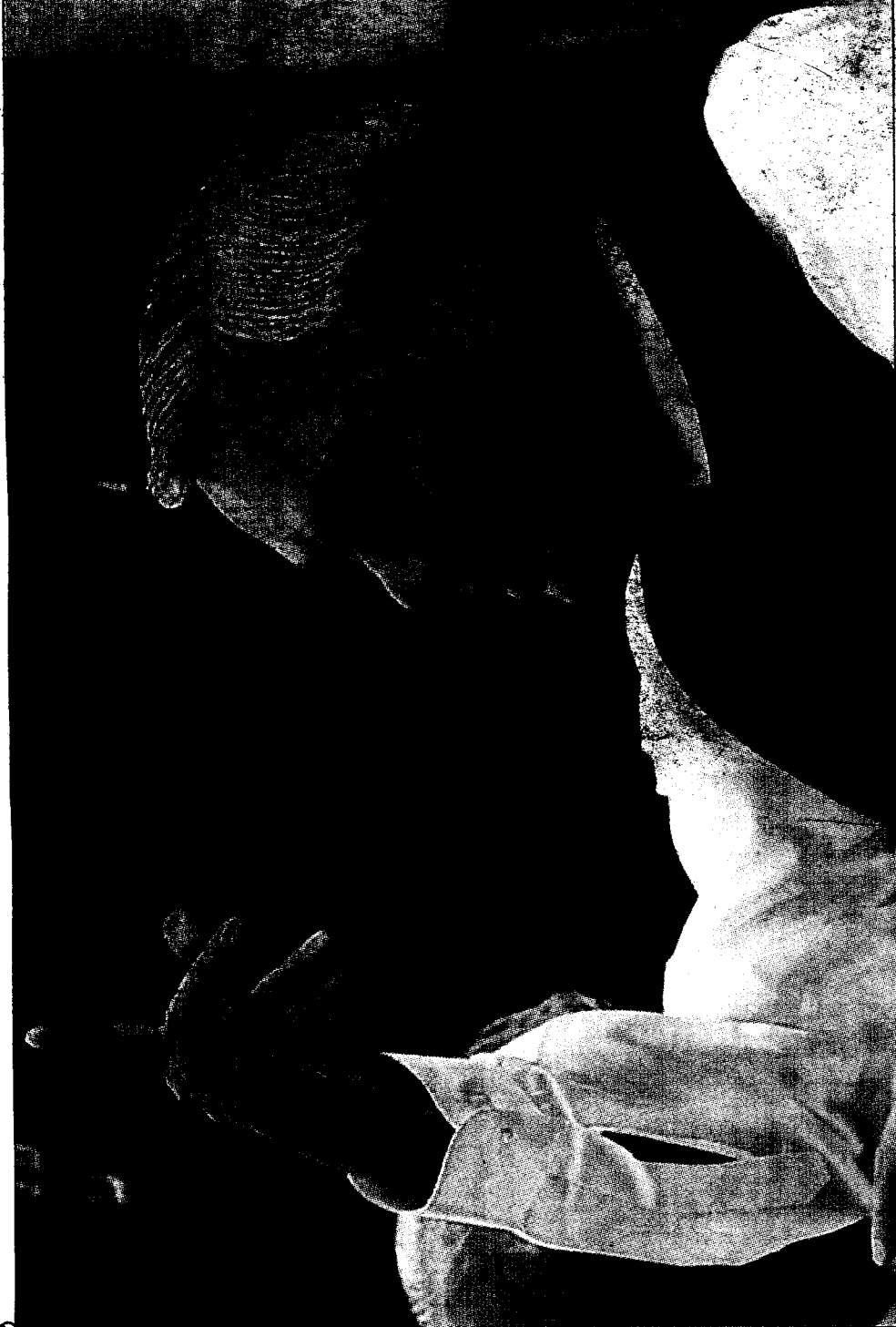
"When he said in the BJP parliamentary party meeting that 'people say I am old and ill, and therefore, I should retire,' it was said with his tongue in cheek because this was what his critics had been saying. A TV channel has been holding panel discussions on the PM's health and its verdict has been he should go."

An opinion poll recently threw up the conclusion that Vajpayee's popularity rating had dropped.

A section of the BJP has been saying: "He appears to have lost interest in everything."

Vajpayee set all such speculation at rest when he spoke in the Lok Sabha and revealed for the first time the kind of plain speaking that took place between him and Musharraf. Next came the Independence Day address from the ramparts of Red Fort. There, he sounded spirited and animated throughout.

Today, he showed he can hit as hard as his opponents. It was rumored that Advani, with parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan, called on Vajpayee at his residence shortly after the Rajya Sabha session. But sources close to the Prime Minister denied this and said they were part of a larger gathering of ministers who met at 7 Race Course Road for an informal Cabinet session.



Atal Bihari Vajpayee talks to guests at a reception on Independence Day at Rashtrapati Bhavan. (APP)

Framework of talks laid at Agra

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 16: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee revealed in the Rajya Sabha today that the Agra summit had put in place a "framework of India's future talks" with Pakistan.

This was not the first time the Prime Minister was separating strand by strand the skein of events that led to the collapse of the Agra talks. But today he was aggressive in defending the decision to invite Pervez Musharraf.

Vajpayee said Pakistan had also agreed not to raise the Kashmir issue at international fora and cited as proof of that commitment the recent Saaro gathering in Colombo where the foreign secretaries of the two countries met.

"During my talks with Musharraf in those hours I was pouring out the pent-up emotions that I have harboured within me for 40 years on the situation in Jammu and Kashmir," he said. His colleagues, including Advani — who had been at the receiving end today — thumped the table. So

did members of the Opposition. In a throwback to the Pakistan policy enunciated by P.V. Narasimha Rao when he was the Prime Minister, Vajpayee said if Pakistan insisted that Kashmir was the core issue, one had to look into the "core of the core", which he described as the part of Kashmir occupied by Pakistan.

Rao used to maintain that the only dispute over Kashmir concerned the portion in the possession of Pakistan. Vajpayee said India had wanted to know why the people of Pakistan-occupied

Kashmir were not allowed to decide if they wanted to stay with Pakistan or India.

As if to lay at rest speculation about his ill health and inability to light a spark any more, the Prime Minister laced his reply with witticisms, many of them diverted at his guest from Pakistan. "India is known for honouring its guests — *atithi jaisg'bit ho* — *harie haridare arma ke evasore mille hain* (We deserve our guests according to our karma — however they be, they are after all our guests)," he said.

Nirupam plans another salvo

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Aug. 9. - Mr Sanjay Nirupam, notwithstanding his "regret/apology" to the Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, seems to be planning another attack on the government, with focus again on the finance minister.

He and another Shiv Sena member, Mr Pritish Nandy, have given notices to the Rajya Sabha chairman, along with 21 others, mostly belonging to the Left and Congress, for a special discussion on the economic slowdown and deterioration of the economy, it is learnt.

The notices (given under Rule 176) have been considered by the chairman's office and a short-duration discussion on the issue has been listed for Monday, it is learnt.

The notices seek to "raise the discussion on economic slowdown, fall in the GDP, deteriorating financial condition in the context of mid-term appraisal of the 9th plan".

The names of members who

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head the list of notices include Mr V V Raghavan, Mr J Chithranjan, Mr Gaya Singh (CPI), Mr Pranab Mukherjee and Mr Suresh Pachouri of Congress.

Since the Opposition is planning to make use of this debate to further embarrass the government and target Mr Yashwant Sinha, the two Sena leaders joining in could add to the fire.

Many see a political message in the move since it comes in the wake of Mr Bal Thackeray asking the BJP to be aware of its limitations.

Mr Nirupam was not available for comment. Sena sources said the fact that he and Mr Nandy have given notices on a debate on economic slowdown signals another move by the party to show its unhappiness over the health of national economy and thus the performance of the Vajpayee government.

■ Thackeray calls meeting of Sena MPs: page 8

Centre decides to clamp down on 'disturbed' J&K

All districts except Ladakh will come under Armed Forces Act

Times News Network & PTI
NEW DELHI: The entire state of Jammu and Kashmir barring Ladakh district is being brought under the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act (popularly known as the Disturbed Areas Act), to protect the lives of ordinary citizens from being made soft targets by terrorists.

The imposition of the Special Powers Act will enable the armed forces to assist the security forces in carrying out searches without hindrance from the civil courts and comes in the wake of a heightened spate of violence unleashed by militants on soft civilian targets in Doda and at Jammu railway station on Tuesday. At least ten peo-

mediapersons as soon as he came out of a two-hour-long meeting.

The decision was taken at that high-powered meeting, chaired by home minister L.K. Advani on Wednesday, when Mr Abdullah and state governor G.C. Saxena made this recommendation. The announcement of the act will be made by Mr Advani in parliament on Thursday.

Others present at the meeting were defence and external affairs minister Jaswant Singh, minister of state for home affairs I.D. Swami, railway minister Nitish Kumar, home secretary Kamal Pande, the director general of military operations, the directors general of the BSF, CRPF and the Intelligence

Bureau chief.

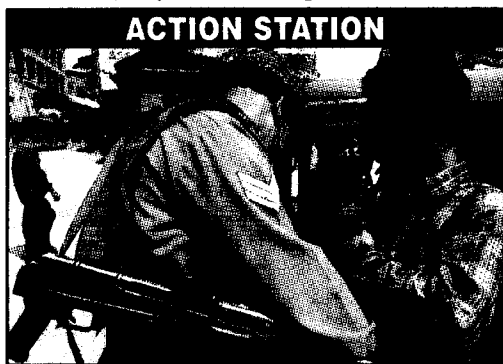
Asked if the proposed move would not go against human rights principles, Mr Abdullah said, "Where were these human rights activists when ordinary people, women and children were being killed by militants? We have to deal with militancy firmly."

He said that the government had taken several crucial decisions to strengthen security all

over the state at public places.

The number of security personnel has also been increased, with additional paramilitary forces being rushed from elsewhere in the country. Asked when the act would come into force, Mr Abdullah said, "The home minister will make an announcement in parliament on Thursday and thereafter, the act will come into force immediately."

Mr Nitish Kumar said, "I was called in view of the attack on railway stations. We discussed the security requirements and other needs of passengers. Several measures have been taken in this respect. We are sending Northern Railways officials to assess the exact nature of the security requirements at Jammu station."



ACTION STATION
A security officer frisks a man in Srinagar's Lal Chowk area on Wednesday after security was beefed up following the attack on Jammu railway station.

ple died when militants opened fire on the general public.

Some areas of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) had already been brought under this act. The armed forces (J&K) Special Powers Act was enacted by parliament on September 10, 1990. The state government had then declared "areas falling within 20 km of the Line of Control in the districts of Rajouri and Pooch and the districts of Anantnag, Baramulla, Budgam, Kupwara, Pulwama and Srinagar" as disturbed areas under the provisions of Section 3 of the act.

But with the fresh declaration, all remaining districts of J&K, like Jammu, Udhampur, Kathua and Kishtwar (except Ladakh), will come under the purview of the act, chief minister Farooq Abdullah told

THE TIMES OF INDIA

79 400 251

Cabinet clears PM dream scheme

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 8: The Cabinet has approved Atal Bihari Vajpayee's dream road project.

The Rs 34,200-crore Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojna will be implemented as a fully Centrally-funded scheme.

Pramod Mahajan, the parliamentary affairs minister, said the requirement of an approval by the full Planning Commission has been waived for this programme which is otherwise mandatory for any Centrally-sponsored scheme.

Under the programme, all unconnected habitations in rural areas with a population of 1,000 and more will be linked by all-weather roads in three years (2000-2003) while those with a population of 500 or more will be covered by the end of the 10th plan (2007). However, in hill states and desert areas, the objective will be to connect populations of 250 and more. Under the programme, 1.40 lakh habitations will be connected by all-weather roads by 2007, Mahajan said.

The total number of habitations in the country are 7.45 lakh, out of which 2.93 lakh are unconnected. The yojana was announced by the Prime Minister on August 15, 2000, and was launched in December.

The Cabinet has authorised the government to raise additional financial resources through borrowings from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank to complete the programme by the target date.

Now, most of the funding will come out of a cess imposed on diesel which yields about Rs 2,500 crore a year.

The Cabinet also approved upgradation of existing links that are not all-weather roads at a cost of Rs 24,000 crore.

It cleared three legislations: Tea Districts Immigrant Labour (repealing) Bill, 2001, Inland Waterways Authority India (amendment) Bill, 2001, and National Commission for Safai Karamchari Management Bill, 2001.

Another proposal that received the nod is an exchange of a plot of land of about 9.18 hectares between the navy and the Andaman and Nicobar administration at Campbell Bay.

With the Cabinet giving its approval of an agreement today, India and Yemen can now offer investors in each other's country the right to free transfer of investments and returns for 10 years.

THE TELEGRAPH

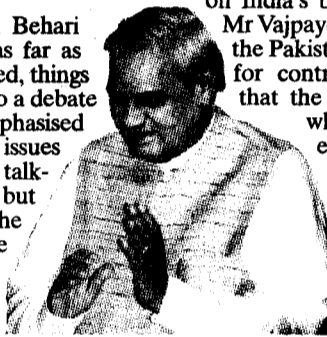
9 AUG 2001

PM takes diplomatic route, says talks with Pakistan will go on

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Tuesday asserted that as far as relations with Pakistan were concerned, things could only move ahead. Responding to a debate in the Lok Sabha, Mr Vajpayee emphasised that there was "some agreement" on issues with Pakistan and that the process of talking with Pakistan would continue, but without in any way compromising the country's security. There would also be no change on India's stand that an end to cross-border terrorism was a must before any substantive achievement could be expected from the talks.

Delivered extempore in Hindi, the Prime Minister's remarks came across as a sober and forceful assertion of the government's point of view that the talks were not a failure and that there had been no compromise



on India's basic stand on cross-border terrorism. Mr Vajpayee conceded he was unable to convince the Pakistani President about accepting the need for controlling "cross-border terrorism" and that the talks were undermined at the point when Gen Pervez Musharraf began to extol terrorists as freedom-fighters.

Citing confidentiality, the PM refused to divulge the contents of his one-on-one talks, but he confirmed that the General was insistent on discussing nothing else but Kashmir. At one point, said Mr Vajpayee, the discussion veered around to the tribal invasion of 1947, and he was

surprised when Gen Musharraf candidly asserted that if it were not for that attack, Pakistan would not even have that portion of Kashmir which it now controls.

VHP ultimatum to Advani to check J&K violence

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 6 AUGUST

THE VISHWA Hindu Parishad (VHP), on Monday, served a two-week "ultimatum" to Union home minister L.K. Advani to initiate strong measures to rein in the militants in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

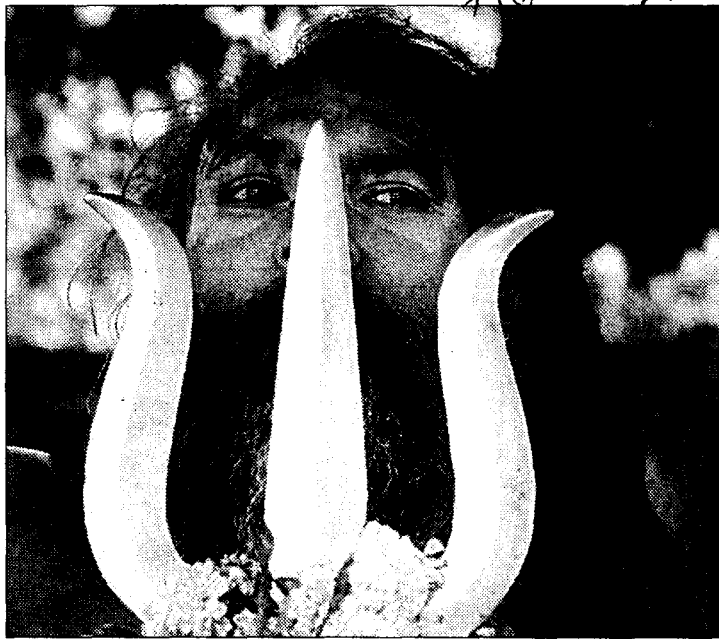
"Failing this, we will reconsider the future of our ties with the government," VHP president Vishnu Hari Dalmiya threatened here on Monday. He also hinted the party may consider seeking Mr Advani's resignation, depending on whether sufficient action was taken in the coming fortnight.

The pro-Hindu outfit, which held the Union and J&K governments equally responsible for the recent killings of Hindus in Doda, was joined by the Bajrang Dal in demanding dismissal of the Farooq Abdullah government for allegedly providing shelter to the Pakistan-sponsored militant groups. The saffron outfits also said the security forces should be given a free hand to stamp out militancy.

"We don't blame Pakistan for whatever is happening in J&K because it has openly threatened to step up militancy after the failure of the Agra summit. However, if our government still did not make adequate security arrangements, it is at fault," Mr Dalmiya told reporters.

Mr Dalmiya was unsparing in questioning the sincerity of Mr Advani's statement in Aligarh on Sunday that militancy will be crushed with an iron hand. "Statements don't satisfy people and the VHP," he said, adding that the outfit was giving the home minister the "last chance" to implement his statement.

Even as the saffron brigade served the ultimatum, the BJP led the protest over the Doda killings in Parliament. The sharpest barbs came from Congress leader Priyaranjan Das Munshi, who accused Mr Advani of being "ineffective, incapable and insincere" in dealing with the spurt in militancy in the Valley state and even questioned his continuation as the home minister. BJP MPs M.L. Khurana, Vijay Goel and Vinay Katiyar asked the government to act firmly against the Pakistan-sponsored mercenaries who were



FUNDAMENTAL RAGE

targeting innocent civilians in the name of "jihad."

The BJP's eagerness to retain its role as the champion of the Hindu cause was obvious in its members' efforts not to allow the Congress, Left and other opposi-

tion parties to take up cudgels on behalf of the community in Parliament. The BJP MPs raised a din while the issue was being discussed, with Speaker P.M. Sayeed requesting the members to restore order.

Clean chit to madrasas comes under fire

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 6 AUGUST

THE VHP and the Bajrang Dal, on Monday, came down heavily on Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee over his statement on Sunday that it was not right to link ISI-backed fundamentalist activities to madrasas across the country. Criticising Mr Vajpayee for giving a "clean chit" to madrasas, the saffron outfits alleged that these institutions were the "breeding ground for fundamentalism" and were being used for "Islamisation of the country."

VHP president V.H. Dalmiya said the Prime Minister's giving "clean chit" to the madrasas will only encourage terrorism in the country. "Indian political leaders are scared of the psychological jihad being waged by the extremists," alleged the Bajrang Dal and added that "it was due to this fear psychology that Mr Vajpayee was forced to give a clean chit to madrasas which no other political leader dared."

The Prime Minister while addressing a delegation of prominent Muslims including religious leaders of the community on Sunday, told them that the report of the group of ministers on national security headed by Union home minister L.K. Advani had not described madrasas as centres for ISI activities.

He said steps should be taken to strengthen the madrasas and they should be asked to impart modern education, particularly in border areas which lacked such facilities.

Centre buys UTI peace with probe

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 3: The Centre today gave in to the Congress demand for a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) probe into the UTI mess, a day after finance minister Yashwant Sinha ruled out any such investigation. The JPC investigating the stock market plunge will widen its probe to include the muddle in UTI.

Though Opposition parties see this as their victory, BJP insiders say the clubbing of the two probes could take the sting out of the investigation.

The decision was endorsed by leaders of all parties at a meeting this morning in Speaker G.M.C. Balayogi's chamber. Announcing the decision in the House, Balayogi made it clear that the JPC will probe "all issues relating to UTI, including issues discussed in the House".

This implies that the committee will also look into allegations levelled by Sanjay Nirupam of the Shiv Sena that the PMO was involved in the UTI muddle.

Parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan, however, maintained that the terms of reference of the current JPC remains unchanged. If that is the

case, the scope of the probe is narrower, with the JPC going only into the "irregularities and manipulations in all transactions, including insider trading".

In a chat with reporters, Mahajan indicated that the JPC could quiz Sinha, but would not bother the PMO officials.

But the Congress made it clear that it will seek a probe into the roles allegedly played by the PMO and the Prime Minister's foster son-in-law, Ranjan Bhatnacharya.

"The PMO has never been above the scrutiny of the JPC. The JPC probe into the securities scam some years back had gone

into the role of the PMO," party spokesman S. Jaipal Reddy, also a member of the JPC on the stock market scam, told reporters. He added that the JPC would also probe Bhattacharya's role.

Reddy told the meeting convened by Balayogi that the Congress wanted a formal amendment to the terms of reference but did not press the issue.

The party, however, maintained that it would not scale down its demand for Sinha's resignation. "His continuation in office is a blot on the fair name of Indian democracy," Reddy said.

The Opposition had demanded Sinha's resignation and a JPC

probe yesterday. But Mani Shankar Aiyar of the Congress suggested that if the government was not agreeable to a full-fledged JPC probe, it could club it with another one.

Congress chief whip Priya Ranjan Das Munshi raised the matter during zero hour this morning. When Mahajan indicated that Aiyar's suggestion could be accepted, the Speaker decided to call an all-party meeting to formalise the decision.

The JPC is likely to meet on August 28 to grill former UTI chairman P.S. Subramanyam. All its meetings slated for the next two weeks have, however, been

cancelled because of "other engagements of its members".

The JPC will formally seek an extension as the decision to entrust it with investigations into the UTI muddle will add to its pending work, chairman Sriprakash Mani Tripathi said.

"We will seek an extension as many areas need to be covered. Moreover, the decision to entrust us with the probe into the UTI affairs will enlarge our area of work," he said. "Cancellation of some meetings due to pre-occupation of the members has also prompted us to seek an extension," Tripathi added.

■ See Business Telegraph

LS rejects Opp motion; I won't quit: Yashwant

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Aug. 2. — The Lok Sabha tonight rejected an adjournment motion seeking to censure the government for "mismanaging" the US-64 scheme while a BSP member alleged that the Ambanis were the real culprits behind the fiasco and demanded a CBI probe into their role.

In the Rajya Sabha, the finance minister said he wouldn't quit because that wouldn't help restore people's confidence in the financial market. He also ruled out setting up of a joint parliamentary committee to probe the UTI scam.

The BSP member, Mr Rashid Alvi, told the Lok Sabha during the debate on the adjournment motion that politicians were linked with corporate houses, especially the Ambanis.

While several speakers shied away from naming the influential Mumbai-based business family, Mr Alvi said the CBI should probe the role of Mr Dhirubhai Ambani and his son, Anil, in the US-64 fiasco.

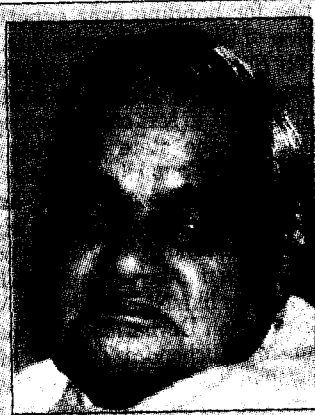
"If Parliament's wall could speak, one would hear how politicians have been trying to protect the Ambanis' interest. The Ambanis can today decide who will be the ministers and secretaries. The political establishment, unfortunately, has been under the Ambanis' influence," Mr Alvi said.

A couple of months ago, Mr Alvi had released some documents on the Ambanis' "questionable" role in the recent share-market crash. Later, he had to approach Mr LK Advani for police protection.

Mr George Fernandes too named the Ambanis though he was defending the government. "I know not many people want to take this name. But I have no problem naming the Ambanis". From the BJP, Mr Kirat Somayya referred to the Ambanis' role in the scam.

Apart from the Ambanis, the members, including some from the Treasury benches, accused

FOUR LEADERS IN SEARCH OF CREDIBILITY

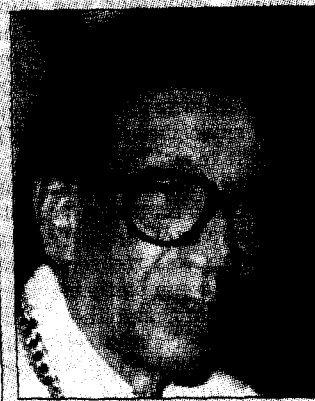


Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee



Mr Yashwant Sinha

- Thackeray says Shiv Sena will support NDA but have its own agenda
- A BSP member demands CBI probe into the Ambanis' role in UTI scam
- Zee Television and HFCL too are accused of duping the UTI
- Yashwant Sinha says UTI kept the finance ministry in the dark



Mr Bal Thackeray



Mr George Fernandes

some other corporate houses, Zee Television and HFCL, of duping the UTI.

The finance minister couldn't reply to the debate on the motion moved by Mr Priya Ranjan Das Munshi (Congress) and supported by the entire Opposition.

The Trinamul opposed the mo-

On page 8
Sena not to compromise
on agenda

On page 10
UTI schemes under Sebi
guidelines

tion. Shiv Sena members didn't participate in the debate but voted against the motion. Miss Mamata Banerjee made a surprise appear-

ance at the end of the debate. Congress members disrupted the proceedings after Mr Sinha said: "I don't consider it worth responding to the charges made

by Mr Raghuvans Prasad Singh." Mr Singh (RJD) had made some personal insinuation against Mr Sinha.

TV cameras were switched off when the Congress members, prodded on by Mrs Sonia Gandhi and Mr Madhavrao Scindia, rushed to the well, shouting "Witta mantri murdabad, Witta mantri istifa do".

The Speaker's plea to restore order fell on deaf ears. A desperate Mr GMC Balayogi even threatened to carry the division on the motion without the finance minister's reply. At one stage, even the Prime Minister tried to end the stalemate.

After the members resumed their seat, Mr Das Munshi kept saying something and refused to allow Mr Vajpayee to speak.

The Speaker left the House in a huff asking Mr PM Syed to preside over the proceedings. He held meetings with the parliamentary affairs minister and Mr Scindia in his chamber.

After coming out of Speaker's room, Mr Scindia signalled his colleagues to again enter the Well. There was chaos again and the Deputy Speaker asked Mr Das Munshi to exercise his right to conclude the debate since the adjournment motion had to be put to vote today.

The motion was defeated by a voice vote.

Earlier, the Treasury members, including Mr Arun Jaitley, Mr Fernandes and Mr Somayya, argued that the government had a limited role in managing the UTI.

This was rejected by Mr Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M) who said the UTI was a statutory body and its trustees were the heads of the IDBI, RBI, SBI and Syndicate Bank. All these are under the finance ministry.

In the Rajya Sabha, Mr Sinha blamed the former UTI chairman, Mr Subramaniam, for keeping the finance ministry and UTI board in the dark about US-64.

See MOTION: page 8

Sena snub for Vajpayee

9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18.

HT Correspondents
New Delhi/Mumbai, August 1

WHY THACKERAY IS UPSET WITH THE BJP

BAL THACKERAY said on Tuesday that he called for the boycott of the NDA meet to protest the BJP's failure to co-operate with him in toppling the Congress-led Democratic Front Government in Maharashtra. The Sena was set to move a no-confidence motion against Speaker Arun Gujarathi of the NCP in the Assembly today but dropped it after it was clear that the BJP didn't support the motion. Thackeray said he was still annoyed with the PMO. "There are certain things that are wrong there and those problems continue. I have not changed my mind about them," he said. **HTC, Mumbai**

IF YOU don't want to blink in a staring match, all you have to do is turn away. In what has been reduced to an ego tussle between Prime Minister AB Vajpayee and Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray, the Sena today stayed away from the NDA meeting that reaffirmed the coalition partners' faith in Vajpayee's leadership. There was also no sign of an apology from Sena MP Sanjay Nirupam for his attack on the PMO. And no hint that one would come.

Had the Sena done the opposite in each case, the crisis in the NDA may well have been over. Both the Sena's decisions came directly from Thackeray.

Till 9.10 am, the Shiv Sena was scheduled to attend the NDA meeting. Power Minister Suresh Prabhu, who was to represent his party, was about to leave home to get to 7, Race Course Road where the meeting was due to start at 9.30 am. At 9.10 am, his phone

rang. It was one of Thackeray's minions, calling from Mumbai. The instruction was simple: stay away from the meeting.

During his conversation with the Prime Minister on Tuesday night, Thackeray had apparently been very conciliatory. In fact, he had told the Prime Minister that the Sena had full faith in his leadership. It was almost certain last evening that Prabhu would attend today's meeting.

George Fernandes and LK Advani also made calls to Thackeray last evening. Both told Thackeray how upset the PM was over Nirupam's statements. And how important it was for the

Sena to attend the NDA meeting.

Sources say Fernandes had also asked Thackeray why he wasn't reprimanding Nirupam. Thackeray ducked the question saying he had already expressed his "displeasure", and assured Fernandes the Sena would be there at Race Course Road.

But at 9.30 am, when Prabhu hadn't shown up, Fernandes made a distress call to Thackeray. But by now, the Sena chief's tone had changed: he would "have to take a view" he said, on whether his party was going to be part of the meeting. In other words, Prabhu wasn't going to attend.

As the NDA piled platitudes on

the Prime Minister, Thackeray issued orders to his men. MPs Anand Geete (Lok Sabha) and Satish Pradhan (Rajya Sabha) were told to keep off the press. When *Hindustan Times* asked Sanjay Nirupam if Thackeray had told him to apologise, he said, "I've just been asked to sit tight."

So what was behind Thackeray's volte-face? Insiders say that Nirupam is as much of a problem for him as for the Prime Minister. Nirupam is from Bihar, and the "Maharashtrian" core of the Sena, led by Thackeray's nephew Raj, is upset over his promotion within the party. And several Sena MPs from Maharashtra are resentful that a non-Maharashtrian is, for practical purposes, the party's face in the Capital.

Although Nirupam finds himself isolated, he has Thackeray's son Uddhav's backing. It was Uddhav who ensured he got a Rajya Sabha ticket. And it is likely that it is Uddhav, not Thackeray, who stands between Nirupam and an apology to the PM.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
THE HINDUSTAN GRAPH
2 AUG 2001

SENA ABSENT AT MEET, CODE OF CONDUCT PLANNED

NDA reaffirms faith in PM

By Our Special Correspondent

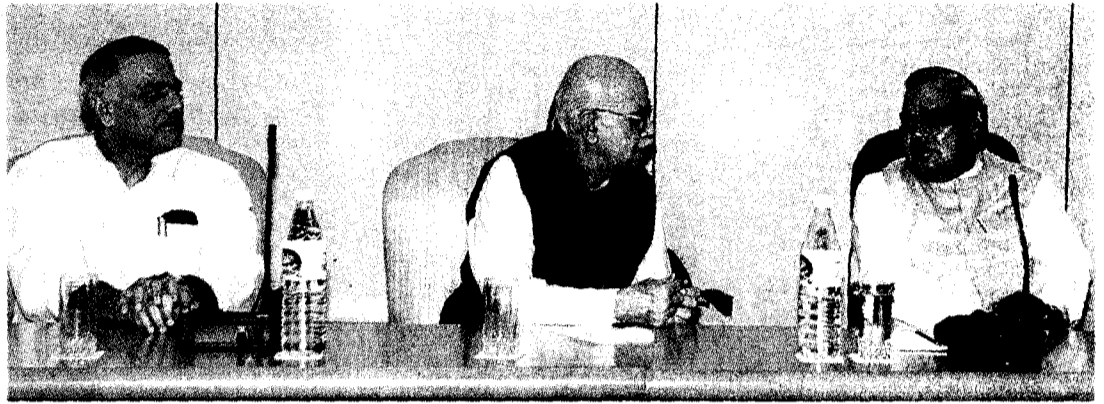
NEW DELHI, AUG. 1. The National Democratic Alliance today expressed "unqualified faith and trust" in the leadership of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, who later described as a "closed chapter" his offer of resignation made yesterday. However, the conspicuous absence of the Shiv Sena at the NDA meeting was a clear signal that the problem of cohesiveness in the ruling alliance was far from over.

By evening, the NDA convener and trouble-shooter, Mr. George Fernandes, had rushed to Mumbai in an effort to pacify the Sena chief, Mr. Balasaheb Thackeray, and try to prevent any unpleasant outburst at a press conference scheduled to be addressed by him tomorrow noon. The Bharatiya Janata Party leaders here said efforts were being made to "persuade" Mr. Thackeray to cancel his press conference.

Notwithstanding the re-dedication of the NDA to work as a "solid phalanx" under Mr. Vajpayee, expressed through a resolution adopted during the meeting at 7, Race Course Road, conflicting signals came throughout the day from the Sena, whose MP, Mr. Sanjay Nirupam, had presumably caused the anguish and pain to Mr. Vajpayee and triggered his offer to quit office by attacking the PMO in connection with the Unit trust of India scandal.

Sena MPs' response

The meeting began 30 minutes late as efforts were being made to get the Shiv Sena chief to send a representative. Although Mr. Fernandes later told reporters he had been personally assured by Mr. Thackeray over phone that Mr. Suresh Prabhu, Power Minister, would attend, there was no sign of him. (Mr. Prabhu is reported to have said that Mr. Thackeray had asked him to stay away). And Sena MPs spread the word that henceforth they would not open their mouths in Parliament, only



The Union Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha, the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, at the NDA meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. — Photo: Anu Pushkarna

their Ministers would speak to respond to specific questions when absolutely necessary, an expression of anger at the effort by the BJP to "silence" criticism by their MPs.

That all was not well within the NDA was clear. Mr. Vajpayee is re-

ported to have expressed concern about the lack of cohesion in the NDA and distress over the irresponsible behaviour of some members. Those who cannot maintain discipline "should think about where they want to be (*weh apne bare mein sochen*)" Mr. Vaj-

payee said, hinting that they could go.

If the Prime Minister did not make himself crystal-clear, Mr. Fernandes who later briefed reporters did. He said those in the Government should not go out and criticise Government decisions "and if they do, they are free to go."

The one-page NDA resolution decided to formulate a code of conduct applicable to all member-parties "to ensure adherence by all to the canons of coalition politics". Mr. Sikander Bakht (BJP), Mr. Murasoli Maran (DMK), Mr. Arjun Charan Sethi (BJD) and Mr. Fernandes (Samata Party) have been asked to draft the code within the next 8 to 10 days.

The resolution said the NDA would "not allow the Opposition to make political capital out of this development." And although "this development" was caused by the ruling alliance and by Mr. Vajpayee's resignation offer, the NDA did not lose an opportunity to tell the Opposition "to allow meaningful debates in Parliament" and "not to disturb its smooth functioning". And through all this, what went practically unnoticed was the attendance of the PMK's Mr. E. Ponnuswamy at the meeting.

Why Sena was upset

By Mahesh Vijapurkar

MUMBAI, AUG. 1. The Shiv Sena has announced that it will remain with the multi-party alliance because it believes in the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and desires to put the country above politics. The Sena supremo, Mr. Bal Thackeray, announced this after a meeting with the NDA convener, Mr. George Fernandes, at the former's residence and explained the reasons why the Sena stayed away from the NDA meeting.

According to Mr. Thackeray, he was upset at the realisation that some unnamed leader from the BJP sabotaged the Shiv Sena's plans of pulling down the Democratic Front Government in Maharashtra which was, "very close to a reality." That was the main reason why the party stayed away from the NDA session today.

While Mr. Fernandes' mission to Mumbai was successful, in that he got an assurance on the continued presence of the Shiv Sena in the NDA, he was apparently stunned at Mr. Thackeray's proposition that someone from Delhi put an end, at least for now, to the efforts to bring down the Maharashtra Government and replace it with a Shiv Sena-BJP arrangement.

However on the question of the Sena MP, Mr. Sanjay Nirupam's controversial statement in the Rajya Sabha, Mr. Thackeray was neither apologetic nor appreciative. He merely told the correspondents that Mr. Nirupam was only giving some telephone numbers called by the disgraced UTI Chief, Mr. P.S. Subrahmanyam, in New Delhi and wanted it probed.

OWN MAN AGAIN!

25/8 The PMO and family to blame MS

*I*M too old and ill and unable to manage the NDA. Thus spake prime minister Vajpayee on 31 July at a meeting of BJP MPs. His sincerity is not in question; his anguish too palpable to be missed. These things do not happen overnight; they have a gestation period. The reference to managing the NDA cannot be the whole or even the main reason; he has had no trouble in this direction except that a member of the NDA, Sanjay Nirupam of the Shiv Sena has hurt him badly. Nirupam would not have spoken without clearance of his boss, Bal Thackeray who has felt neglected and alone but has his own agenda, a fact not unknown to the prime minister. Nirupam does not speak unless he has something to say. The hurt to the Prime Minister was on two grounds, neither of them new nor a surprise. One the role of the PMO, which Vajpayee has apparently come to depend upon well beyond what could possibly be good for him or for his government. NK Singh, now in the Planning Commission has threatened to sue Nirupam; this is out of character and suggests nervousness. It is not NK's style but it is possible that he is not alone. Brajesh Mishra is not generally unaware of what is being done within the PMO but it is possible that their intervention in the UTI affair, if Nirupam is right, has different and perhaps irreconcilable motives.

The other hurt is personal and concerns his son-in-law who lives with him and visits the PMO frequently. We have had occasion to comment on his involvement in the SOS from Jyoti Basu's corner to Delhi pleading for the income-tax raids on the Todi father and son and Chandan Basu to be called off as it was a major embarrassment to the former chief minister of West Bengal. That this was not the only instance can be safely assumed. Vajpayee is not the one to overstay his welcome. He still has a lot to contribute to the country; it is clear that if he were to leave no one else in the government will be able to hold the NDA together. Held up in Kolkata with a raging fever, the stormy petrel of the Trinamul Congress has had no hesitation in sending Vajpayee a reassuring message. Mamata has a close and affectionate relationship with Vajpayee, which is reciprocated.

For the time being the cracks have been papered over and it has been all hands to the mast. The question is will this last. Partly it is in the hands of the Prime Minister himself. He has sent NK Singh away; only time will tell whether it was too late. Brajesh Mishra has been in the PMO too long for any good that he may be doing; is the Prime Minister ready to part with him? Nobody is indispensable. The PMO has grown tremendously from the time it was set up because Indira Gandhi did not trust her ministers. The Prime Minister needs a secretariat; he does not need a parallel government. The distinction has been blurred over time. The co-ordination of the various ministries is the job of the Cabinet Secretary, there is no room in a democratic polity for big brother to be watching. The fallacy has been to regard men in the PMO as knowing everything from foreign affairs to defence, economics and domestic politics — it has only succeeded in making the Prime Minister a cocooned creature in their hands. It is time for a change. It will be good for Vajpayee who can be his own man again.

THE STATESMAN

27 AUG 2001

5.8 118 Allies sing the wrong tune against PM

**SANJAY SINGH
 STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**

NEW DELHI, July 31. — The NDA constituent parties' leaders are concerned more with the contents of the Prime Minister's outburst today and the forum he chose to do so than his offer to step down from office.

A senior NDA leader said if Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee was hurt by the Shiv Sena MP, Mr Sanjay Nirupam's statement in the Rajya Sabha alleging the possible involvement of the PMO in the UTI scam, then he should have called an NDA meeting to discuss the issue.

He also could have made an offer to quit if some of the alliance partners expressed lack of faith in him. The BJP parliamentary party meeting was not

the right forum for the Prime Minister to say that the NDA was not functioning in a disciplined manner.

"No alliance partner, at least during the present NDA regime ever made such expression. The NDA has so far been functioning in a coherent and disciplined manner," the NDA leader said.

The statement released by the parlia-



A file photograph of Mr AB Vajpayee paying tribute to Kargil martyrs in July. — APIPTI

mentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, said: "The Prime Minister did express his desire to quit office, in view of his inability to have the NDA function in a coherent and disciplined manner."

Others blamed the intra-party bickering of BJP and Sangh Parivara for Mr Vajpayee's rather unusual emotional outburst. The leader of the parliamentary par-

ty, Mr Devendra Prasad Yadav, said: "The allies had been following the national agenda as approved by the coalition and had not done anything to disturb that. The non-cooperation is not from the allies but from the members of the Sangh Parivar and some elements within the BJP, he should have made efforts to discipline them."

"The BJP president, Mr Jana Krishnamurthy, wanted to have a bigger role for his party in the coalition and tried to redefine the relationship between the party and the government. He tried to poach into certain prerogatives of the Prime Minister to allow entry of different political parties in the NDA, and also whether or not they should be given berth in the Cabinet," another NDA leader said.

Why is Sonia soft on govt, wonder Congmen

**MOHAN SAHAY
 STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE**

NEW DELHI, July 31 — A soft line on the Prime Minister vis-à-vis the UTI scam has left some sections of the Congress wondering about Mrs Sonia Gandhi's leadership, sparking a debate about the occupancy of the top position.

Unlike the Tehelka expose, the Congress today restrained itself from asking the Prime Minister to resign. Instead, the party said, "We are weighing the evidence against the Prime Minister". Mr Vajpayee should come clean on the allegations of involvement of his office in the

put ahead of the UTI scam in the Opposition's parliamentary list. The "surrender", sources said, came "tamely" at the Business Advisory Committee meeting - between floor leaders of the House and the Speaker - preceding the monsoon session.

Congress workers also feel that Mrs Gandhi is too ready to listen to suggestions from the treasury benches. They claim that before the session, a message was conveyed to Mrs Gandhi that the Congress should be "constructive" in its opposition.

This suggestion, insist some Congress leaders, was a hint that the Congress, the main Opposition group, treat the UTI

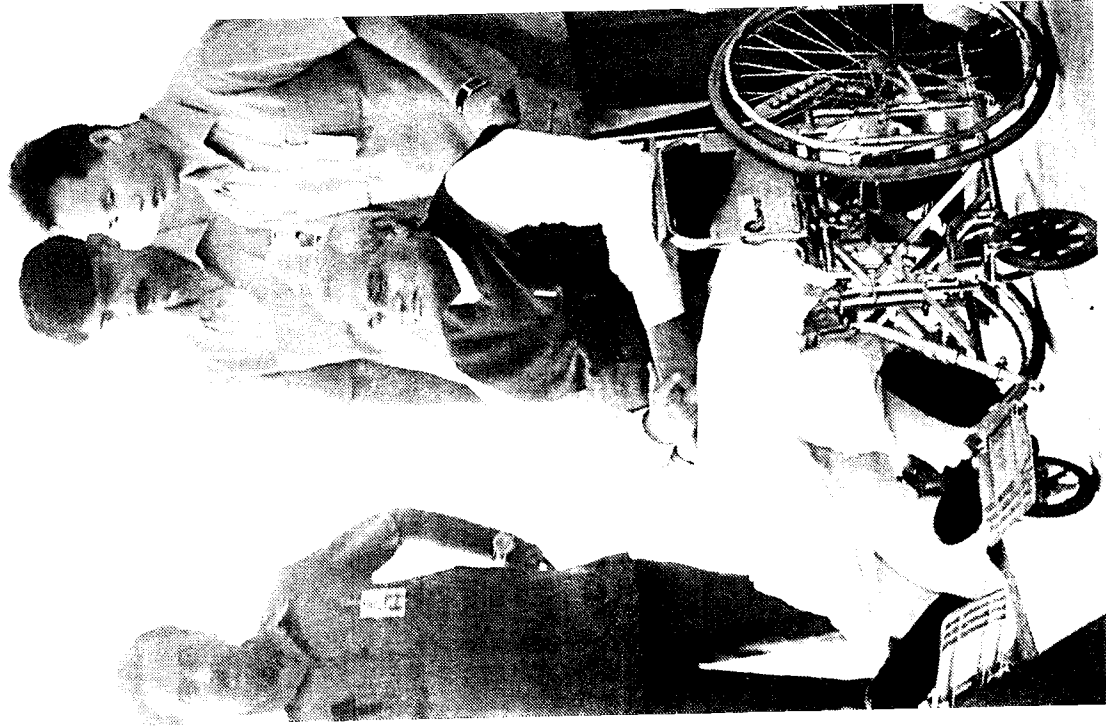
scandal with less gusto than it applied to the Tehelka expose. That the Congress leadership agreed to take the suggestion is "proved" by the fact that it agreed to a short notice discussion on UTI in the Rajya Sabha, said party sources. During the first days of this session, UTI did not come up in the Lok Sabha. This, say some Congress leaders, is "highly unusual" given the "ammunition" the Opposition has against the government on UTI.

Dissatisfied Congress leaders also have a theory explaining Mrs Gandhi's "low key" leadership style. They say that Mrs Gandhi's strategy is to provide as

much opposition as is required for form's sake, but no more.

Mrs Gandhi's "key" political advisers - Mr Arjun Singh, Mr Makhan Lal Fotedar, Mrs Ambika Soni and Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad - favour a status quo at the Centre, sources said.

"It suits the leadership", remarked a Congress leader. Mrs Sonia Gandhi enjoys the status of a Cabinet minister by virtue of being the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha. She is in control of the Congress apparatus and there are some 10 chief ministers belonging to her party in various states. What else does she need? asked a Congress leader.



A file photograph of Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee being wheeled out of Mumbai's Breach Candy Hospital after his knee surgery in June. — APIPTI.

Ally sucks PMO into UPI scandal

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 30: The Prime Minister's Office and its key former official — N.K. Singh — today stood directly accused by an ally as the "hidden hands" that had influenced Unit Trust of India to make one of its biggest dud investments last year in Lucknow-based Cyberspace Infosys.

Mobile telephone records of sacked UPI chief P.S. Subramanyam, which were bandied about in Parliament by Shiv Sena MP Sanjay Nirupam, indicated that

someone from Singh's residence spoke to the UPI chief at 2.19 pm on July 20 last year, a day before the Trust reversed its decision not to invest in Cyberspace.

Today's revelations also appeared to confirm Subramanyam's lawyer Satish Manishinde's submission in a Mumbai court last week that "hidden hands" had influenced UPI investment decisions.

On July 17 last year, UPI had decided against investing in the company after its equity research cell counselled against it.

On the same day, Subramanyam spoke to someone using

a mobile phone registered as belonging to the Prime Minister's Office. A call was also made by the sacked UPI chief to this mobile number — 9810180481 — on July 20 at 2.38 pm. Finally, on July 21, UPI's board of trustees agreed to invest Rs 32 crore to pick up 3.45 lakh shares of Cyberspace at Rs 930 per share. The stock is now quoting below Rs 9.

The Sena is an ally of the BJP and Nirupam was actually expected to come out in support of finance minister Yashwant Sinha.

Another BJP ally, the Telugu Desam, too, took the finance minister to task for the UPI scam. Its

member, Ramachandraiah, bluntly referred to the scam and described the government's response to it as "hoodwinking the public".

Nirupam's same-side attack caught many by surprise. The Sena MP stirred up a storm in the Rajya Sabha when he popped another cell number — 9811074666 — from which a call had been made to Subramanyam. The mobile, he claimed, belonged to "unke *damad*" (son-in-law).

Most, including treasury bench members, took this to mean the PM's son-in-law Ranjan Bhatnacharya and reacted angrily. Nirupam immediately changed

his stance and said: "It could have been anyone's son-in-law — even Subramanyam's... they could have been discussing the weather."

But the Sena leader knew damage had been done without any breach of parliamentary privilege. To add insult to injury, he then said the finance secretary had spoken to the sacked UPI chief on his mobile an hour before the budget was placed in the Lok Sabha. And he wondered aloud what could have been the reason for the call, especially when the finance ministry has been claiming it had little to do with the running of the mutual fund.

On budget day, the market had whooped in response to the finance minister's fiscal announcements. Heavy buying by financial institutions was reported and Nirupam was trying to link this to the phone call earlier in the day to UPI. He also spoke of a letter that Subramanyam had written to Vajpayee and demanded that Sinha place it before the House. Nirupam later claimed he had no idea what the letter contained.

Both the cell numbers revealed have now been switched off and attempts to reach them throughout the evening proved futile. Singh too refused to take calls.

8/7

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THE TELEGRAPH

UPI

Advani hints at 'special powers' for J&K

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 25

UNION HOME Minister L K Advani today told the Rajya Sabha that the Centre was "willing to consider according special powers to Jammu and Kashmir" though it had rejected the J & K Assembly resolution on autonomy.

Advani said the "special powers" would be granted if there were "such a necessity as part of the process of devolution of power to the States". While answering supplementaries during Question Hour, Advani reiterated that there was no change in the Government policy on Jammu and Kashmir.

The Government had "accepted" that the extended ceasefire

proved to be costly, with larger numbers of civilians and security forces personnel dying, Advani said. "I can only say that it was an initiative which was welcomed by everyone," he said. "The extensions (however) proved costly."

It was decided on May 23 to resume operations against terrorist groups and also invite Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf for talks.

Advani told Ramakrishna Hegde of the Janata Dal, "What is happening in J & K is naked terrorism." Most of the "mercenaries" fighting there were from outside the State. "During the past few years most of those terrorists killed were from Pakistan, Pak-Occupied Kashmir

Opp shelling on Agra flop continues

THE VAJPAYEE Government on Wednesday continued to receive flak from the Opposition on the failure of the Agra summit.

During the resumed debate on Vajpayee's statement on the summit in Lok Sabha, Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M) said the Centre's immature, amateurish approach had allowed Pakistan to take India "for a ride". The Government had behaved like onlookers groping for directions. Chatterjee said the Prime Minister should have spelt out the reasons for the talks' failure, instead of hiding behind "inanities". But he emphasised Vajpayee must make a return trip to Pakistan, for there is no alternative to dialogue and "it is naive to expect a lasting solution in one meeting".

HTC, New Delhi

and Afghanistan. There is no question of a freedom struggle going on there," Advani said.

Minister of State for Home Vidyasagar Rao also admitted that terrorist violence had

1,672 during the pre-peace initiative days.

During the ceasefire, 266 security personnel, 543 civilians and 597 militants were killed. The corresponding figures for the pre-ceasefire period are 223, 461 and 985. Advani told Pranab Mukherjee (Cong) that there had been a review of the efficacy of the ceasefire in J & K before each extension. It was not only the Cabinet Committee on Security that decided on the extensions; the views of the security forces were also taken into consideration, he said.

He reminded Kapil Sibal (Cong) that the first "unilateral ceasefire" was declared by the Hizbul Mujahideen and not by the Government.

Vajpayee gives pedantic speech on summit

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 24. — A week after the Agra summit, the Prime Minister today gave Parliament a pedantic exposition of the substance of the talks.

It was, at best, a lacklustre performance by the government's star orator. The 15-minute speech narrated parts of General Pervez Musharraf's itinerary and his attempts to build a consensus before the summit. But it contained little beyond his opening remarks at the summit's plenary session.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee read from a prepared text. All through, he tried to make the point that the two sides "did achieve a degree of understanding", and that bilateral cooperation "shouldn't be held hostage to any one issue."

The Prime Minister said: "Pakistan's refusal to end cross-border terrorism is the main hurdle in the creation of a conducive atmosphere." The "quest for a joint document," he said, had to be abandoned "because of Pakistan's insistence on the resolution of the Kashmir issue as a precondition for normalisation of relations."

"We can't accept that the insurgency in J&K is anything but terrorism. The daily killing of innocent men, women and children can't simply be glorified as jihad or as any kind of political movement."

At his press conference in Islamabad, Gen Musharraf had sought to portray the insurgency as "freedom struggle".

Mr Vajpayee said that in his over five hours of talks with General Musharraf, he had "focused on terrorism being promoted in J&K." He also "took up other specific issues which would help the peace process." Among these were PoWs, extradition of criminals, upkeep of Sikh and Hindu shrines in Pakistan and "mutually beneficial trade."

He also proposed all issues within the composite dialogue framework, including the need to maintain peace and security.

Not seeking to "score debating points", Mr Vajpayee said he had accepted Pakistan's invitation to visit that country to continue the dialogue and that his government would implement the CBMs announced before the summit. "It's our conviction that an all-round development in the relationship between In-

dia and Pakistan will have a beneficial impact on our dialogue on J&K."

Mr VK Malhotra (BJP) defended Mr Vajpayee but went along with Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav (SP) and Mr Madhavrao Scindia (Congress) in demanding that Parliament decide through consensus whether the Prime Minister would pay a return visit to Islamabad.

The Opposition described Mr Vajpayee's statement as "defensive".

Mr Scindia said Mr Vajpayee should take the House into confidence on Pakistan's claim that the two sides had reached a point very close to signing the declaration by accepting Kashmir as the central issue and omitting any mention of cross-border terrorism.

Gen Musharraf's statement had raised doubts of a division among the ministers representing India at the summit, Mr Scindia said. He also questioned Mr Jaswant Singh's statement in Agra that the Mrs Sushma Swaraj was authorised to brief the media about the talks.

Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav said Mr Vajpayee should have learnt lessons from history before inviting Gen Musharraf.

Omar at MEA: India's new face on Kashmir

BY SEEMA MUSTAFA

New Delhi, July 23: Thirty-one-year-old Omar Abdullah, as the new minister of state for external affairs, can legitimately fulfil his "favourite pastime and recreation" for travelling without any questions asked. He might find it difficult to follow his "special interest" of finding a "long-term solution" to the problem of unemployment in Jammu and Kashmir but he will be able to present the nationalist face of Kashmir to the world through the new portfolio.

Mr Omar Abdullah, smart and savvy, with a well-known fondness for expensive clothes and fast cars, can be expected to handle the grim Islamic countries with a fair degree of charm. Passionate about Kashmir, at least as he knows it, he is quite convincing when he begins to defend the National Conference and more specifically his father, chief minister Farooq Abdullah.

He insists that the political party in power in Jammu and Kashmir is the only true representative of the people there, that it is absurd to even suggest that it is being sidelined by the BJP, and that the views of the chief minister and his government are usually overruled.

The young minister, in fact if reports from the Valley are to be believed, is the main reason why his father has refused to withdraw support from the NDA government at the Centre. Even when senior ministers in his Cabinet were keen that he withdraw support after his autonomy report was summarily discarded without even a discussion by the Central government, Dr Farooq Abdullah resisted. "This is because of Omar Abdullah's insistence" was the rumour that overtook Jammu and Kashmir with critics insisting that the young son was reluctant to give up the perks of power, and prevailed upon his father to remain

with the winning side. Mr Omar Abdullah's "biographical sketch" does list unemployment in Jammu and Kashmir as a special interest. But it is no secret that the young minister did little to alleviate this problem even though he was the minister of state for com-



merce and industry for nearly two years. And that he is barely interested in the development or progress of Jammu and Kashmir, and its politics. He was not given independent charge of any department within these ministries, remaining subservient to Cabinet minister Murasoli Maran who was in complete

change. Interestingly, his "social and cultural" activity in the sketch is listed as having worked for the upliftment of poor children in Himachal Pradesh!

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee is believed to have a special fondness for the young man. Mr Omar Abdullah has accompanied the Prime Minister on several foreign trips. He will now be expected to tackle the Islamic countries, Europe with Mr Jaswant Singh overseeing the all important USA, China, Russia and of course neighbouring countries like Pakistan and the immediate region.

Mr Abdullah is quite content at being minister and will not fight for turf. Even with the possessive Mr Maran, he was quite willing to concede decision-making, letting reporters know that the final viewpoint would be taken by the senior minister. The new portfolio will bring with it a touch of glamour and excitement. An erstwhile student of

the exclusive Sydenham College in Mumbai, he is fond of tennis, squash, swimming and skiing. Not to mention Internet and travelling. In short, external affairs will allow the new incumbent to indulge his various pursuits just as his minister Jaswant Singh is able to go riding almost every morning when he is in town.

Cynical Opposition leaders too are quite satisfied with the choice. CPI's Atul Anjan pointed out, "He will let the world know that Kashmir is our problem not that of Pakistan." Mr Omar Abdullah has remained non-controversial, and is seen by his colleagues as a "pleasant, easy going lad." He is not credited with a very serious outlook, has brought little of his own into the commerce and industry ministries, but his "obvious assets" of good looks, charm, dress and etiquette will find a decided home in the ministry of external affairs.

Forget Musharraf & talk to Pant first, PM tells Hurriyat

Archana Phull,
Brij Bhushan Singh and PTI
Manali, May 29

ATL BHHARI Vajpayee today asked the Hurriyat Conference to talk to the Government's interlocutor K C Pant before pressing for a meeting with Gen Pervez Musharraf.

"Hurriyat leaders were released from jail to enable them talk to the Indian Government. Pant is in Jammu and Kashmir for talks with various groups and they should come forward for parleys with him," Vajpayee said here.

"Doosron ki baki baad mein aavegi (others' turn will come later)," he said when asked about the demand by Pakistan that Hurriyat leaders should be permitted to meet Musharraf during his proposed visit to New Delhi.

Taking the cue from Vajpayee, Pant asked the Hurriyat to accept the Prime Minister's advice and enter into a meaningful dialogue. "Hurriyat should behave in a matured manner and respond to the advice of the Prime Minister and involve itself in a dialogue," Pant said after holding a series of meetings on

the second-day of his visit to Jammu and Kashmir.

However, he refused to extend any fresh invitation to the Hurriyat for talks. Hurriyat, on its part, pressed for its inclusion in the proposed Indo-Pak dialogue and said that if its demand was not met, a solution to the Kashmir issue would remain elusive.

Hurriyat Chairman Abdul Gani Bhat said the proposed Indo-Pak summit strikes at the root of Pant's nomination as interlocutor and his "activities" have become "irrelevant".

Meanwhile, stating that his

invitation to Musharraf should not be construed as a "weakness", but a demonstration of India's self-confidence, Vajpayee said New Delhi always favoured a political solution to the Kashmir issue because it did not consider it a religious matter.

Termining his invitation to Musharraf as a "new initiative" as both countries desired peace, he said it was a "well thought out" one and hoped Islamabad would respond positively. So far he has not received any communication from Pakistan, he said.

The Prime Minister recalled

Musharraf had stated on several occasions that he was prepared to talk to India any time and anywhere. Other countries also favoured resumption of dialogue between India and Pakistan, he said.

He pointed out that India had never said it would not talk to the military regime in Pakistan. Recalling that Islamabad had military rule for long, he said even after the Kargil conflict, India had maintained full diplomatic relations with Islamabad.

On the ceasefire, he said it was done to create the right environ-

ment in the valley. The six-month ceasefire was called off as it was found that even after three extensions, it had not yielded the desirable results, he said.

Pant, who met Shabir Shah today, also held talks with leaders of the Quomi Mashawarti Council (QMC), including the JKLF (Amanullah faction).

"I am here to understand the aspirations of the people of the State and Shah has a particular place within Kashmiris," he said.

He said the Prime Minister's initiative provided a window of

opportunity for all groups to seize, adding that all groups need to get their act together and move ahead to resolve the Kashmir issue.

QMC leader Haider Hijazi of the Amanullah Khan faction said they had told Pant to take into account the wishes of the Kashmiri people while finding a solution to the problem.

When asked whether he had the mandate from Amanullah Khan, the Pakistan-based leader of the JKLF, to meet Pant, Haider said: "Yes, of course. I had talked to him and sought his permission."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
MAY 29 2001

Ajit Singh sworn in as agriculture minister

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 22. — The Rashtriya Lok Dal president, Mr Ajit Singh, was today sworn in as a Cabinet minister at the Centre. The President, Mr KR Narayanan, administered the oath of office at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Mr Singh has been given the agriculture ministry held by Mr Nitish Kumar. The Samata Party leader will retain the railway ministry. He has been holding it as additional charge since Miss Mamata Banerjee's exit.

Mr Vajpayee also effected minor changes in the portfolios of three ministers of state. Mr Digvijay Singh has been shifted to commerce and industry from railways in place of Mr Omar Abdullah, who will now work in

the external affairs ministry.

Mr Krishnamraju, who was in the MEA, has moved to the defence ministry.

Mr Kumar is considered an efficient minister and has reversed several of Miss Banerjee's projects.

The move has effectively sealed the prospects of the Trinamul chief's return to the government.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's urgency to get Mr Singh inducted into the Cabinet a day ahead of Parliament's monsoon session explains the BJP's electoral compulsions in Uttar Pradesh where its stakes are high.

Other aspirants for the ministry were Mr Ajit Panja, Mr Karria Munda, and five independent MPs who have offered their

support to the Centre.

Some senior BJP leaders feel Mr Singh is a potential ally whose entry in the government will boost the ruling coalition's chances in Uttar Pradesh. In recent by-polls in some Assembly segments in western UP where Mr Singh is perceived to command sizeable influence among the dominant Jats, the RLD performed well. The BJP hopes the alliance will win most of the Jat-dominated seats.

Party sources said though the BJP's downslide in UP had been checked after Mr Rajnath Singh became the chief minister, the party still needed a powerful ally.

■ Photograph, more reports, on page 8

THE STATESMAN

A week later, blame Pakistan

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 22: Nearly a week after President Pervez Musharraf's breakfast blast, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee gave a hungry public something to chew on, blaming Pakistan for the failure of the Agra talks.

Much of what he said in his first public statement on the talks has been said already, such as Pakistan's insistence on the "centrality" of the Kashmir issue and its refusal to include in the declaration any reference to cross-border terrorism.

"The talks broke down because of Pakistan's adamant attitude against making any reference to cross-border terrorism in the draft document which they repeatedly termed a freedom strug-

gle," Vajpayee said at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The Prime Minister, under pressure to reply to Musharraf's media double whammy — first at the Agra breakfast meeting with editors and then on Friday in Islamabad — will make a statement in Parliament on Tuesday, which will be telecast live.

Vajpayee said one other factor that caused the declaration deadlock was Pakistan's insistence that "till the Kashmir issue is resolved, there cannot be normalisation of relations".

Musharraf has said he and Vajpayee had twice come close to signing an agreement. The Prime Minister denied this. "No draft came before us. It was discussed only at the delegation level."

He conceded that there was agreement on "some points" but it

was "wrong" to suggest accord on signing the document.

Vajpayee reacted strongly to views expressed in private by some in the BJP, blaming Jaswant Singh for the Agra fiasco. "This is wrong and I want to deny it. All decisions were taken unanimously. As external affairs minister, Singh had a special responsibility but everything was done on the basis of collective responsibility."

"If there was any shortcoming, as leader of the council of ministers it was my shortcoming," he said.

A more generous helping of what happened at Agra will be available in Vajpayee's statement in both Houses of Parliament at noon on Tuesday. Vajpayee's spin doctors are eager to ensure that he conveys a firm, confident, if not aggressive, counter to Musharraf.

The effort is to minimise Vajpayee's trademark "long pauses".

The statement is likely to be telecast live on all channels. "If the Prime Minister allows, we will give the feed of his statement to all channels," parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan said.

Taking a dig at Musharraf's breakfast meeting with Indian editors, which was telecast by STAR News in India, Mahajan quipped: "Instead of a deferred breakfast, we can have a live lunch."

He wouldn't, of course, say that the "live lunch" will come as a deferred response.

Mahajan said the Centre was ready for a discussion, as demanded by the Opposition, on Agra. The Opposition has a clutch of other issues — UTT, Air-India divestment and the Naga ceasefire — to put the government on the mat.

Sushma turns fire on Pervez

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

ISLAMABAD, July 20. - Information and broadcasting minister, Mrs Sushma Swaraj, who was criticised by the Pakistan President and the media for "selective" briefing on the Agra summit, has blamed General Pervez Musharraf for "derailing" the talks with his much-publicised telecast of the breakfast meeting with Indian editors on 16 July.

Mincing no words, Mrs Swaraj told a Pakistani daily in an interview published today that not she but General Musharraf himself was to be blamed for it.

"Things were derailed the moment the video recording of the general sahib's tough-talk to a group of senior editors was instantly made available to all TV channels of the world, who took no time in airing them," she said.

Such meetings are generally kept off-the-record to "conceal unpleasant things from public," the daily quoted Mrs Swaraj.

Referring to the initial unfavourable reaction of the Indian media towards the visit, Mrs Swaraj said: "Let me start by revealing to you that most of the newspapers were really upset when our Prime Minister invited your President for a summit in May. Column after column was coming everyday, wondering as to why Vajpayeeji has invited Musharraf sahib, who did Kargil to us," Mrs Swaraj said.

PAK SPECIAL TANK

ISLAMABAD, July 20. - General Pervez Musharraf today unveiled what Pakistan claimed was the "world's first main battle tank (MBT) of the millennium" built in collaboration with China.

Flagging off the first batch of 15 newly built MBTs, named Al-Khalid, Gen Musharraf said Pakistan worked for peace and tranquillity.

"This, however, can't be at the cost of security. We can't lower our guard and most have the desired deterrent against misadventures by our adversaries. My government would provide all the resources to ensure a strong defence for a stable Pakistan," he added. - PTI

"I personally approached almost each senior journalist and columnist to make them appreciate that after inviting the general, for the good or bad reasons, it now has become India's responsibility to make the summit a success.

To all of them, I referred to the remarks of an illiterate woman from the desert of Rajasthan. Her son was killed in Kargil. But, when some reporters approached her for comments over General Musharraf's visit, she said: 'It is with enemies that you have to negotiate peace.'

NO THIRD-PARTY INVOLVEMENT

HD-1 19/7

Let's bury the past: Vajpayee

NEW DELHI, JULY 13. What are the feelings of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, about the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, widely perceived to be the author of Kargil, which cost India a number of precious lives?

"No one can forget the bravery and sacrifices of our armed forces, who successfully vacated Pakistan's armed aggression and intrusion in Kargil. But we have to move ahead to the future," Mr. Vajpayee replied when this question was posed by PTI.

Voicing the hope that Gen. Musharraf would bring to Agra a desire to bury the conflicts of the past and to build a new relationship of trust, Mr. Vajpayee said India had never shied away from addressing any issue, including Jammu and Kashmir, with Pakistan through bilateral approaches.

Asserting that India's position on Jammu and Kashmir stemmed from 'the core principles of our nationhood', Mr. Vajpayee said there was no question of any third party involvement in an India-Pakistan dialogue.

On Pakistan's insistence that the Hurriyat Conference be involved in the dialogue, Mr. Vajpayee said there was no question of any third-party involvement in it.

'We are for building trust'

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, JULY 13. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has said that India would like to build trust and put in place a stable structure of cooperation, addressing all outstanding issues with Pakistan.

In an interview to the Pakistani



daily, *Dawn*, the Prime Minister has said he believed that 'a movement across the full range of relations' between India and Pakistan would provide for the welfare of the people of both the countries.

The Prime Minister told another English daily *The News* that instead of digging the past, India and Pakistan would have to concentrate on an objective future. He said, "we would take innovative measures to bring peace and prosperity in South Asia".

He said India and Pakistan should have good neighbourly relations, as it was necessary to convert the dream of making South Asia a peaceful region into a reality through sincere efforts. He said the option of laying of the Iranian gas pipeline through Pakistan was not given up, adding that various alternative options were under consideration and finally that option which was cheaper and secure would be approved.

During the interview, he repeatedly said that India and Pakistan should have good neighbourly relations.

Indian media barred as Hurriyat, Pak. scribes meet

NEW DELHI, JULY 13. Leaders of the Hurriyat Conference and Pakistani officials today refused entry to Indian media to a press conference of the amalgam leaders with Pakistani scribes at a five-star hotel.

As the Indian media approached the venue of the meet-the-press programme, Pakistani officials and local office-bearers of the Hurriyat Conference slammed the door on them saying "it is a private affair with Pakistani journalists only." A reporter of a Hindi daily, who managed his way into the conference hall, was shown the door by Hurriyat office-bearers after being spotted. However, some television camera crew were allowed to shoot the programme.

On protest later from a peeved Indian media, which maintained the utmost patience and waited till the end of the programme, Hurriyat leaders expressed regret and walked off.

The reporters were aghast at the attitude of the Hurriyat leaders. "We never expected this," an angry reporter from a leading daily shouted at the Hurriyat leaders much to their embarrassment. — PTI

India tags terror, Pak minorities to talks (11)

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 12

INDIA IS prepared to talk about Kashmir at the Agra summit, but in a grammar of New Delhi's choosing.

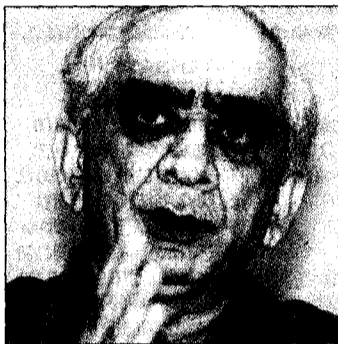
India has never shied away from talking about Kashmir, External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh said at a press conference in New Delhi today. But India's Kashmir concerns revolved around cross-border terrorism and "the condition of minorities" in Pakistan.

Singh rejected the suggestion that India wanted to avoid talking about Kashmir. After all, he said, Kashmir was part of the composite dialogue between the two nations. The dialogue "was all encompassing" and included other issues such as trade and Siachen.

India did not accept Kashmir as the "core issue" between the two countries and believed Kashmir "was at the core of India's nationhood". But Singh admitted that India had "no set proposal on Jammu and Kashmir as such".

Singh stressed the importance of terrorism. "Cross-border terrorism, the export of terrorism," he said, "is very much an issue for India. It is an affliction that India remains concerned about... Cross-border terrorism is part of the situation in Kashmir."

The Cabinet Committee on Security reportedly decided yesterday to raise terrorism if Musharraf insists on talking only about Kashmir.



TALKING HEADS

- Vajpayee will make a "courtesy call" on the General at 1 pm on July 14 in New Delhi.
- The next day, in Agra, they will have a one-on-one at 11.30 am. The afternoon schedule will be "flexible," with the possibility of another one-on-one meeting.
- But that will not be the end. If the leaders want they could meet again on July 16.

Home Minister L K Advani is expected to talk about Pakistan-sponsored terror when he meets General Pervez Musharraf here on Sunday.

The Home Minister's 25-minute meeting with the Pakistani leader will involve informal discussions on cross-border terrorism, narco-terrorism and Pakistan's attempts in the recent past to sabotage fencing of the border, sources said. Advani is expected to seek closure of camps on Pakistani soil where

militants are trained. Advani is also likely to draw General Musharraf's attention to the Karachi-based mafia don Dawood Ibrahim's involvement in trans-border smuggling and other criminal activities in India. He may also talk about the men who hijacked an Indian Airlines plane to Kandahar and are now in Pakistan.

Singh's statement at today's press conference reflects New Delhi's continuing campaign to dilute Pakistani efforts to try and ensure that Kashmiri self-determination dominates the Agra agenda.

For the first time in the run-up to the summit, Singh said the condition of minorities in Pakistan would "find mention" at Agra. Observers note that this would bring into focus the persecution of Shias in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, including the northern areas. It will also bring to the world's attention the persecution of Christians, Ahmadis and other religious groups.

Pakistani analyst and former Cabinet Secretariat member, B Raman, has pointed out that early in his military career, Pervez Musharraf brutally put down a Shia rebellion in Gilgit.

Singh defended India's confidence-building measures saying, "I do not subscribe to the view that people are peripheral."

In an interview today to APP today, Prime Minister AB Vajpayee said the two countries should shed "narrow and cliché-ridden approaches" and take their relationship forward.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

JUL 12 2001

NDA to boycott, Congress to attend tea party

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 11. - The NDA will boycott the 14-July tea party thrown by the Pakistani high commission in honour of General Pervez Musharraf. But the government will send its representatives to the party to fulfil its "responsibilities."

The late night meeting attended by 23 NDA leaders, including the National Conference representatives, took strong exception to the Pakistani high commissioner, Mr Ashraf Jehangir Qazi's, invitation to the All-Party Hurriyat Conference leaders, ignoring the elected representatives of the J&K government.

"This amounts to legitimising the Hurriyat as the sole representative of the state while discrediting the duly elected government and members of Parliament from the state," the NDA convener, Mr George Fernandes, told journalists after the meeting at the Prime Minister's Race Course house. "This is not acceptable to us."

At the meeting, the foreign minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, said Pakistan had invited the APHC despite the government's serious reservations. Mr Fernandes clarified that the NDA was not going to attend the meeting. It was, by no means, a boycott.

Some NDA leaders said the Opposition parties would also probably decline invitation to

General Musharraf has begun consultations with China and other friendly countries to take them into confidence over his forthcoming visit to India. Gen Musharraf met the ambassador of China in Islamabad today and handed him a letter for the Chinese Prime Minister, Mr Zhu Rongji. This is part of the consultations with friendly states, Pakistan information secretary, Mr Syed Anwar Mahmood and defence spokesman, Maj Gen. Rashid Qureshi said at a media briefing. The President also had a telephonic conversation with the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia and the Sultan of United Arab Emirates. The consultations are going on, Mr Mahmood said. - PTI

the party since they wouldn't want to be seen on the wrong side of the nationalistic line. At the all-party meeting on Monday, the government had said the Opposition could, if it wished, boycott the tea party. The Congress has, however,

announced that it would attend the tea party, despite having reservations against the reported "closed door" meeting of Hurriyat leaders with Gen. Musharraf. "The party view is that we are going to join the tea party," senior Congress leader, Mr Pranab Mukherjee said.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said the summit agenda would not be Kashmir-centric and asserted that India would strongly raise the issue of cross-border terrorism.

Speaking at the meeting, Mr Vajpayee said Gen. Musharraf's recent statements on Kashmir had raised doubts about his earlier claims that he was coming to India with an open and flexible mind.

Petition against summit: A petition seeking cancellation of the invitation to Gen. Musharraf was filed in the Delhi High Court today. The petition said Gen. Musharraf was responsible for cross-border terrorism in J&K and the Kargil intrusion, adds PTI.

Jinnah House: The Prime Minister today said there was no question of handing over Jinnah House to the Pakistan government, PMO officials said. He was answering a specific question from an NDA ally. Before the Pakistan consulate in Mumbai closed down, it was lodged in the building where M A Jinnah lived before he left for Pakistan in 1947.

THE STATESMAN

Kashmir will be discussed: PM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 9. - India and Pakistan will certainly talk about J&K but it won't be the only subject on the summit agenda, the parliamentary affairs minister, said after an all-party meeting today.

Mr Pramod Mahajan said the Centre had advised Islamabad not to invite All-Party Hurriyat Conference leaders to the tea-party at the Pakistani high commissioner's residence on 14 July. He said leaders of all parties had agreed with the Prime Minister's statement on Kashmir.

In his concluding remarks, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said: "We keep hearing about the so-called core issue standing in the way of good neighbourly relations. We have never shied away from this or any other issue. But narrow and cliché-ridden approaches have not worked in the past. Nor has vio-

lence.

Mr Vajpayee said the two countries would have to seek another way - "one that takes the relationship forward". All subjects, including J&K, will be discussed at the summit, he said and hoped he would "get a constructive response" from Pakistan.

After the meeting, Dr Manmohan Singh (Congress) said his party favoured a composite dialogue that included Kashmir. The Congress's stand on J&K is very similar to that of the government.

Mr Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M) said Kashmir should not be the only issue at the summit while Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav (Samajwadi Party) said he didn't want a third party to be involved in the Kashmir issue. That's the government's stand too.

Besides the Prime Minister, 37 leaders from almost all parliamentary parties took part in the discussions. Only the Telugu De-

sam was absent as its leaders are busy with the local elections.

Mr Mahajan said India had no hesitation in discussing J&K, but other important subjects like nuclear confidence-building measures, cross-border terrorism, business and trade, travel and cultural ties and sports and communication-related issues too will be discussed.

Leaders at the all-party meeting had said Kashmir should be discussed within the framework of the Constitution, the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore declaration.

On the Hurriyat leaders' issue, Mr Mahajan said the Centre had advised Pakistan not to invite them to the Pakistan high commissioner's tea-party. The Hurriyat, he said, has no locus standi and no "legitimacy".

■ See SUMMIT: page 8

(Continued from page 1)

as it hasn't fought elections.

"It's wrong to invite the Hurriyat. We hope wisdom will dawn," Mr Mahajan said. A tricky situation would arise if the Hurriyat leaders and the government officials are invited to the party. For, it would be difficult to refuse an invitation by a person invited by the Indian government.

Mr Mahajan said protocol issues had to be checked before arriving at a decision. Opposition leaders were not keen on attending the party if the Hurriyat leaders were invited.

Most Opposition parties, including the Congress and the Left, were not in favour of the Pakistani President, General Pervez Musharraf, meeting the Hurriyat leaders. But Mr GM Banatwala (IUML) said there was no harm if he did.

Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav spoke strongly against the invitation to the Hurriyat

SUMMIT:

leaders and there was talk of lower-level representation by government in case they weren't kept out of the party.

Explaining the reason for inviting Gen. Musharraf, the Prime Minister told Opposition leaders that though the militants were very active, the Line of Control was quiet and that good-intentioned countries wanted India and Pakistan to live peacefully. Also, the two countries had talked peace after every war.

All parties thanked Mr Vajpayee for the invitation, Mr Mahajan said. While no one was certain about the success nor did anyone expect one summit to resolve all issues, it was a good beginning, they felt. If nothing else, it will allow for future discussions.

Mr Mahajan said that if the Agra summit was not result-oriented, it would be "process-oriented" and emphasised discussions as the Saarc

meetings hadn't been held of late.

What is the state of gurdwaras and temples in Pakistan and can they be accessed? Is there a possibility of Indian POWs in Pakistani jails being released and will India lower its guard as it had done after the Lahore declaration? The foreign and defence minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, said the shrine issue would be brought up at the proper time and the Lahore declaration had paved the way for talks on POWs.

Will India sign a no-war pact? Mr Singh said such a pact can't be meaningful unless it covers the proxy war or cross-border terrorism. Is Pakistan likely to ask for a reduction of Indian troops in J&K. Mr Singh said it's for the government to decide whether it'll have its troops in a state.

Will General Musharraf get a guard of honour? Mr Singh quoted the Centre as having said the accepted protocol across the world would be followed.

PM begins discussions with party leaders

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 9. The all-party meeting called by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today marked the start of a series of consultations with the Opposition parties and those of the National Democratic Alliance in the run-up to the India-Pakistan Agra summit.

On July 12 evening Mr. Vajpayee will meet Congress leaders exclusively to discuss in detail issues related to the coming summit. And on July 10 leaders of the CPI(M) and the CPI, including Mr. Harkishan Singh Surjeet and Mr. A.B. Bardhan and other Left leaders outside the parliamentary parties will be consulted.

On July 11, Mr. Vajpayee is expected to call a meeting of the NDA leaders to discuss all issues, some of which could not be taken up at today's meeting.

The Telugu Desam Party was the only major political formation that was not present at today's meeting, for, its leaders were pre-occupied with the panchayat elections in the State. It was offi-

cially said after the meeting that if TDP leaders wished to see Mr. Vajpayee they could certainly do so.

This process of separate consultations was set in motion today with a meeting between Mr. Vajpayee and the Samajwadi Party president, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav.

In fact, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, Parliamentary Affairs Minister, said Mr. Vajpayee would try and find time for any political party leader who may want to meet him ahead of the summit. And since there is no formal summit agenda, all important suggestions would be taken up seriously.

'Exclusion unfortunate'

The Communist Party of India (Marxist Leninist) today took exception to 'being excluded' from the all-party meeting called by the Prime Minister ahead of the Indo-Pak talks.

In a statement issued here, the party said, "It is unfortunate. Everybody knows that the CP(ML) represents a particular strand of Indian people on Kashmir issue."

THE HINDU

Centre to review Naga ceasefire

9/9 By Our Special Correspondent 10-1

NEW DELHI, JULY 8. After an all-party meeting here today, the Centre announced that it would review its ceasefire agreement with the Naga militant group, the NSCN (I-M), and complete the process before the end of this month. Indicating that the review could limit a revised agreement to the Nagaland territory, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, who chaired the meeting, appealed to the people of Manipur to maintain peace and calm in the State which has been witnessing a violent agitation.

A statement from Mr. Vajpayee said the Government would "review the ceasefire agreement, including the words, 'without territorial limits', presently incorporated in the agreement, so as to ensure that all doubts about preserving the integrity of Manipur and other States of the north-east are removed."

The decision to review the agreement signed last month — talks will be held again with the NSCN (I-M) leader, Mr. T. Muivah — came after a Home Ministry team, led by the Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Mr. I. D. Swami, which visited Manipur, submitted a report to the Prime Minister today.

It was clear that the parties were expecting the Government to remove or amend the words "without territorial limits." For the moment, the Government has only promised a review and the final

outcome would depend on the dialogue with Mr. Muivah.

9 - 23 9 m
The Government and the Manipur MLAs are hoping that the review will restore normality in the State. The party leaders let it be known today that the crisis in Manipur cannot be resolved unless the agreement is withdrawn or amended to restrict it to Nagaland.

The meeting at the Prime Minister's residence was attended by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, the National Security Adviser, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, the Government's negotiator with the NSCN (I-M), Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, and several key officials, besides the Union Minister, Mr. Chouba Singh, and representatives of Manipur political parties, including the BJP and the Samata Party. The Manipur MLAs, who were under intense pressure to get the Government to rescind its agreement or make changes in it, wanted a clear signal before July 31. In the absence of this, they said they had no option but to resign as members of the State assembly.

Even within the BJP, which has the largest number of MLAs in the 60-member House, the State leadership's view is that implementation of the ceasefire agreement will be "suicidal," — a view articulated today by a senior leader, Mr. Bhuban Singh. And a six-member team of the Left Front, which left for Imphal on Saturday, has also asked for the "immediate withdrawal" of the agreement.

Centre caught in Hurriyat cleft stick

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, July 8: South Block mandarins are in a dilemma over the possible meeting between Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf and leaders of the All-Parties Hurriyat Conference.

The Indian leadership is not quite certain if it should have Hurriyat leaders arrested before the meeting, or turn a blind eye and allow the interaction to take place on the eve of the Agra summit.

Musharraf has sent a letter to Pakistan high commissioner Ashraf Jehangir Qazi in Delhi asking him to extend invitations to Hurriyat leaders for the high-tea he is planning to hold on July 14. Musharraf has also indicated that though he is keen to meet the Hurriyat leaders, he is willing to wait for the Indians to take a final decision on it.

Islamabad's ambiguity on the issue has hardly made things easier for Delhi. The Prime Minister has convened an all-party meeting tomorrow to discuss his meeting with Musharraf. The question of how the government will deal with the Hurriyat issue is likely to come up there. (See P 6)

Indian officials are still hoping that ultimately Musharraf will not meet the Hurriyat leaders. "We have made it clear that we don't want the meeting to take place. It is for Musharraf to honour the wishes of the host," a senior foreign ministry official said.

He added: "But if he does go ahead and meet the Hurriyat leaders, it will definitely leave a bad taste in the mouth before the summit."

While a tough line — probably putting the Hurriyat leaders under house arrest — is not being ruled out, it is the impact of such an action that worries the Indian leaders. Allowing him to meet them is an equally unpalatable alternative. The problem now is to decide which of the options will be seen as the lesser evil.

The one thing India wants to avoid the most is engage in a slanging match with Pakistan before the summit. An example of this is the restrained response to the Pakistani outburst, accusing India of atrocities in Kashmir. India has described it as "out of sync with what the Pakistani leadership had been saying for the past few weeks". The diatribe is seen as part of the attempt to keep the focus steady on Kashmir.

India views the two packages of confidence-building measures (CBMs) announced over the past week as "pathbreaking" and a "well-conceived and well-considered" move towards normalising relations.

The CBMs, on improving people-to-people contact and on interaction on conventional and nuclear arms, are an attempt at putting before Musharraf an entire package that is not "Kashmir-only" but tries to tackle the entire gamut of India-Pakistan relations.

Union Cabinet gives Jaya strong warning

All charges on ^{9-vay qm} Judge pulls up
Maran, Balu officers over
are dropped ⁴⁷ DMK arrests

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS
IN NEW DELHI AND CHENNAI

BY R. BHAGWAN SINGH

July 3: The Union Cabinet on Tuesday evening confined itself to issuing a warning to the Tamil Nadu government on the protection of constitutional rights. The Centre also asked the state government to take action against the policemen "guilty" of committing excesses while arresting DMK chief M. Karunanidhi and Union ministers Murasoli Maran and T.R. Balu.

Bowing to pressure from New Delhi, the Tamil Nadu government on Tuesday announced dropping of all charges against Union ministers Murasoli Maran and T.R. Balu, who were arrested on Saturday for allegedly abusing and assaulting the police during the arrest of former chief minister M. Karunanidhi.

While Mr Balu came out of the Vellore jail after the government announcement, Mr Maran will be leaving his hospital bed on Wednesday as per medical advice. His son

Turn to Page 2

Chennai, July 3: The principal sessions court in Chennai on Tuesday pulled up the police investigating officers in the Rs 12-crore flyover scam of the Chennai City Corporation in which former chief minister M. Karunanidhi was arrested on Saturday amidst an uproar of allegations of police excesses. Judge S. Ashok Kumar faulted the IOs for not obeying his instructions while remanding Mr Karunanidhi that day by not providing him proper medical attention before sending him to prison.

Pointing out that Mr Karunanidhi was made to wait for several hours at Chennai Central Jail without receiving medical aid, Mr Ashok Kumar wanted to know why his instructions that he be taken to the Government General Hospital first were flouted. Investigating officer Padmanabhan meekly replied that he had delegated the job to another officer and that Mr Karunanidhi was attended to by doctors inside the prison. This

Turn to Page 2
Continuing to Islamabad.

Cabinet gives warning

Continued from Page 1

Dayanidhi said the pacemaker inserted into Mr Maran some months ago had shifted slightly in Saturday's skirmishes and required correction.

In New Delhi, Union law minister Arun Jaitley told reporters after the Cabinet meeting that an "environment of confrontation" was created by the state government, adding that the decision to carry out the arrests of the Union ministers was "arbitrary and unjustifiable." He claimed that the arrests were a "flagrant violation of observations laid down by the apex court." Mr Jaitley clarified that the directive was not under Art. 256 or Art. 355 but in compliance with the procedure on Centre-state relations recommended by the Sarkaria Commission and endorsed by the Supreme Court.

It was learnt that attorney-general Soli Sorabjee was consulted before the Cabinet meeting. Mr Jaitley said the state government has also been requested to identify the officials "guilty of having committed the excesses and proceed against them as per law." After consideration of the home ministry report,

which "seriously indicts" both the Tamil Nadu government and state police for violation of law, human rights, freedom of press, right to legitimate political activity and federalism, the Union Cabinet felt that immediate action by the Union government was required to ensure restoration of all constitutional guarantees, Mr Jaitley said.

In Chennai, a Tamil Nadu government statement said the decision to drop all charges against the two Union ministers was taken in the interest of cordial relations with the Centre and following requests from the Union government and the Prime Minister. "While the government of Tamil Nadu reiterates that the charging of the Central ministers was for explicit offences committed by them, considering the need to maintain the cordial relationship with the government of India and out of deference to the views expressed by the government of India, and more specifically the Prime Minister of India, the government of Tamil Nadu have decided to drop the cases against the two Central ministers," the statement said. It said the Union government had conveyed its feelings "informally" that the detention of the two ministers, "even if under specific charges, was undermining the cordial relationship between the state and the Central government under the federal setup."

Centre lets off Jayalithaa with mild rap

HT Correspondents
New Delhi, July 3

THE CENTRE, in an apparent climbdown from its tough posturing, today let off the Jayalithaa Government with a mild warning and asked it to put right all constitutional aberrations committed before and after the police crackdown on DMK leaders.

Earlier in the day, the Jayalithaa Government dropped all charges against Union Ministers T R Baalu and Murasoli Maran. Nonetheless, the Centre decided to instruct the State administration to identify police officers and others who violated the law. This despite the fact that the Chief Minister ruled out any action against those involved in the arrest of M Karunanidhi. "The Tamil Nadu Government assures the State police that care will be taken to protect their interests. The police should, therefore, discharge their duties without fear and favour."

The Home Ministry will convey to Jayalithaa the Centre's displeasure. It will be in the nature of an administrative order and hence, won't need presidential clearance.

The relatively low-key Cabinet response is attributed to reservations expressed by some NDA allies in power in other States. Also, the State Government's decision to take back cases against the Maran and Baalu seemed to have changed the Centre's mood.

Most ministers pressed hard for an appropriate response from the Centre to what they perceived as the Jaya Government's flagrant violations of the Constitution, sources said. But some senior leaders, including the PM, advised restraint.

But even as the PM advised a controlled response, a PMO release clarified that the Centre had made no special request to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister to free Maran and Baalu.

Earlier in the day Jayalithaa ordered that the charges against the Union ministers be dropped.

This move came after the two ministers had refused yesterday to seek bail after a court ordered their release on the basis of a plea made by the police, unless charges were dropped. With the NDA also demanding the revocation of the cases, the Tamil Nadu government dropped the charges against the two ministers. Baalu was released subsequently. Maran's remand was to have ended today, while Baalu's was till July 13.

The State Government issued a statement explaining why it had decided to drop charges. It said that even though the state police had made it clear that the two ministers were not needed for investigation and could be released on bail, "for reasons best known to themselves, they refused" to be released.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

4 JUL 1977

Home Ministry team suggests tough action in TN

Anil Anand/Chandan Nandy
New Delhi, July 2

THE UNION Home Ministry team which returned here late last night after an on-the-spot assessment of the Tamil Nadu situation is understood to have suggested that the Centre's authority and writ should prevail in States faced with constitutional and law-and-order crises.

The report will be placed before the Union Cabinet tomorrow after Home Minister L K Advani returns from his three-nation tour, for deliberations on

how the Centre should act in Tamil Nadu. The Cabinet meeting, originally slated for this evening, was postponed to enable Advani's participation.

Given the imbrolio over withdrawal of cases against the central ministers and DMK chief Karunanidhi, the official team's observations would seem to be suggesting sterner action by New Delhi. But much might depend on what transpires between the Centre and the State Government between now and when the Cabinet actually goes into session.

Earlier today, Advani spoke to Prime Minister Vajpayee and NDA convenor George Fernandes on the unfolding situation in Tamil Nadu. His phone conversations with the PM and Fernandes may also have had to do with the appointment of Fathima Beevi's full-time replacement.

The Home Ministry team, led by Special Secretary M B Kaushal, had faxed a brief but "factual" report to Home Secretary Kamal Pande yesterday. The report was based on Kaushal's discussions with State Government officials, Fathima Beevi,

mediamen and Chennai-based central intelligence officials. The contents of the detailed report the team prepared upon its return have since been vetted by Pande, in telephone consultation with Advani.

Sources disclosed that Kaushal's was essentially a "fact-finding" mission. But in his report he has "strongly" hit out against the manner in which Karunanidhi and Union Ministers Murasoli Maran and T R Baalu were picked up by the police. Significantly, the Ministry officials are learnt to have

held Baalu responsible for causing ruckus at Karunanidhi's house, forcing the police to arrest him and Maran besides bodily carrying away the DMK chief.

"The report is strong enough. It makes some recommendations on how ugly and politically motivated incidents involving State Governments can be avoided," an official said, hinting that the report has brought out in sharp relief the political divisions in the bureaucracy and the police. Kaushal and his colleagues have also focused on how Beevi failed to utilise independent sources at

her disposal to verify the Government's account of what transpired at Karunanidhi's residence and other related developments.

"The Centre may have acted a little too fast in recalling Beevi, but then she didn't help the situation at all," insisted a source.

It was Baalu who woke up the Home Secretary at 2:30 am on Saturday to inform him about the police action. Within half an hour, Intelligence Bureau chief K P Singh called up Pande. But there was no let-up from the DMK. The phone at Pande's resi-

dence did not stop ringing. Personal aides of both Maran and Baalu made desperate appeals to Pande, complaining how the Union Commerce Minister was being denied medical aid.

Pande acted swiftly, directing Chief Secretary P. Shankar to arrange medical assistance for Maran, a heart patient. "The Chief Secretary agreed," an official said. Having got the full picture, Pande called up Advani around 6 am (IST) in Turkey. He then woke up Vajpayee and briefed him. The Prime Minister reportedly said: "This is very

wrong, speak to the State Government." Ultimately it was Vajpayee personally who spoke to Shankar for a report.

It was when Pande talked to Advani a second time that the Home Minister instructed that Beevi be recalled. "The Home Minister was clear that political and not administrative steps needed to be taken," an official said. Since Saturday, dozens of calls have been made between Turkey and North Block and UAE and North Block to keep Advani posted on the Tamil Nadu scene.

'I'm not satisfied with probe'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 2. - This is the Chief minister's statement in the Assembly today.

"My statement in regard to the issue of the arrest of some criminals from Yuba Bharati Krirangan raised by Mr Debaprasad Sarkar on 29.6.2001 :-

"According to police report, the IC (Inspector-in-charge) of Bantra thana in Howrah district got information on 26.6.2001 at 9 p.m. that a gang of dreaded criminals would assemble at a place near Panchanantala Shishu Udyan located at Chatterjeepara in the Bantra thana area to commit a dacoity in Purba-Paschim Bypass. The Bantra thana IC recorded the information as a GD entry (No 1242) on 26.6.2001 and then proceeded towards the spot with a team of police officers. Armed with information the police team reached the spot at 1.45 a.m. (27.6.2001) and found 11/12 persons standing near a tree, discussing something.

"Meanwhile, the DSP Town (South), Howrah, reached the spot. The police team asked the persons with suspicious movements to surrender but they tried to escape. The police chased them and could arrest seven of them. Two revolvers, five single shotters (two loaded with bullets) were seized. The arrested persons told the police, during interrogation, that the rest, possibly, could be at Salt Lake stadium.

TEXT OF BUDDHA'S STATEMENT IN HOUSE

"Immediately, the police proceeded towards Salt Lake stadium. After reaching Salt Lake stadium, the police searched the dormitory and picked up 16 persons for interrogation and identification on the basis of suspicion. Those arrested earlier identified four of them as members of the gang that had assembled at Chatterjee Para More for committing a bus dacoity. Police arrested the four and the rest 12 were released, after conducting

body searches, for not being involved in any criminal activity.

"Later, following searches, 19 rounds of ammunition were seized from them. In this regard, a GD entry (No 1274) was made at Bantra thana and according to the Bantra thana IC's complaint a case (No 52) under Sections 399/402 of the IPC and Sections 25/27/35 of the Arms Act was lodged on 27.6.2001.

"During investigation it was

found that the 11 arrested persons, who had assembled at Chatterjee Para More to commit a bus dacoity in Howrah's Purba-Paschim Bypass, were dreaded criminals and that they were involved in heinous crimes in Howrah and its adjoining areas.

"The names of the arrested persons are : (1) Rabindranath Mondal (2) Tarun Chakraborty, alias Toton (3) Amit Saha (4) Surajit Das (5) Uttam Singh (6) Manoj Sharma (7) Tarak Thapa (8) Ra-

ja Chetri (9) Md Shamim (10) Digvijay Maitra and (11) Babu, alias Binoy Sarkar.

"Police investigations further revealed that one Palash Das, involved in several cases in Howrah district, is the gang leader. But Palash Das could not be arrested from Chatterjee Para More or Salt Lake stadium.

"During investigations, the accommodation register of Yuba Bharati Krirangan youth hostel was taken and during examination it was found that the names of the criminals were not in the register.

"One Tapash Ghosh Dastidar, associated with the stadium, has been arrested and interrogation is on. Police is on the hunt for one Gobinda De. As the incident occurred at the stadium, I've asked for the views of the minister concerned - how these criminals got shelter inside the stadium.

"I am not satisfied with investigations conducted till now and considering the seriousness of the crime I have decided to hand over investigations to the CID."

THE STATESMAN

Coalition hands sack-gun to Cabinet

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, July 2: Apparently dissatisfied with the recall of Tamil Nadu Governor Fathima Beevi, the National Democratic Alliance tonight recommended the dismissal of the Jayalalitha government and the imposition of Central rule. A meeting of the NDA, chaired by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, concluded that Tamil Nadu was a fit case for the use of Article 356.

The ruling coalition also felt that the release of the two DMK Central ministers, Murasoli Maran and T.R. Baalu, was not enough. NDA sources said the Centre expected Jayalalitha to carry out three tasks simultaneously: explain why the Cabinet ministers were arrested in the first place, withdraw the charges against them and punish the officials who had allegedly committed the "atrocities" against them.

A PTI report said attorney-general Soli Sorabjee, who is in London, has been asked by the Prime Minister to cut short his visit and attend tomorrow's Cabinet meeting on the situation in Tamil Nadu.

The focus of tonight's meeting was on the arrests of Maran and Baalu, and not on the crackdown on former chief minister M. Karunanidhi, indicating that it was the "affront" to the Centre's authority from a regional satrap that had unsettled the NDA more than Jayalalitha's attempts to settle scores with her predecessor.

Stressing that Maran's arrest was the "central issue" at stake — copies of the commerce minister's faxed account detailing his experience on Saturday were distributed to the media — a statement signed by NDA convener George Fernandes, who had led a delegation to Chennai yesterday, said: "We believe that by arresting two members of the Union Cabinet, the chief minister of Tamil Nadu has opened the doors of anarchy as no one person or political party has done since Independent



Jayalalitha with Sasikala at the Guruvayoor temple in Kerala after offering an elephant, Kamman. (PTI)

dence. If these are not shut immediately, the country may face an unprecedented assault on its unity and integrity."

"This is what makes us see justification and strength in the demand of these parties," Fernandes said, referring to his meeting with political leaders in Chennai. "They told us very strongly that with the breakdown of the Constitution in the state, the Union government should invoke Article 356."

However, government sources said, a note of caution was expressed by BJP MP V.K. Malhotra, who was also part of the NDA delegation. Apparently he said the "ground realities" would have to be considered before a "drastic action" is contemplated.

Bending over backwards to pave the way for her re-entry into the Central coalition, Mamata Banerjee said she would support the government if it clamped Ar-

FROM SUJAN DUTTA

Chennai, July 2: Tamil Nadu chief minister Jayalalitha today ordered police to seek the release of Union ministers Murasoli Maran and T.R. Baalu but the climbdown by the state administration does not mean that the crisis has blown over.

Maran and Baalu refused to sign an undertaking stating that they will be available for interrogation and further investigation and, technically, have refused to be released on bail. They have demanded withdrawal of the cases against them.

The Union ministers were held on charges of obstructing the police from performing duties when former chief minister M. Karunanidhi was arrested.

At five this evening, director-general of police A. Ravindranath sent instructions for the release of the two ministers. Maran is under arrest at Apollo Hospitals and Baalu in custody at Vellore jail. When the police reported to the headquarters that the ministers were refusing bail and wanted the cases dropped, the police brass went into a huddle and desperately tried to contact Jayalalitha who

MP. But Karunanidhi's son-in-law, Aravindam, said lawyers had met the former chief minister in his cell at the Chennai Central Jail this afternoon to prepare to secure his release in court tomorrow.

Earlier today, it was clear that Jayalalitha was keen to wind down the tension. She sent a delegation of her ministers to Delhi who told Union law minister Arun Jaitley that Maran and Baalu will be released today. Clearly, the DMK does not want Jayalalitha to withdraw from a fight on her terms.

The hard line taken by the DMK is being interpreted as its resolve to push through its demand for President's rule, though the party will find it hard to justify a decision to dismiss a government with a majority in the Assembly. "We have requested the Prime Minister to invoke Article 356," DMK general secretary K. Anbazhagan told The Telegraph. But asked categorically if the party was threatening to pull out of the NDA if its demand was not granted, he said: "We are not thinking on those lines." However, with Karunanidhi in jail, no other leader can have the last word.

More reports on Page 6

No-bail battle in jail

is on a pilgrimage to Kerala.

Jayalalitha's orders to the police to release the ministers came after the NDA team led by George Fernandes recommended stern action against the government.

State administration sources said the chief minister's move to release the two ministers was an attempt to pre-empt the possibility of the Centre sending a directive under Article 356.

However, their refusal to accept bail means that the DMK ministers, having rallied all NDA partners to the aid of the party, are precipitating a fresh crisis.

Indications from the DMK camp are that Karunanidhi, too, could take a similar course of action tomorrow when the court can consider a bail application. "What bail? We have not applied for any bail," said S. Kuppuswamy, DMK

had swivelled the spotlight on the alleged acts of omission and commission by the Governor.

This section is baying for the ADMK's blood and is willing to overlook the fact that the NDA lacks the numbers in the Rajya Sabha to ratify President's rule. "We can wait for two months to seek its ratification. By that time, the new Governor can swear in a person other than Jayalalitha. After that, we will see how the government functions minus the lady," a senior BJP minister said.

Today's NDA meeting condemned Jayalalitha's attempts to implicate Karunanidhi in the fly-over scam. "The diabolical manner in which the chief minister has subverted the Constitution and made mockery of the rule of law to fix Dr. Karunanidhi, becomes obvious from the way the complaint on the basis of which Dr. Karunanidhi was arrested was cooked up," the statement said.

QUOTE

We have recommended stern and exemplary action, including the use of Article 356

GEORGE FERNANDES

Central team meets Fathima Beevi

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, JULY 1. A three-member team of Union Home Ministry officials today met the Tamil Nadu Governor, Ms. Fathima Beevi, and sought details of the incidents relating to the arrest of the former



Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, and the two Union Ministers, Mr. Murali Maran and Mr. T.R.

Baalu. The Governor, as in the report she sent to the Home Ministry at the instance of the Union Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, gave the State Government's version of yesterday's incidents to the team of officials led by Mr. Mukund Behari Kaushal.

The members tried to get independent accounts of the incidents from mediapersons who had covered the arrest of Mr. Karunanidhi and the two Union Ministers. In presenting her report to Mr. Pande, she conformed to the 9 a.m. deadline. The deadline was meant to enable the Union Cabi-

net to take a decision on the basis of the report before its afternoon meeting.

Unlike the NDA team led by Mr. George Fernandes, members of the Home Ministry team kept a low profile and took pains not to give any political colour to their visit. Their major concern was the

propriety of the arrest of the two Union Ministers. Again unlike the NDA team, they did not call on Mr. Karunanidhi, but obtained the version of events from Mr. Maran in the hospital. They were to meet Mr. Baalu too at the Vellore prison, but could not obtain permission to do so in time.

I don't want to beg for parole: Karunanidhi

By M.R. Venkatesh

CHENNAI, JULY 1. "I do not want to beg for parole," the DMK president and former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, now in the Central Prison here, said in the wake of a bereavement in his family, according to sources in the family.

This was the message he conveyed to his family after Mr. Karunanidhi's lawyer was made to run from pillar to post on his petition seeking parole following the death of the DMK leader's mother-in-law, the former Chief Minister's son-in-law, Mr. Aravindan, said today at their Oliver Road residence.

The DMK leader's wife, Mrs. Rajathi Ammal, has lost her mother and the funeral was delayed on the expectation that Mr. Karunanidhi would come out on parole to pay his last respects to the deceased. A team of doctors has been attending on Mr. Karunanidhi, whose "hands are swollen", said Mr. Aravindan. Though the DMK chief required a specialised diet due to his health problems, "they are giving him prison food" as family members were not allowed to visit him in the prison, he added.

THE HINDU

TN governor Fathima

Congress attacks Centre, alleges political vendetta

By Smita Gupta
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Tamil Nadu governor Fathima Beevi on Sunday submitted her resignation to President K.R. Narayanan following the Centre's decision to recall her. She faxed her resignation letter to the President on Sunday evening, Raj Bhavan sources said.



Fathima Beevi had an eventful term in Tamil Nadu, culminating in her resignation following the Union cabinet's decision recommending her recall by the President after she failed to "discharge her constitutional obligations" and inform the President on the happenings in the state, including the arrest of former chief minister M. Karunanidhi and two Union ministers M. Murasoli Maran and T.R. Baalu.

A retired supreme court judge, Ms Beevi became the governor on January 25, 1997. Before assuming the office, she was a member of the National Human Rights Commission. Ironically, Mr Karunanidhi, as the chief minister of the state, was instrumental in bringing her as the governor as she hailed from a minority community.

Unable to secure the release of the two Union ministers—whose arrests are key to the standoff between the Centre and the Tamil Nadu government—the Union cabinet chose a soft target on Sunday: it decided to recall the governor. The Union cabinet will now meet again on Monday to consider the next course of action, as its discussions on other issues related to the situation in Tamil Nadu were "inconclusive".

The inconclusive issues relate to whether any action could be taken against the state government. The options considered were Article 356—President's rule—and Article 355, whereby the Union government has to ensure that the governments in the states act in accordance with the constitution. Also discussed was the best way to get the two Union ministers released from police custody. Ministerial sources said legal opinion was being sought on all these issues. A Central directive seeking the release of the Union ministers is possible on Monday, these sources added.

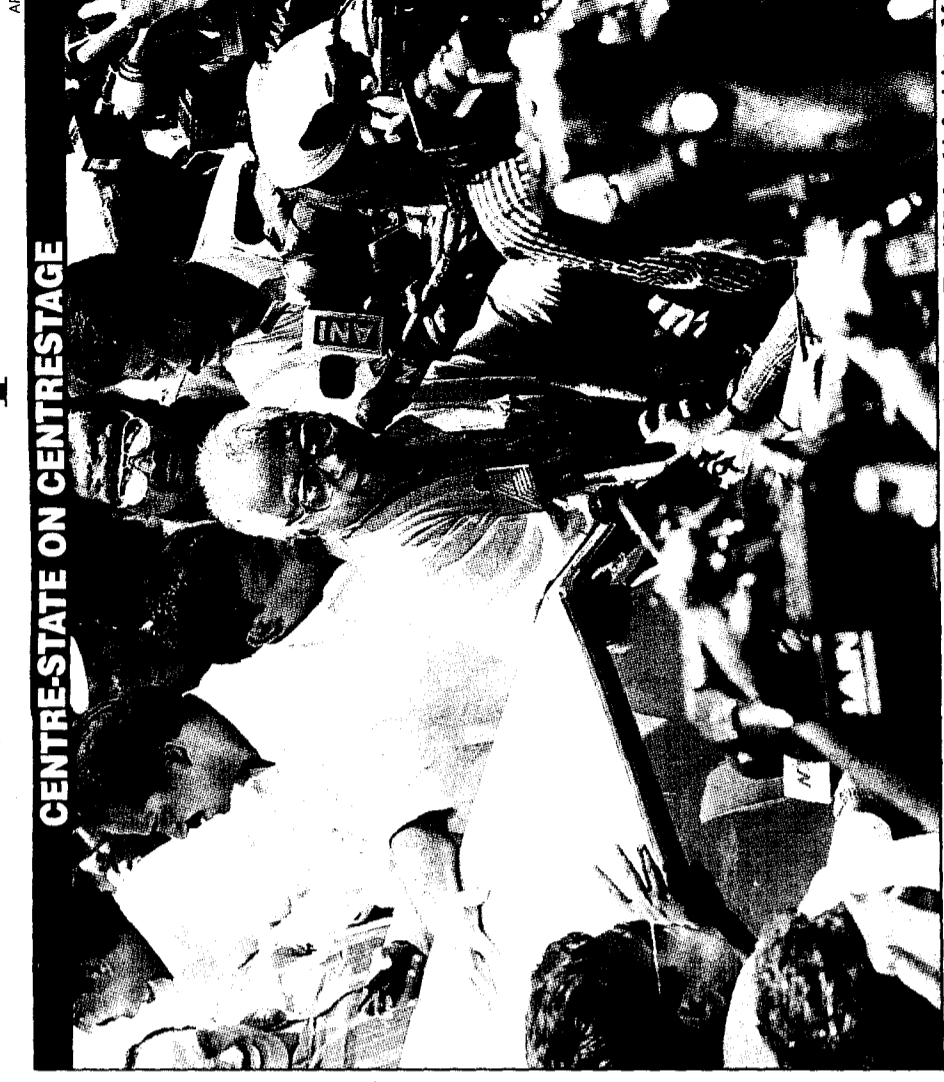
Within hours of the cabinet meeting, Andhra Pradesh governor C. Rangarajan was given additional charge of Tamil Nadu, pending the appointment of a new governor. Sources said the new appointment would be made in the next few days.

The Centre is toying with the idea of appointing Union minister Sikandar Bhakti as the new governor of Tamil Nadu. It is gathered that the NDA government wants to replace Ms Beevi with another person from the minority community. Another name that is widely doing the rounds is that of Dr P.C. Alexander, who is currently the governor of Maharashtra.

Meanwhile, the Centre's decision to recall Ms Beevi provided the Congress the perfect opportunity to deflect attention from the alliance partner's action and to train its guns at the ruling NDA. The Congress launched a scathing attack on the NDA government for its decision to recall the TN governor, dubbing it a case of "political vendetta" against Ms Beevi for her decision to swear in Jayalithaa as the chief minister.

► See Edjit-Anima's Revenge, Page 10

Centre-State on step down



CENTRE-STATE ON CENTRE-STAGE

NDA convener George Fernandes speaks to the media after meeting former Tamil Nadu chief minister M. Karunanidhi at the Chennai central prison on Sunday.

NEW DELHI: Caught between inaction and overreaction, the Centre may choose to exercise only the provisions of Article 355 of the Constitution and warn the Tamil Nadu government.

"There is not much we can do since we cannot get her government dismissed. In any case, that would be a disproportionate response. Yet, we have to be seen to be doing something. Therefore a directive under Article 355 is being seen as the best option so far," said a senior NDA leader who did not want to be named. Directions to the state government under Article 355 are on actions that the Centre perceives as violating provisions of the Constitution or the failure to uphold them.

Saying that the final decision would be taken after the official home ministry team and the NDA delegation led by George Fernandes submitted their reports to the Prime Minister, the NDA leader said the legal advice received so far was against the use of Article 356. "How can we dismiss a government with a two-third majority? The DMK will have to fight the rest of the battle politically,"

The inclusion of S.S. Dhindsa in the NDA team visiting Chennai was no coincidence, sources said, since the Akali Dal is firmly opposed to the use of Article 356. Article 355 will also meet the demand of some senior leaders within the NDA, who feel that the arrest of the two Union ministers on flimsy grounds could set a bad precedent, unless it is opposed at this juncture. The limited options before the Centre have forced it to take action against governor Fathima Beevi.

Talks only option after truce failure: PM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 31. — The Prime Minister today admitted to his Cabinet colleagues that the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir had failed in its objective, leaving him with few options but to talk to Pakistan.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee iterated India's view that "while we would love to have a democratically-elected government in Pakistan, we can't choose their government." He explained the reasons behind his decision to suddenly reverse his stand on talks with Pakistan.

This was not the first time, Mr Vajpayee said, the Centre would talk to a Pakistani military regime.

Briefing journalists after the Cabinet meeting, the Union parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, said the Prime Minister would meet General Pervez Musharraf most probably in "the first or second week of July".

Mr Vajpayee is scheduled to leave for Mumbai for his knee operation on 7 June. He will probably take rest of the month to recuperate.

During his 10-minute speech to Cabinet colleagues, Mr Vajpayee said the J&K ceasefire was withdrawn as the number of civilian casualties had increased manifold during the period, with only the Line of Control being relatively peaceful.

But, after Mr LK Advani and Mr Jaswant Singh visited the Valley, there was need to do something to bring peace to the region.

Mr Vajpayee wanted to give peace another chance as the people there "are dying to have peace," Mr Mahajan said.

Besides, Gen Musharraf had been "desperate" to talk with the Indian government, and "how long can we put him off?"

Mr Vajpayee felt it was important to explain his latest initia-

tive because it has been a major climb-down in regard to the Centre's stand that no talks would be held with Pakistan unless it stopped promoting terrorism.

Safe passage for militants

The 20-hour stand-off between three militants holed up inside a mosque and security forces in south Kashmir ended with the ultras being allowed a safe passage to "maintain sanctity" of the shrine, PTI reports from Srinagar.

Two security personnel were killed and two injured in the gun-battle at Khadwara village in Shopian, around 70 km from here. The ultras were allowed the safe passage to "maintain sanctity" of the mosque and "in view of sentiments of the local people", officials said.

The J&K minister of state for home, Mr Mushtaq Ahmed Lone, said in Delhi: "As the peace efforts are underway, care is applied in such situations as any untoward twist could damage the process."

Shah meets Pant: Former J&K chief minister, Mr Ghulam Mohammad Shah, today told Mr Pant that Kashmir was a disputed issue and needed to be resolved through tripartite talks UNI adds. The statement comes after Mr Jaswant Singh's remark that Kashmir is an integral part of India.

Mr Pant has expressed satisfaction over his visit to the Valley and Ladakh, saying it helped him understand better the views of the local people. He said he would not brand any outfit militant because it (outfit) could shun the path of violence at any time.

Mufti accuses Farooq: Former Union home minister and Peoples Democratic Party president, Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, today accused the Farooq Abdullah government of sabotaging the peace initiative by insisting on the withdrawal of the unilateral ceasefire.

THE STATESMAN

No move to re-induct Mamata in NDA: PM

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 29. — The Prime Minister today said there was no proposal to take Miss Mamata Banerjee back into the NDA fold.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee will return to Delhi tomorrow afternoon. He will meet the West Bengal chief minister, Mr Buddhadev Bhattacharya, tomorrow evening, officials said.

Miss Bannerjee is due to arrive in Delhi tomorrow. She will meet President Mr K R Narayanan on Thursday evening.

Speaking at a press conference in Manali today, Mr Vajpayee said, "there is no proposal" to re-induct Miss Banerjee into the NDA.

(The West Bengal BJP chief, Mr Asim Ghosh, however, declined to rule out the possibility.

He said in Kolkata today he couldn't contact Mr Jana Krishnamurthy as the latter was not in Delhi. The Trinamul's return was "in the realm of the future" and the state unit of his party would send an appropriate response to the central leadership if the question came up, Mr Ghosh said. "We'll think about it when she (Miss Mamata Banerjee) takes a decision.")

The Prime Minister said he would "positively" fill vacancies in his Cabinet before the start of the Monsoon session.

■ Mamata to meet Sonia:
page 3

THE STATESMAN
31 JUN 2001

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29/6

Cabinet secretary's term extended

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 26. — The Cabinet today amended service rules relating to the Cabinet secretary's appointment, in a clear attempt to grant an extension to the incumbent, Mr TSR Prasad. He is due to retire on 31 July.

After the fifth Pay Commission's recommendations were accepted, there was no provision to allow extensions beyond the age of 60. It became necessary for the government to create

this "enabling provision" to extend a Cabinet secretary's tenure up to the age of 62. There has been intense pressure on the government from its key ally, the Telegu Desam, to either extend Mr Prasad's tenure, or appoint its nominee, Mr HJ Dora, as the CBI director. The government opted for the former.

Briefing journalists after today's Cabinet meeting, law minister Mr Arun Jaitley said the amendment would allow

the government to grant extension to the Cabinet secretary if "in the public interest" it was felt that his services were required beyond the regular retirement age of 60. This, Mr Jaitley clarified, didn't mean an automatic extension for all Cabinet secretaries. No separate sanction was required for this from Parliament.

The Cabinet today decided to ask BIFR not to pass a winding up order, but instead to offer the six nationalised jute mills, under the National Jute

Manufacturers Corporation (referred to the BIFR since August 1992) for sale to workers' cooperatives, failing which, offers could be made from West Bengal and Bihar governments. Five of the sick mills — Alexandra, Khardah, Kinnison, National and Union — are located around Kolkata.

Private sector enterprises and the private sector could also bid for these mills on condition that employment of permanent workers is protected, a Cabinet note said.

■ Editorial: Old order 'stayeth, page 6
Cabinet asks BIFR to offer MJMC for sale to cooperatives, page 6

11-10

Drift as Policy

Is anyone in the Union government in control, or at least nominally in charge of the crisis-engulfed north-east? Given that its 'strategy' for peace in the region changes almost daily, the answer perhaps is self-evident. It is obviously nobody's case that the 'problems' in the north-east are only of this government's making or that they are easy to resolve but that is hardly an excuse for the total lack of coherence in the Centre's handling of the situation. Add to this, its cynical economy with the truth in public pronouncements over the issue. Consider this: when the extension of the ceasefire with the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) to cover Naga-inhabited areas in bordering states first met with violent protest, the ministry rather loftily assured the media that the decision was neither arbitrary nor arrived at in haste. It was solemnly proclaimed that the affected states had been duly consulted and taken into confidence. Home minister L K Advani, in fact, went on record to say that the extension initiative was the outcome of a 'broad consensus' reached on the issue with the states concerned. It is now abundantly clear that the process of 'consultation' was at best aimed at maintaining form. From Assam chief minister Tarun Gogoi to Manipur governor Ved Marwah to the ousted Manipur chief minister Radhagobind Koiyam — who ironically belongs to a party which is a constituent of the central coalition — anyone of any political standing in the states concerned has disputed the official version. It is hard to escape the conclusion that, like much else in successive central interventions in the north-east, the extension decision was taken without serious regard either for its immediate fall-out in terms of law and order or its larger implications for regional politics. Little wonder, the violent response to the ceasefire decision caught the state authorities as much by surprise as those sitting in Delhi.

The tragedy is compounded by the realisation that far from learning from the earlier fiasco, the Centre's subsequent moves in the region are being dictated more by expediency than a well-thought-out policy framework. On Friday last, for instance, the Centre announced its decision to re-explore the possibility of restoring popular rule in the state. A complete about-turn from its three-week-old decision that it was impossible to have an elected government in the state. On Sunday, barely two days after the volte-face, prime minister Vajpayee, under pressure from state legislators, abandoned the two-day-old initiative. Similarly, early last week the Centre steadfastly defended its decision to extend the ceasefire and belatedly assured the non-Naga people that this did not amount to an endorsement of the demand for greater Nagaland. However, we are now told, on Mr Vajpayee's authority, that the Centre is reviewing "various aspects arising out of the ceasefire". No one quite knows what this means and whether the review might even end up revoking the extension. Meanwhile, one might do no better than to heed Mr Vajpayee's advice to Manipur legislators — to await the home minister's return from his foreign sojourn — to find out what fresh 'strategy' the government has in store for that benighted part of our Union.

Ceasefire review to be expedited: PM

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, June 24.— Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee tonight said the Centre would expedite the review of various aspects arising out of the ceasefire with NSCN(I-M), even as political leaders from Manipur demanded withdrawal of truce extension by 31 July failing which, they said, they may quit Assembly en masse.

"The review is underway and the process will be expedited. Territorial integrity of Manipur will be preserved," the Prime Minister told an all-party delegation from Manipur with whom he had a two-and-a-half hour meeting.

Another meeting of Manipuri leaders with Mr Vajpayee would be held on 8 July by when Home Minister Mr LK Advani, who left on a three-nation tour today, would be back home, a PMO spokesman said.

Asked whether the issue of restoration of a government in the state was discussed, delegation spokesman and former deputy chief minister Mr L Chandramani Singh said

it was "unthinkable when the entire state is burning."

Amsu rejects truce review: In Imphal, the All-Manipur Students Union rejected the demand of some political parties in the state for review of the Centre-NSCN(I-M) ceasefire and decided to continue the stir till the ceasefire was withdrawn from the state.

Announcing this, an Amsu spokesman said the students' bo-

dy was not demanding review of the ceasefire agreement but immediate withdrawal of the ceasefire from Manipur.

Curfew relaxed: Indefinite curfew, clamped in the Greater Imphal area of Imphal East and West, was relaxed today from 5 a.m. to 11 a.m., adds SNS. Curfew will be further relaxed tomorrow from 5 am to 1 p.m., according to official sources.

Assam bandh: The Congress and Sulfa activists have called separate 12-hour bandhs in Assam's North Cachar Hill and Sibsagar districts from tomorrow in protest against truce extension to the state, PTI adds from Guwahati.

■ Editorial: Meitei retribution, page 6

THE STATESMAN

Nitish Kumar to stay put

SM 16/6
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 15. — Mr Nitish Kumar is set to continue as railway minister despite his public posturing of “welcoming Miss Mamata Banerjee back to the ministry”.

It is learnt that Mr Kumar agreed to shoulder the additional responsibility of the railway ministry following the exit of the Trinamul leader only after he was assured that it would not be a stop-gap arrangement but a permanent one.

The Prime Minister had informally given this assurance to Mr George Fernandes (who had also resigned from the Cabinet the same day as Miss Banerjee) and Mr Kumar before giving the agriculture minister the additional job of the railways, it is learnt.

Mr Kumar, a qualified engineer, had manned the railways before Miss Banerjee took over. He is known for the “professional interest he shows in technical and administrative

matters” of railways unlike the populist Miss Banerjee.

Political and ministry sources see in the scrapping of the Sam Pitroda panel a definite signal of the end of the left-over of the Mamata era besides Mr Kumar's determination to stay put and push ahead his own vision and ideas. This move, they feel, would not have been taken unless Mr Kumar was sure of his long-stint in the ministry.

Even his public welcome of Miss Banerjee's back to the NDA and ministry, in response to questions from reporters yesterday, was consistent with his stand.

Only recently he told **The Statesman** that out of “generosity” and because of their unwillingness to be seen as a “stumbling block” before the Trinamul leader, neither he nor Mr Fernandes will be able to say “no” if they were publicly asked their opinion on the re-entry of Miss Banerjee.

Of late there has been a clear intention of doing away with the populist “generosity” of

Miss Banerjee. If many of the new trains that formed her “Bengal package” have been held back till the “infrastructure is created”, Miss Banerjee's uneconomical move to order more wagons and electric locomotives from the Bengal-based production units are also being held back on “economic” grounds.

After scrapping the Pitroda panel, Mr Kumar, who is not allergic to reforms, is expected to take steps on the lines of the interim report of the Rakesh Mohan committee, which he set up during his earlier stint.

Mr Kumar is expected to take a series of steps aimed at cutting expenditure, manpower, leasing out of ticket counters on the lines of air travel agents, increase use of Internet and restructuring of the railway board, if not doing away with it. Despite his public denial of immediate plans to hike fares, in-house exercises are on reportedly on the “rationalisation” of fares and freight-charges to tide over the financial crisis

THE STATESMAN

15 JUN 2011

Nitish welcomes Mamata but scraps her Pitroda panel

NDA
SF-1
15/6
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DUAN (Midnapore)/NEW DELHI, June 14. - Mr Nitish Kumar is ready to vacate the railway ministry for Miss Mamata Banerjee and has assured that the railway projects in West Bengal would be completed on time but his ministry today scrapped the Sam Pitroda panel set up by the Trinamul chief.

Mr Kumar scrapped the three-member committee, headed by Mr Sam Pitroda, and comprising former railway board member, Mr Shanti Narayan and Trinamul general secretary, Mr Dinesh Trivedi, a couple of days ago, officials said.

The Pitroda panel was set up by

Miss Banerjee on 6 February 2001 to "find ways to modernise the railways and suggest alternative revenue mobilisation". But actually it was part of Miss Banerjee's efforts to offload interim proposals of the Rakesh Mohan Committee on restructuring railways.

Mr Kumar was in Duan today to inaugurate a platform at a new halt between Balichak and Radhamohanpur in the Howrah-Kharagpur section of South Eastern Railway.

On the Trinamul chief's return to the NDA, the railway minister said: "Miss Banerjee quit office on her own and we will welcome her if she joins NDA."

He, however, said the Prime

Minister's decision in this regard would be final.

Regarding the railway projects in West Bengal, Mr Kumar said the Digha-Tamluk project in Midnapore would be completed by June next year. He ruled out any hike in railway fare.

The railway department will concentrate on profits by curbing all round expenditure and reducing man power. Mr Kumar has convened a special meeting with railway officials on 23 June to discuss this issue.

General managers will be given discretionary powers to raise the freight in volume discount scheme and non-conventional sources will be used fully to earn revenue, Mr Kumar said.

THE STATESMAN

15 JUN 2001

Nitish sacks Mamata pointman

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, June 14

NITISH KUMAR has dissolved the Sam Pitroda Committee that his predecessor, Mamata Banerjee, had formed in February to suggest ways of modernising the department.

The committee was scheduled to submit its report in six months.

Former Railway Board Traffic member, Shanti Narain, and Trinamool leader and Passenger Amenities Committee chairman, Dinesh Trivedi, were on the committee.

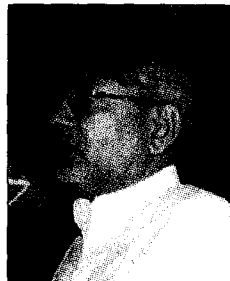
Banerjee had selected Pitroda to head the committee for his expertise in the telecom sector. Pitroda believes telecom can not only improve the Railways' effi-



SAM PITRODA



MAMATA BANERJEE



NITISH KUMAR

ciency but prove to be a source of additional revenue through the Railways' newly set-up Railtel fibre optics firm.

But the future of the Pitroda Committee was uncertain from the time Banerjee pulled out of the NDA Government. Not only was Pitroda handpicked by Ba-

nerjee for the job, he said he accepted the assignment because of the Trinamool leader, whom he has known for years.

The dissolution of the committee indicates that the Railway Ministry may review the policies that Nitish Kumar's predecessor had pursued.

Nitish has shown that unlike Mamata, he is not averse to increasing fares. The Lucknow Shatabdi fares have already gone up, though only after the speed was increased and better coaches introduced.

She did not explicitly suggest reorganisation of the Railway Board, but did say that the Railways required drastic restructuring since "operations and administration" were too large to be efficiently handled by one person.

But Kumar, after assuming office, ruled out disbanding of the Railway Board.

The wagon industry's fears regarding reduction in the wagons procurement order during 2001-2002 also indicated the Railways' changing perspectives.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

15 JUN 2001

ALL NAGA-INHABITED AREAS TO BE COVERED

40-1
15/6

Truce in Nagaland extended by a year

9-Centre
grow

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JUNE 14. Putting aside the irritants which had bogged down the Naga peace talks less than a month ago, the Centre and the NSCN (I-M) today formally agreed to extend the four-year-old ceasefire by one more year and enlarge it to cover all Naga inhabited areas in the entire North-East.

"The most salient feature of this latest extension of the ceasefire is that it will be without any territorial limits. However, this stipulation will not, in any way, affect the territorial integrity of any of the North-Eastern States," the Union Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pande, said in a statement.

At a press conference here, Mr. Pande formally announced the extension of the truce following an agreement between the NSCN(I-M) and the Government. The Centre's representative, Mr. K. Padmanabhaiah, and Mr. T. Muivah, general secretary of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN I-M), had held talks over the past two days in Bangkok.

Mr. Pande said the north-eastern States had been assured that extension of the truce beyond Nagaland would not, in any way, impinge upon their territorial integrity. "In fact, a written communication is being sent to the North-Eastern States today."

The NSCN (I-M) is known to have bases in Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh and their concerns relating to territorial integrity have been voiced by their Chief Ministers in the recent past.

States consulted

The State Governments concerned in the North-East had been consulted and the ground situation taken into consideration before extending the truce. Asked whether it would not give a leverage to the NSCN(I-M) to press its demand for a "Greater Nagaland", the Home Secretary said the present round of talks was confined to the extension of the ceasefire.

Both sides expressed the hope that talks on more

substantive issues would be held at a much faster pace. They also agreed to move forward with the process of dialogue to bring about a lasting political solution to the vexed issue. Mr. Pande termed the discussions in Bangkok "extremely fruitful".

It said the ceasefire agreement was between the Government of India and the NSCN as two entities without territorial limits. "Both the parties would abide by the ground rules as revised on January 13, 2001, both in letter and spirit. It is agreed to further extend the ceasefire for a period of one year with effect from August 1, 2001." The ceasefire first came into operation from July 1997 during the I. K. Gujral Government.

Ground rules

Mr. Pande said the two sides also agreed to strictly implement the ground rules and there would be no highway hold-ups, no extortion, the cadres of the NSCN (I-M) would not move with their arms and not break laws of the land. On including the Khaplang faction of the NSCN in the peace talks, Mr. Pande said it had also broadly agreed to the same set of ground rules of the ceasefire and the arrangement with the group was confined only to the ceasefire. "It is a positive step," he added.

Assam opposes agreement

PTI reports from Guwahati:

The Assam Government today strongly opposed the Centre's decision to extend the ceasefire with the NSCN(I-M) without territorial limits.

A Government statement said extending the ceasefire to all States in the region without taking into consideration the views of the Governments concerned was strongly opposed by the Congress government in Assam. "This unilateral decision may result in escalation of insurgent activities of Assam."

Ban orders in Imphal: Page 9

THE HINDU

14 JUN 2001

Advani's short stint at the top

Fr
19/6

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 14: L.K. Advani returned to the head of the Cabinet table this evening, two years after chairing a meeting which recommended President's rule in Bihar.

Today's Cabinet meeting took up a more sedate issue — the schedule of the monsoon session of Parliament from July 23 to August 31 — and wrapped up its business fast.

"We decided to hold the meeting today because the session has to begin within three weeks of the President issuing a notification," parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan said.

However, questions were raised whether the government could not have waited till early next week when Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee is scheduled to return.

BJP leaders said nothing more should be "read" in the meeting than a series of "unavoidable circumstances and schedules" which forced Advani's hand. But Advani was reportedly reluctant to chair a meeting when Vajpayee is in the capital.

Even if Vajpayee returns by Tuesday, he has been advised not to move out of his 3 Race Course Road home (where he and his family live) till June 26. A full Cabinet meeting can only be held at either 7 Race Course Road (where he usually holds meetings) or in South Block. Postponing the meeting to June 26 would have meant another hitch — the parliamentary affairs minister will be out of Delhi. That left today and tomorrow. Advani chose the earlier day, though only 14 of the 27 ministers could attend.

THE TELEGRAPH

13 JUN 2001

Tehelka panel notice may queer George pitch

CL MANOJ
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, June 8. — The decision of the Venkataswamy Commission, probing the Tehelka expose, to issue notice to Mr George Fernandes could affect Mr Fernandes' chances of making a comeback to the Vajpayee government in the next Cabinet expansion the Prime Minister has indicated to undertake before the beginning of the monsoon session on 24 July.

Soon after the BJP-Samata Party crisis over the Manipur political tug-of-war got blown over, Mr Fernandes'

return to the Cabinet was widely speculated. In fact, sources said that there has been some "informal understanding" at the highest-level of the government that Mr Fernandes could make a return in the next Cabinet expansion.

However, the commission's decision to issue fresh notices on 5 June to another batch of people — including Mr Fernandes and Mr Brajesh Mishra (people like Mr Bangaru Laxman and Mrs Jaya Jaitley had been issued notices earlier with the 31 May deadline to file their affidavits) — could upset the "prepared script" of Mr Fernandes'

comeback, sources said.

The commission, in its notice under section 5/2 A (as was served earlier to others like Mr Laxman and Mrs Jaitley), has asked Mr Fernandes to respond personally to the charges before the commission on 2 July, just their respective affidavits.

BLOW TO FERNANDES'S RE-ENTRY INTO CABINET

21 days before beginning of the monsoon session and 22 days before the expiry of the commission's four-month term.

With the commission issuing more notices, the chances of it seeking an extension has further strengthened,

sources said. Further, and given the precedence of proceedings in other commissions of inquiry, recipients of the notices under 5/2A can receive more summons after the examination of their respective affidavits.

These summons can come under section 8B, calling for more cross-examination.

That will further increase the time Fernandes will need to wait for a verdict.

Sources say Mr Fernandes is still

the prime minister's choice as a Cabinet minister, provided the commission clears him. Mr Fernandes has developed "an excellent personal equation with the prime Minister and was doing many fire-fighting missions for him," an NDA leader said.

Therefore, Mr Vajpayee was reportedly keen to get him back, specially in these "testing times for himself and his government". However, a section of the NDA feels that the commission's notice to Mr Fernandes will give him a platform to "prove his innocence and absolve himself of the shadow of doubt" that

the Tehelka expose cast on his integrity. The Venkataswamy Commission which had issued notices to Mr Fernandes, Mr Brajesh Mishra and other senior officials, was assured of full government cooperation by the attorney-general, Mr Soli Sorabjee.

The commission, set up by the Centre after the Tehelka expose, will be handed over all necessary documents, except those concerning national security issues, Mr Sorabjee said at the first public hearing.

The panel had also issued notice to the former minister of state for defence, Mr Harin Pathak.

THE STATESMAN

Be tough, talk friendly, is Advani's new mantra for Indo-Pak relations

Home minister advocates 'kathor-komal' stance

By Aunohita Mojumdar
The Times of India News Service

LEH: Arriving here on the eve of Sindhu Darshan, the three-day cultural-religious festival of the Vajpayee government which was inaugurated on Friday, Union home minister L.K. Advani chose to strike a firm note, describing the invitation to General Pervez Musharraf as evidence of a hard, but gentle state.

In an apparent bid to dispel accusations that the Vajpayee government was turning the nation into a 'soft' state, Mr Advani said there would be no laxity regarding security.

Making his first remarks on the invitation to Pakistan at an Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) function here, the home minister said the defining characteristic of the Indian state was to be "*kathor aur komal* (strong and friendly)." There would be no relaxation in the area of security, but the country was prepared for friendship.

Although the home minister did not mention either Pakistan or General Musharraf by name, he spoke of the recent invitation to the leader of a 'neighbouring country', saying the talks would bring progress.

Saluting the bravery of the ITBP jawans at a 'Sainik Sabha', Mr Advani said the aim of victory should be to ensure peace for the nation and the world. Security constituted the core of the nation's aims, along with education and health. India had faced many threats to its security, both internal and external, and attention had to be paid to this aspect, he said.

The home minister appreciated the oper-

ational preparedness of the ITBP and promised to respond quickly to some of the demands raised by ITBP director-general S.C. Choubey regarding additional staff for the administration and training of the new companies, and extra flying hours for surveillance on the border. He also assured the ITBP personnel that all border outposts would be provided with entertainment facilities to break the jawans' monotony.

Sindhu Darshan, which is projected by the BJP-led government as a symbol of national integration, was inaugurated in the presence of senior NDA leaders, including Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah and Union minister for culture and tourism Ananth Kumar, besides Mr Advani.

The prospect of talks with Pakistan has added a political dimension to the festival. The inauguration of the festival was held amidst Buddhist chants and Hindu rituals, followed by Ladakhi women in traditional attire honouring the jawans by tying rakhis. Mr Advani and several of his ministerial colleagues were also turned out in the traditional Goncha, the black robe with bright pink sash. Other prominent guests included actor Amrish Puri and the ambassadors of Norway and South Korea.

The home minister expressed the hope that the festival would come to symbolise international friendship, especially between India and Pakistan. The Sindhu Darshan festival was described by Mr Ananth Kumar as an example of national integration. The government of India would spend Rs 3 crore on building a cultural centre here, he said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

2 JUN 2001

Move on J&K well thought out

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 24. — The Centre's radical change in policy on the Kashmir issue, should not be seen piecemeal but as part of a package. If India has called off non-initiation of combat operations in the strife-torn state, it has extended a "friendly hand" to Pakistan for a "lasting peace".

While it has taken a diplomatically correct stand by deciding to invite Pakistan's chief executive General Pervez Musharraf to India for a clean chit to Islamabad on the issue of sponsoring terrorism in the state.

No doubt India has partially succeeded in its efforts for an unilateral ceasefire. The success came along the LoC which remained "relatively peaceful" during the past few months due to restraint exercised by both sides. However, it failed

to encourage the terrorist organisations to respond positively to its efforts and shun violence in the region.

The government said these terrorist groups and organisations are "mostly foreign". The fact that New Delhi still continues to hold Islamabad responsible for these terrorist groups' activities was clear when a foreign ministry official today said: "We all know that there are terrorist groups operating from Pakistan".

It seems the government has been preparing itself to call off the ceasefire for some time now. The external affairs minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, who is also holding the defence portfolio said yesterday that it was not a sudden decision.

Sources said the ground situation in the region was taking shape in such a direction during the last two months that the government was forced to dwell with the idea of calling off the ceasefire.

The unhappiness and frustration among the security forces for not being able to carry out an open operation, besides killings of civilians and attacks on security personnel, had prompted the government to give the unilateral ceasefire a fresh look. In the meantime, special forces of NSG deployed in the region were also withdrawn.

Even the statement issued on the appointment of the government's mediator, Mr KC Pant, last month, was indication enough that the ceasefire was virtually null and void, a formal announcement of which came yesterday. "The road to peace is not without serious obstacles: one such is continuing violence against the innocent people of J&K. To reduce this violence security forces have been directed to vigorously conduct operations against those who disturb the peace and victimise the innocent people of

J&K, while at the same time ensuring that the population at large is spared undue hardships or harassment".

Following the joint visit to the region and subsequent meeting between home minister, Mr LK Advani, and Mr Jaswant Singh, the information that filtered down was that both the leaders were unhappy with the grim situation in J&K. But India could not have taken the risk of calling off the ceasefire and close all doors. Had India taken such a step it would have been at the receiving end from international quarters. Therefore, the invitation to Gen Musharraf.

BJP stand: The BJP, which too had maintained that there should be no talks with Pakistan till it took definite steps to prevent cross border terrorism, put up a brave face. The party spokesperson, Mr Narendra Modi, defended it as the need of diplomacy. He said that the government would now talk to

SANGH PARIVAR SURPRISED

NEW DELHI, May 24. — The government's decision to call off the ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir and extend an invitation to Gen Musharraf for talks has surprised the Sangh Parivar. It has been opposed to further extension of the ceasefire but never calculated that it could end so soon. Even some BJP leaders privately admitted that both the decisions were "totally unexpected".

The VHP welcomed the calling off of the truce, but raised serious objections to the decision coming into effect from 31 May. This meant that the government was giving ample time to the terrorists to leave their hideouts and take up positions to target the security forces, the VHP president, Mr Vishnu Hari Dalmia, said. The decision should have been implemented with immediate effect, he said.

He said the "gamble" to initiate dialogue with Pakistan's chief executive officer would not pay off. "We have our doubts." In this context he pointed to the statement of the chief of Pakistan's ISI, Mr Hamid Gul, that an invitation to talks meant that India had dropped its preconditions and said this was a bad omen. — SNS

Pakistan and deal firmly with militants in the valley.

Gen Musharraf had already expressed his readiness to discuss the issue within the context of the Shimla agreement and the Lahore declaration. "We hope Pakistan will approach the forthcoming talks with India in a positive manner and in a peaceful atmosphere," Mr Modi said.

THE STATESMAN

25 MAY 2001

Sangh wants Advani as deputy PM

GM By Rajesh Ramachandran
The Times of India News Service 2/15

NEW DELHI: The Sangh Parivar has proposed that Union home minister L.K. Advani be appointed deputy prime minister. This is with a view to sorting out the differences between the parivar and the Prime Minister, Sangh Parivar sources said.

Parivar hardliners said this was the only option as any change of leadership at this stage would weaken the government. A senior Parivar leader, however, added, "It has been left entirely to Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to take a decision. Either way, we would honour his decision."

Sources said the Prime Minister's absence from office for his second knee surgery in mid-June could be the opportune moment for the announcement.

The development follows a series of events since the 'armsgate' expose in March. While the opposition attacked the government, the Sangh Parivar had focused its attack on the PMO. The subtext of the

Parivar's attacks on Mr Vajpayee's foster son-in-law and his principal secretary Brajesh Mishra was the grouse that the Prime Minister had strayed too far from the Parivar and its ideology.

The Sangh sees the poor performance of the BJP's allies in the recent assembly elections as a factor negatively affecting the government's image, and a section within the Parivar now increasingly feels that the situation may be salvaged only by making Mr Advani deputy prime minister.

There was some speculation about Mr Vajpayee formally handing over the government's charge to Mr Advani before going for his earlier knee surgery. But this did not happen. This time around, there has been a qualitative change in the political situation, resulting in opinion being built up within the Parivar in favour of an image-lift for the government, especially since the party is going in for the crucial assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh as early as October or latest by March 2002.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

25 MAY 2001

TRI-SERVICE INTELLIGENCE AGENCY PROPOSED

GoM for new security setup

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 23. An inter-ministerial group on defence reforms has recommended a new national security architecture in which the role of defence forces in policy formulation has been enhanced.

Releasing the report on reforming the national security system, the Group of Ministers headed by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, recommended the formation of a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) as the tri-service administrative head of the nuclear forces as well as the Government's principal military adviser.

According to the report, the CDS will form the key interface between the Prime Minister and the commander of the "strategic forces". The strategic forces, analysts say, will comprise air, land and sea-based platforms for delivering nuclear weapons. India's draft nuclear doctrine envisages establishing a small air, land and sea-based nuclear arsenal, sufficient to deter an enemy attack by atomic weapons.

The CDS will also head the tri-service Andaman and Nicobar command. Sources said this command would mainly focus on the Bay of Bengal area, especially to ensure an uninterrupted flow of



The Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, flanked by the Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha (left), and the External Affairs and Defence Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, at a press conference in New Delhi on Wednesday. 7— Photo: V. Sudershan

commercial shipping towards the strategic Malacca Straits. The GoM has also recommended the formation of a marine police in the coastal areas including the island territories.

The CDS will be assisted by a Vice-Chief of the Defence Staff. The VCDS will perform the "think-tank" role of strategic planning in the light of a 15-20 year defence perspective plan to be drawn by a cell headed by the Defence Secretary. Inputs may also be received from a National

Defence University, proposed to be set up at a later date.

The VCDS will be the hub for prioritising procurement decisions for the three services. He will also be on the Defence Procurement Board, which in turn will integrate decisions related to military purchases and will be steered by a Special Secretary (procurement). Procurement decisions may also be influenced by the recommendations of a special unit in the Defence Ministry which will scan the international market for military products.

The CDS, according to the report, will be assisted by an integrated tri-service Defence Intelligence Agency. The head of the DIA will also be represented in the apex Intelligence Coordinating Group. The ICG, on its part, will play a "watch-dog" role over the entire national intelligence machinery and will be empowered to prioritise intelligence gathering and dissemination.

The report has made sweeping recommendations to enhance border security and surveillance. For instance, it lays special emphasis on deploying the Indo-Tibetan Border Police along the sensitive border with Nepal. Emphasising specialisation, it recommends that the Border Security Force focus mainly on border management. It should be reorganised as an administratively distinct BSF (East) and BSF (West). The BSF should be given charge of the troubled Indo-Bhutan border which has become vulnerable on account of cross-border infiltrations by the north-east insurgents.

The Indo-Myanmar border should be the prime responsibility of the Assam Rifles. A new road along the entire Indo-Myanmar border needed to be opened and an effort was required to resolve the differences between the two countries on the boundary alignment in the Molcham area.

THE HINDU

24 MAY 2001

Vajpayee invites Musharraf, calls off Kashmir truce

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 23. — The Centre today sprang a twin surprise by calling off the six-month ceasefire in Jammu & Kashmir and simultaneously inviting General Pervez Musharraf to New Delhi for talks.

The Vajpayee government clarified that New Delhi was not averse to holding a dialogue with Islamabad provided the latter created a conducive atmosphere by stopping cross-border terrorism. The decision to invite General Musharraf was taken after assessing the ground situation in the state.

The ceasefire was extended three times, beginning last November on the eve of Ramzan. It was last extended in February for three months but "this phase is now over." The decision was taken at the Cabinet Committee on Security this evening.

The CCS took four major decisions. First, to end the non-initiation of combat against terrorists; second, continuation of maximum restraint along the Line of Control; third, government's chief negotiator, Mr KC Pant, will continue with his initiative for talks with Kashmiri groups and lastly, in pursuance with the Lahore Declaration and Shimla Agreement an invitation to the Pakistan's chief executive to visit India for talks.

Earlier on several occasions, Gen Musharraf expressed his willingness to hold talks with In-

dia "anytime and anywhere".

Speaking to the media after the CCS meeting, the External Affairs Minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, also holding the Defence portfolio, said the four elements of the decision were "complimentary" and "not contradictory".

He said the government's decision "reinforces India's stand towards lasting peace in Jammu & Kashmir". The decision, he said, was not sudden.

Calling off the ceasefire after having extended it over the past six months, the government reasoned it out by blaming squarely the non-cooperation of terrorists groups and organisations.

The government said it was expected that terrorist groups and organisations, mostly foreign, would see reason and that they would shun violence recognising the imperatives of peace, dialogue and cooperation. "Regrettably, they have not. This phase, therefore, is now over."

These groups have "hindered" the restoration of peace in the region and "inflicted misery" upon the people of the state. "Hereafter, security forces would take such action against terrorists as they judge best."

The government has, however, maintained that the security forces would continue to exercise maximum care so that no harassment was caused to the civilian population.

The non-initiation of combat operation, the government acknowledged, had a positive im-

pact along the LoC. It has been relatively peaceful on "account of restraint exercised by both sides". The government admitted that exchange of fire had considerably come down. Keeping these facts in mind, the government has decided to continue to observe maximum restraint. Mr Pant's process of political dialogue with various groups would continue "unhindered".

Mr Singh said that though ceasefire had been withdrawn, India's commitment to "peace, dialogue and cooperative co-existence" with Pakistan remained "unaltered".

In pursuance of the Lahore Declaration and the Simla Agreement, Prime Minister has decided to invite General Musharraf to visit India at his "early convenience".

A formal invitation would be delivered soon.

Extending the invitation to Gen Musharraf is a gesture of offering the hand of "friendship, reconciliation, cooperation and peace" to Pakistan in the expectation that this opportunity would be "positively and purposefully" utilised.

Regarding involvement of the All-Party Hurriyat Conference, the government clarified that APHC had no place in tripartite talks. As far as their demand for a visit to Pakistan is concerned, the minister shrugged it off by saying "where does it stand".

■ Another report on page 8

THE STATESMAN

24 MAY 2001

WEDNESDAY, MAY 23, 2001

MANIPUR AND THE NDA

THE EXIT OF the Radhabinod Kojiam Ministry in Manipur may not have attracted such nationwide attention, as it has now, in the normal scheme of things. The party system, after all, had never been integral to the political discourse in Manipur (and for that matter in most other States in the Northeast). Such en masse shifting of loyalties by legislators has indeed been a routine development in the region and party affiliations have hardly been an important factor in the formation of Governments in these States. And this has contributed immensely to the woes facing the political setup in those States in the past few decades. But then, the developments in Manipur this time involved the BJP's State unit having ensured the fall of a Government headed by the Samata Party, an important constituent in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). And this is what has lent a sense of significance and political urgency to the Manipur developments. Add to this the developments after the fall of the Kojiam Ministry; Mr. R. K. Dorendra Singh, the BJP's leader in the Manipur Assembly, seems hardly bothered about his own party's high command and is reported to have led the BJP legislature party members to the Governor and staked his claim for the Chief Minister's post. All these are bound to deepen the crisis that has caught the NDA.

It may be true that the Manipur developments, on their own, may only have the effect of rattling the NDA and the Vajpayee dispensation at the Centre in the immediate context. But then, the very fact that the NDA had to go about holding a meeting of its steering committee without its convener, Mr. George Fernandes, is a fact that the political leadership of the ruling combine cannot gloss over. The signals are clear. It may not take too long before the combine begins cracking. Coming as it does in the immediate context of the poor show by the parties in the ruling combine — the DMK-led front's defeat in Tamil Nadu and the trouncing that the AGP-BJP

alliance received in Assam — the standoff involving the Samata Party can indeed mark the beginning of the disintegration of the NDA as a political platform. The BJP-led alliance is even otherwise breaking up. The exit of Ms. Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress and the withdrawal of the four-member PMK from the combine had initiated this process even earlier. Mr. Vajpayee and his aides in the BJP may be justified in hoping that Mr. Fernandes will not behave in the same fashion as did Ms. Mamata Banerjee and Dr. S. Ramdoss. Unlike others who could find a place elsewhere — as did Ms. Banerjee and Dr. Ramdoss — Mr. Fernandes cannot walk out of the NDA with the hope that he will be welcomed by the Congress(I) or by any other party. But then, the Samata leader cannot afford to ignore the sentiments among his partymen too. It is this reality that lends itself to the view that the Manipur developments are bound to shake up the NDA in a big way.

Be that as it may, there is a larger aspect to the Manipur developments that raise some serious concern. For instance, the fact that Mr. R.K. Dorendra Singh, the BJP's pointman now in Manipur, is neither a stalwart of the party nor is he new to the political scene. Mr. Singh had been Chief Minister of Manipur thrice in the past and he was then the leader of the Congress(I) in the State. It is also a fact that he was found (sometime in the 1970s) to have links with a section of the militants in the region even while he was heading a Congress(I) Government in the State. And that was when he was removed from the post (by the then high command) and rewarded with a diplomatic assignment at that time. The BJP had no qualms in admitting Mr. Singh into its fold and crowning him the leader of its legislature party. Given all these facts, Mr. Singh's role in ensuring that the BJP legislators defied the whip (against voting out the Kojiam Ministry) could not have surprised anyone. But then, this is a cause for concern.

THE HINDU

Crisis over as Manipur ice is broken in Delhi

■ Samata says it remains part of NDA

PRADEEP KAUSHAL
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

THE possibility of a flash-point emerging in the Samata-
BJP relationship in New
Delhi over the
Manipur devel-
opments receded today as the two-
hour luncheon meeting between
Prime Minister Atal Behari Vaj-
payee and former defence minister
and Samata leader George Fer-
nandes succeeded in breaking the
ice. At the end of the meeting, the
two sides agreed to maintain the
status quo in the north-eastern
state for the moment and hold a
joint meeting of central and state
leaders of the two parties here on
May 28 to resolve the issue.

The Samata Party, conse-
quently, toned down the threats it
was issuing earlier. "We are part of
the NDA," George told corre-
spondents as he emerged from the
PM's residence.

For the record, Samata leader
Jaya Jaitly reiterated the condi-
tions the party had set earlier, that
the BJP either support the contin-
uation of Radhabinod Kojiam as
the chief minister or Manipur be
placed under President's rule.

The mellowing was visible in
BJP circles as well, with party gen-



eral secretary Narendra Modi em-
phatically stating that the BJP
would "neither form a government
in Manipur nor
support any
other govern-
ment".

There were
some indica-
tions of the way
things are going
in Manipur in the light of the Fer-
nandes-Vajpayee patchup effort.
In Kohima, a new alliance, the Pro-
gressive Democratic Front, was
formed under the leadership of
RK Dorendra Singh, who heads
the 26-member BJP legislature
party in the 60-member House.
According to agency reports, 41
legislators — 26 of the BJP, 10 of
the MSCP (C), two each of the
NCP and the Federal Party and
one of the Janata Dal (Loken) —
formed the front.

However, the front stopped
short of staking a claim to form a
government. The stand of the high
command had obviously damp-
ened the enthusiasm of party legis-
lators at Kohima, who aimed at
forming an alternative govern-
ment. They were left with the
choice to either stay in the BJP and
abide by the directive of the high
command or get out of it and form
a government.

In a state where MLAs contin

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Police expose plan to kill BJP, Sena leaders

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MAY 22

IN the first ever expose of the
underworld-terrorist nexus, Delhi
Police today claimed to have foiled
a plan to carry out serial bomb
blasts in Mumbai and eliminate
BJP, Bajrang Dal and Shiv Sena
leaders, with the arrest of three
persons, including a Kashmiri mil-
itant, and seizure of sophisticated
explosives from them.

Acting on a tip-off, sleuths of
the Special Cell arrested a Punjab-
based gang member of Karachi-
based don Chhota Shakeel,
Gurvinder Singh Bhullar alias
Tinku and two militants belonging
to the Bilal Ahmed Beg-led
Jammu and Kashmir Islamic
Front, Mohd Asghar alias Pappu,
belonging to Kupwara in Kashmir
and Abdul Jabbar, a Haryana-
based 'Jehadi'.

The arrests took place in the
parking lot of Gurudwara Bangla
Sahib when the two ultras had
come to deliver a consignment of
explosives to Bhullar, DPC Ajai
Raj Sharma said.

Two kgs of PETN, two radio
based detonating devices, two det-
onators, two nine volt batteries, six
1.5 volt pencil cells and a digital
Kenwood wireless set, besides
three mobile phones and a car were
recovered from them, he said.

"This is for the first time that a
dangerous nexus between the un-
derworld and a militant group has
come to the fore. A radio-based de-
vice capable of triggering four blasts
simultaneously has also been re-
covered for the first time in Delhi.
Had they not been apprehended,
series of explosions would have
rocked Mumbai," Sharma said.

INDIAN EXPRESS

23 MAY 2001

George boycott forces Vajpayee retreat

BJP puts Delhi before Manipur

FROM RADHIKA
RAMASESHAN, KAY
BENEDICT AND OINAM SUNIL

May 21: George Fernandes, one of the oldest and most reliable allies of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, tonight brought the BJP down on its knees after political skullduggery dislodged the country's sole Samata Party-led government in Manipur.

Samata, which threatened to pull out its ministers from the Centre, extracted an assurance from the BJP that it would not stake claim to form a government in Manipur. The BJP also said it would take "appropriate action" against its legislators who voted out the Manipur government.

The Manipur coalition government, headed by Radhabinod Kojiam, was overthrown during the day after 24 of the 26 BJP legislators voted against a confidence motion. The Kojiam government could manage only 17 votes in the House with an effective strength of 59.

The BJP had yesterday assured Samata that a whip would be issued, but confusion prevailed in Imphal today whether a "formal, three-line" order was issued. A livid Samata, which insisted that the BJP had not issued a whip and termed it a betrayal, struck back as soon as the result of the trust vote was declared.

The party, which has 13 MPs, threatened to not only withdraw from the coalition at the Centre but also pull out its ministers from the BJP-led government in Jharkhand.

Fernandes, who is the convenor of the coalition at the Centre, turned up the heat on Vajpayee by boycotting a meeting of the al-

liance partners in the evening. Vajpayee rushed two emissaries, PMO joint secretary Sudheendra Kulkarni and Delhi MP Vijay Goel, to turn Fernandes around.

Meeting him at the venue of the Samata national executive convened to review the support to the Centre, the duo urged Fernandes to attend the meeting at the Prime Minister's house.

The emissaries tried to buy peace with the promise that the BJP would not stake claim to form the Manipur government despite being the single largest party. But Fernandes — once Vajpayee's first choice in leading such fire-fighting missions to Jayalalitha and Mamata Banerjee — turned them away.

The coalition partners eventually met without their convener and spent an hour discussing how to pacify him. The original objective of the meeting was to discuss the post-poll scenario.

Briefing journalists later, Jaswant Singh, Fernandes' successor in the defence ministry, said: "Nobody from the BJP will be a contender for the chief minister's post in Manipur and action will be taken against those who did not comply with the whip."

Singh asserted that the stand-off would not undermine the stability of the Centre. "It is an internal matter," he said, emphasising that Fernandes would continue as the coalition convener.

He said the Manipur crisis was not inspired by the BJP but arose out of "an acute sense of grievement born of extreme factionalism in the Manipur legislature parties". Singh did not rule out the possibility of President's rule in the state.

Armed with these assurances, Fernandes is likely to meet the Prime Minister. The Samata na-

tional executive has authorised him to take any decision on ties with the Centre. No time frame has been set for taking a decision.

Asked what action would be taken against the errant MLAs, Singh said party president K. Jana Krishnamurthi would decide after he returns from the central office-bearers' meeting in Mussourie. But Samata sources were sceptical of the BJP's ability to act against its Manipur unit as an overwhelming majority of the legislators had dumped Kojiam. The 24 "errant" BJP legislators included not only the 18 who defected recently to the party but also four of its original members.

Before the NDA met in Delhi, the BJP legislature party leader in Manipur, R.K. Dorendra Singh, who abstained during the trust vote, had declared that he would stake claim to prevent President's rule being imposed.

Although Samata is prepared to give the BJP another chance, it said it would be forced to contemplate drastic action if the party reneges on its assurance. At today's meeting, two Jharkhand ministers, Ramachandra Kesri and Ramesh Singh Munda, said they were ready to quit any time.

Manipur Samata leaders charged Union home minister L.K. Advani and former BJP president Kushabhau Thakre with "instigating" the party MLAs.

Political observers believe that today's crisis was not just a tug-of-war between the BJP and Samata for controlling a state far removed from Delhi. It was designed at "clipping" Fernandes' wings post-Tehelka, and preempting his return to the Centre in case he was cleared by the Venkataswamy Commission probing the Tehelka disclosures.

■ Picture on Page 6

MANIPUR FALLOUT SOURS SAMATA-BJP TIES

Samata leaves it to Fernandes

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 21. The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) today suffered a jolt, even if only a temporary one, when its convenor and Samata Party leader, Mr. George Fernandes, did not attend a meeting of the allies called by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Mr. Fernandes kept away to protest the BJP central leadership's inability and unwillingness to save the Samata Party-led Government in Manipur. The absence, though for now just

symbolic, has created doubts about the NDA's unity of purpose.

A concerned Mr. Vajpayee sent two of his aides — Mr. Sudheendra Kulkarni and Mr. Vijay Goel, MP — to explain the intractability of the Manipur situation to the Samata leadership which was in an emergency national executive meeting.

The Samata meet was called to discuss the Manipur situation and relations with the BJP-led NDA. Mr. Fernandes preferred not to meet the Prime Minister's aides, leaving the task to party general secretary, Dr. Shambu Shrivastav,

and also declined the offer to attend the NDA meeting.

The Samata took the plea that since Mr. Fernandes was attending the party meeting, it was not possible for him to leave it, especially since the matters being discussed were its continuation in the NDA Government and whether it should create trouble for the BJP Government in Jharkhand and its other elected bodies elsewhere.

The four-hour meeting authorised Mr. Fernandes to decide on the party's relations with the NDA. Later, the Prime Minister

spoke to Mr. Fernandes and they are likely to meet tomorrow.

The three Union Ministers, Mr. Nitish Kumar, Mr. Digvijay Singh and Mr. V. Sreenivasa Prasad, were among the 46 of the 65-member policy-making body to attend the meeting, where passions against the BJP's move were said to be high.

The Prime Minister's emissaries also carried the message that the BJP would not stake claim to form the next Government in Manipur. This followed reports from Imphal that the party leader, Mr. R.K. Dorendra Singh, was doing so. The Samata leadership was not amused and preferred not to pay attention to the matter now.

The party general secretary said that as a sign of protest, two Ministers in the BJP-led Babulal Marandi Government in Jharkhand, Mr. Ram Chandra Kesri and Mr. Ramesh Singh Munda, and the party's Deputy Mayor in Baroda, Mr. Sailesh Mehta, offered to step down.

'Act of betrayal'

Earlier, the Samata criticised the BJP leadership for its "act of betrayal" following the fall of the Kojiam Government. The Samata said that despite it being the "most loyal" of the NDA allies and the BJP top leadership's repeated assurances of support to the Kojiam Ministry, the party MLAs voted against the Samata-led Government.

'No threat to NDA'

PTI reports from Patna:

The Janata Dal (U) chief and Civil Aviation Minister, Mr. Sharad Yadav, asserted that there was no threat to the NDA Government.

On the possibility of inclusion of the expelled RJD MPs in the Union Cabinet, Mr. Yadav told presspersons "it is the prerogative of the Prime Minister."

THE HINDU

21 MAY 2001

Atal Govt a threat to national security: VHP

HT Correspondent
Bhubaneswar, May 20

THE VISHWA Hindu Parishad on Sunday accused the BJP of trying to stick to power "at any cost."

International vice-president of VHP, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, said continuance of the Vajpayee-led Government was a threat to national security.

On a three-day visit to the State, Kishore attacked the BJP for not taking adequate measures to protect "national interests." As a result, conversion and subversive activities by Christian missionaries and ISI agents had registered an increase across the country, particularly in Jammu

and Kashmir and the North-east. He called for a complete ban on conversion of tribals and urged the Centre to enact a suitable legislation in this regard.

A "hard-pressed" BJP was compromising with national security due to certain "political compulsions," which he did not elaborate.

He said that some NDA partners were against taking stringent action in this regard. No political party could ensure national security without social awareness, Kishore said.

Hinting at VHP's plans to completely dissociate itself from the BJP, Kishore maintained: "The VHP has no relationship with the BJP, or any political party. We

know certain political leaders, but have no links with them."

He also criticised the NDA Government for its ceasefire in Kashmir. "This only proves the lack of confidence of the NDA Government. Six months of ceasefire has taken us six years back." Ceasefire between two countries was acceptable, not with terrorists, he said. He advised the NDA Government to call off the ceasefire and crack down on ISI training camps.

He exhorted the Union Government to come out with a White Paper at the earliest on the "funding of insurgents by foreign churches and ISI."

In 1996, the then Union Minister of State for Home, Maqbool

Dar, had admitted in Parliament that the Government was aware that insurgents were getting money and arms through foreign churches. But till date no action had been taken, he said.

In the last three years, 35,000 people, including 5,000 defence personnel, have been killed by ISI agents, he said.

The blasts at the Sena Bhawan, Lal Kila and the South Block, had proved that the Government had failed to curb terrorist menace, he said.

Kishore also questioned the rationale behind continuance of the Liberhan Commission, when 23 persons accused of conspiring in the Babri Masjid's destruction had already been exonerated. His

organisation plans to start constructing the Ram Mandir at Ayodhya on any auspicious day after Shiv Ratri next year, he added.

Kishore said the Dharam Sansad had already decided at the last Mahakumbh Mela to start construction work and there was no going back on it. "Come what may whether BJP or no BJP Government, the temple is on. We don't mind if it affects NDA," he said. The VHP leader observed that there were no legal hurdles in constructing the temple.

The Supreme Court stay was on the disputed structure and since the structure no longer exists, the stay is legally no more valid, he added.



ACHARYA GIRIRAJ KISHORE

PM, Advani camps take their battle to Manipur

Trust vote today; BJP fails to issue whip

By Aunohita Mojumdar
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The no-confidence motion against the Samata-led People's Front in Manipur is a reflection of the ongoing tussle in the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) leadership.

NDA sources said the outcome of the trust vote on Monday could be decisive for the Vajpayee government as it was being viewed as a proxy battle of power between the Vajpayee and Advani camps.

The Samata-led government in Manipur sought a vote of confidence after BJP MLAs informed the governor that they had lost faith in the leadership of chief minister R.B. Kojiam. The BJP state unit took this step after welcoming 18 MLAs into its fold, thereby emerging as the single largest party. The Samata Party expressed its anger over the breach of the "dharma of coalition politics", and pointed out that the assurances of the BJP central leadership had failed to change the situation on the ground.

The fate of the Samata Party-led government appeared uncertain as no whip had been issued to the BJP members to support the Kojiam ministry until Sunday evening. Samata Party sources said that all its ministers would resign from the Union cabinet by Monday evening if the party failed to win the vote of confidence.

Meanwhile, NDA sources said,

Chautala warns PM against inducting Ajit

KOSI KALA (Haryana): Haryana chief minister Om Prakash Chautala on Sunday threatened to reconsider support to the NDA government if Rashtriya Lok Dal leader Ajit Singh was inducted into the Union cabinet. "It is for the PM to decide who should join the government. But if Ajit Singh is inducted, we will be forced to rethink about our support," he said. (PTI)

"Manipur is obviously not the main issue. It makes no sense to lose such a trusted ally over the leadership of a state which is usually ignored. The real issue is ensuring the marginalisation of the Samata Party in the NDA. After all, George Fernandes has been a pillar of support for the Prime Minister."

In another development, the Prime Minister and Mr Fernandes met over lunch on Sunday to discuss ways to defuse the crisis. The Prime Minister, it is learnt, assured Mr Fernandes that he would try to resolve the problem.

Notwithstanding the assurances from the Prime Minister and a public statement from BJP president Jana Krishnamurthy that the BJP would support the Kojiam government in Manipur, the Samata Party issued a statement on Sunday evening pointing out that the BJP had failed to issue a three-line whip to its MLAs. The statement of the BJP president did not alter the situation on the ground, the party said.

THE TIMES OF INDIA
INDIAN EXPRESS

THE TIMES OF INDIA

21 MAY 1991

Troubleshooter PM meets George on Manipur

BJP chief assures support, Samata wants whip

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE & PTI

NEW DELHI, May 20. — The Samata Party is not satisfied with the BJP's assurance of support to the Radhabinod Kojjam government in Manipur because the latter was yet to issue a whip to its MLAs till late tonight.

A day after the Samata threatened to reconsider its participation in the NDA government at the Centre on the Manipur leadership issue, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today had to intervene in a bid to diffuse the situation.

During his hour-long meeting with the Samata leader Mr George Fernandes, Mr Vajpayee apparently assured him that he would try to solve the problem.

Late this evening, the BJP president, Mr Jana Krishnamurthy, talked to former Samata chief, Mrs Jaya Jaitley, over phone from Mussoorie and assured her of taking all steps "to save the Kojjam ministry", the BJP general secretary Mr Narendra Modi said.

Earlier in the day, the BJP president, Mr Jana Krishnamurthy, said in Mussoorie his party would support the Samata Party-led ministry during tomorrow's trust vote.

However, this didn't seem to have reconciled the differences between the BJP and its oldest and most trusted ally. The Samata felt Mr Krishnamurthy's statement "has not yet altered the situation on the ground" as the BJP is yet to issue a whip to its MLAs asking them to support the government.

The Samata spokesman, Mr Shambhu Srivastava, said the whip had not been issued despite a formal request by Mr Fernandes to the BJP chief yesterday.

"Issuing a three-line whip is normal and necessary proce-

sure in the case of a trust motion," he said. "The general assurances of support from the central BJP leadership had not been translated on the ground during the last 10 days."

Mr Srivastava alleged 25 of the 26 BJP MLAs were being kept confined at the official bungalow of the Speaker, Mr S Dhananjay Singh. "Even their wives and children are not being allowed to meet them. It's not understood why the BJP members feel the need to remain confined to the Speaker's

ANOTHER SETBACK

IMPHAL, May 20. — Mr Radhabinod Kojjam suffered another setback tonight when the lone JD-S MLA, Mr Kh Loken Singh, withdrew support to the People's Front ministry and formed Janata Dal-Loken. The Speaker said he had recognised the new party. — PTI

residence when the party intends to vote in support of the trust motion," he said.

The Samata has decided to go ahead with its national executive meeting here tomorrow to reconsider its participation in the NDA government.

Meanwhile, in a statement from Imphal, MLAs of the BJP, NCP and the Federal Party of Manipur have claimed that Mr Kojjam has ceased to command majority in the Peoples' Front Legislature Party "because of his failure in every front of governance and administration".

They accused the chief minister of campaigning for the Speaker's removal and dropping six BJP ministers by bringing false charges against them.

Mr Kojjam said the BJP MLAs "don't seem to be going

by the assurances given by the BJP central leadership. We aren't very sure of support as BJP MLAs are not listening to their central leadership."

The MSCP, another PF partner, too had not issued whip to its 11 members. Party leader and agriculture minister, Mr Thangminlien Kipgen, has been debarred from casting vote tomorrow following his disqualification from the House.

The Speaker issued a notification today saying Mr Kipgen has been debarred from voting as his House membership was annulled on 11 November last year.

The Speaker's ruling had been stayed by Gauhati High Court, but the Supreme Court suspended the High Court order on 3 April, the notification said.

Seat arrangements: The Speaker today said seat arrangements in the House were complete according to the choice of the members. He said the BJP has 26 MLAs and the Samata has 13. Among the other parties, the MSCP has 11 MLAs; Federal Party of Manipur and NCP 2 each; Manipur People's Party, Congress and JD-Secular have one MLA each. There is one Independent.

Chautala clarification: Late tonight, the Haryana chief minister, Mr Om Prakash Chautala, said it was the Prime Minister's prerogative to appoint any one in his ministry. He was clarifying reports quoting him as saying that the Indian National Lok Dal would reconsider its support to the NDA government if the RLD chief Mr Ajit Singh was made a minister.

Earlier, he had told reporters: "Our party would be forced to reconsider its support to the NDA government if Singh is inducted into the Cabinet."

THE STATESMAN

21 MAY 2001

DECISION ON CEASEFIRE EXTENSION SOON

Peace initiative sound: Advani

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR, MAY 19. Terming the Centre's peace initiative in Jammu and Kashmir "sound and correct", the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, today said that the decision to extend the six-month-long unilateral ceasefire would be taken soon by the Cabinet Committee on Security.

After attending a meeting of the Unified Headquarters (UH) here along with the Defence and External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, Mr. Advani said, "Today's meeting has given us proper insights into how we proceed from here."

Refusing to comment on whether there was a possibility of extending the ceasefire, he said, "The CCS is meeting shortly and it will not be possible for me to speculate on something that is likely to happen." However, he said the three-hour meeting had

offered valuable inputs.

The meeting was attended by the Governor, Mr. Girish Chandra Saxena, the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, the Minister of State for Home and Law, Mr. Mushtaq Lone, the Union Home Secretary, Mr. Kamal Pandey, the Commander of 15 Corps, Lt. Gen. J.R. Mukherjee, the 14 Corps Commander, Lt. Gen. Arjun Ray, heads of all the paramilitary forces, the Director-General of Police and other senior officials.

The meeting "would enable the Centre to take the right decision and in a manner that would ensure that both our objectives of peace and security are subserved," Mr. Advani said.

On the results of the ceasefire, he said that officials of the security agencies pointed out that there have been both gains and misgivings. He did not elaborate on the latter. "It was a matter of immense delight for us to learn that

the work done by the armed forces in the border regions has earned them immense respect." According to Mr. Advani, the security officials emphasised that if there were excesses committed anywhere, they had not been condoned.

Mr. Advani said that the peace initiative has been a matter of discussion and debate in the country and very shortly it would be decided how to ensure peace and at the same time the security of the people in the borders. To a question, Mr. Advani denied that the peace process was a non-starter.

The Defence Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, said that Pakistan has no *locus standi* in creating hurdles for border fencing "in our own land". "We will go ahead with the plan formulated by the Home Ministry."

Speaking at the meeting, the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, is reported to have expressed

concern over civilian killings, particularly workers of National Conference. He told reporters that he was never against the ceasefire and knew nothing about its extension. "It has been announced by them and they (the Centre) know it," he said, adding that it was a fact that borders were calm but the militants were killing innocent civilians. He pointed out that in the recent past the rate of militants getting killed had gone up.

During the meeting, the State officials stressed the increase in the killing of civilians. However, representatives of Army supported the extension of the ceasefire.

Pitch in, Shabir tells Musharraf

SRINAGAR, MAY 19. In a significant development, the president of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party, Mr. Shabir Ahmad Shah, today wrote to the Pakistan Chief Executive, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, urging Islamabad to come forward and contribute towards the restoration of peace and stability in the sub-continent.

All the three parties to the Kashmir issue — India, Pakistan and the people of Jammu and Kashmir — should come forward and contribute to the restoration of peace and stability in the region as "bottlenecks" had been removed, he told PTI.

Asked what were the bottlenecks that had been removed, he said, "New Delhi no longer considers the Kashmir issue a law and order problem but a dispute." The letter would be delivered to the Pakistani envoy, Mr. Ashraf Jehangir Qazi, in New Delhi tomorrow.



Union Ministers, Mr. L.K. Advani and Mr. Jaswant Singh, with the Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Mr. G.C. Saxena, and the Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, at a meeting of the Unified Command in Srinagar on Saturday — Photo: Nissar Ahmed.

Party draws up seven-point revival plan; PM waits for arrival of 19 new faces

BJP not happy to play second fiddle

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, May 18: As the two-day soul-searching session of the BJP at Jhunjhunnahalli restored the party's umbilical links with the Rashtriya Swamasevak Sangh, it also drew up a seven-point programme of action to rejuvenate the organisation.

The opinion expressed in the *chintan baithak* (introspective session), where RSS political affairs cell chief Madan Das Devi gave a pep talk, was that the party was forced to play second fiddle to the government. The participants felt this anomaly ought to be "set right".

A statement issued by BJP general secretary Narendra Modi, a former RSS *pracharak*, said: "Much more co-ordination between organisational wing and legislature/parliamentary wing of the party is to be effected so that the two wings work in tandem."

The participants also felt that "groupism and indiscipline should not be allowed to mar the identity of the party and effective and timely steps are to be taken to deal with these."

It was decided that special attention be given to educate the BJP cadre not only on current politics but also on the commitments of the party as enunciated in the Chennai declaration.

The declaration, adopted in December 1999, formally ratified the NDA agenda and declared that the BJP had no agenda save the

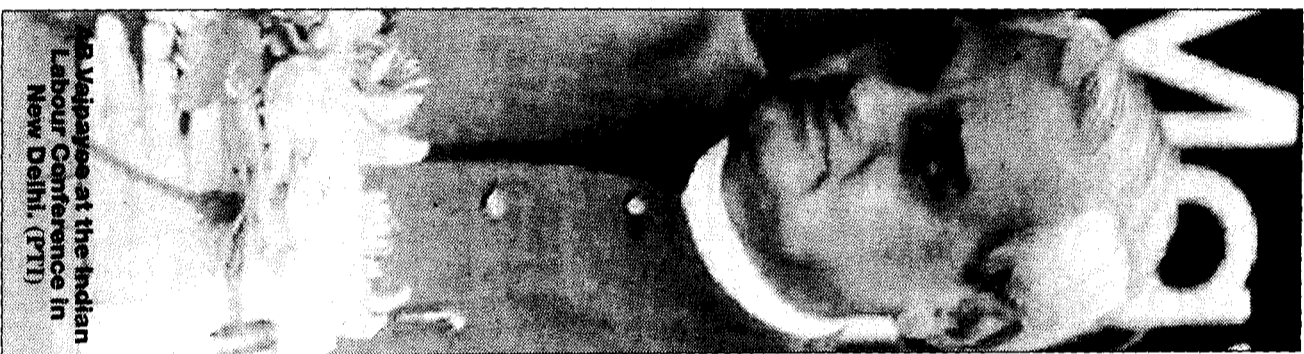
national agenda of governance. BJP sources said the need to remind the cadre of the Chennai declaration arose as even MPs have opposed the government's economic and Kashmir policies in internal meetings. Some have raised doubts about the BJP's commitment to its Hindutva agenda and sourced the party's electoral failures to its "deviation" from the hard-line.

Devi's presence was meant not so much to reinforce the Hindutva viewpoint as to reassure *pracharaks* that the RSS-BJP equation was "in place" and the Sangh was not ditching its progeny despite reservations on some of the Centre's policies.

The participants also decided to organise more programmes involving grassroots workers and ask Central, state and district leaders to be in touch with workers, who felt "neglected" once the BJP came to power.

Taking stock of the Assembly elections, the session noted that the DMK "did not succeed to the extent it was expected". In West Bengal, the conclusion was that the electoral outcome was "principally determined by the electoral strategy adopted by the Trinamul Congress leader".

All eyes are, however, now on Uttar Pradesh. In his address, home minister L.K. Advani said: "As a party, we will have to work hard to expand our base, further improve our image and move forward along with our allies."



A Vajpayee at the Indian Labour Conference in New Delhi, (PTI)

Freshers' welcome before govt shuffle

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, May 18: Whether Atal Bihari Vajpayee can expand his Cabinet before he is wheeled in for his second knee surgery depends on how soon he manages to rope in the 19 new MPs from various breakaway groups and blocks, most of whom are keenly eyeing the exercise.

The Prime Minister is expected to take off for his summer holiday in Mannali, his favourite resort, on May 23.

After chilling out in the hills for a week, he will return to the Capital and complete his "pending" business before leaving for Mumbai on June 5 to have his right knee operated.

Government sources said the interim agenda also includes expanding his Cabinet. But, if the political realignments — partly triggered off by the Assembly polls — do not fall in place, they said Vajpayee would defer the exercise till June-end, before the monsoon session of Parliament begins.

According to the BJP's assessment, the 19 prospective inductees into the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) include five MPs each from the Trinamul Congress and the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), three from the Rashtriya Janata Dal (Democratic), two from Ajit Singh's Rashtriya Lok Dal and four independents led by

Bihar strongman Pappu Yadav. The PMK MPs had left the coalition to the up with Jayalitha before the Tamil Nadu polls and now want to come back.

The sources made it clear that all of them would not be "rewarded" with ministries. In fact, Vajpayee is believed to have said that rather than "isolate" Mamata Banerjee and allow her to "languish" in Bengal, she should be "persuaded" to rejoin the NDA and his Cabinet.

"Even Nitish Kumar (the Samata Party leader who took over as railway minister after Mamata left) has shed his earlier reservations about her and says he does not mind having her back, provided, of course, that she does not insist on getting the railway ministry back," Samata sources claimed.

But the BJP's reading is that Mamata, faced as she is with a "credibility" crisis, is unlikely to switch her allegiance back to the central coalition yet.

In which case, the sources said, the government would "more than welcome" her dissenting MPs.

The three RJD (Democratic) MPs, BJP sources said, had no choice but to stick with the NDA after burning their boats with Laloo Prasad Yadav.

They said the ministerial offer would go to Nagmani, a Lok Sabha MP and not Ranjan Yadav, the star

dissident who belongs to the Upper House. "We need the numbers in the Lower House," the sources said.

The pact with Ajit Singh, sources said, was expected to crystallise in a week. Although the Indian National Lok Dal leader and Haryana chief minister Om Prakash Chautala initially opposed the kisan leader's entry, BJP leaders have reportedly worked on Chautala to not make an issue of it. The Lok Dal leader has agreed on the condition that Singh is not given the agriculture ministry.

Government sources said this round of expansion would only absorb the newcomers and not give more berths to existing allies like the Samata and the Biju Janata Dal.

This implies that the vacancy, created by the departure of Samata leader George Fernandes, may not be filled now and foreign minister Jaswant Singh would continue to hold the defence portfolio as well.

Vajpayee message

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee today congratulated Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and Tarun Gogoi on becoming chief ministers of West Bengal and Assam, reports PTI. Vajpayee has sent letters of felicitation to both of them, sources in the Prime Minister's Office said.

OPERATION ON RIGHT KNEE ON JUNE 7

Vajpayee hints at Cabinet expansion

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, MAY 16. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today hinted that he would soon undertake a Cabinet expansion of sorts by filling up the existing vacancies. This exercise should take place before Mr. Vajpayee undergoes an operation on his right knee, scheduled for June 7, in Mumbai.

Interacting with reporters on his return from Malaysia and earlier on board, the Prime Minister confirmed that his right knee also needed to be operated upon. Dr. Chittaranjan Ranawat who performed a replacement surgery on Mr. Vajpayee's left knee last October would again operate on him on his right knee.

The Prime Minister indicated that he did not plan any "drastic reshuffling" of the portfolios. He also ruled out the possibility of the Trinamool Congress leader, Ms. Mamata Banerjee, making it back to the Union Cabinet.

As per Mr. Vajpayee's observations, "new faces" should be filling the existing vacancies — the most important being Railways and Defence; Mr. Nitish Kumar is looking after both Railways (earlier held by Ms. Banerjee) and Agriculture, whereas Mr. Jaswant Singh is also presiding over Defence (earlier held by Mr. George Fernandes), besides stewarding External Affairs. There are also vacancies caused by the exit of Ministers belonging to the Trinamool Congress, the PMK and Mr. Rajnath Singh's departure to Uttar Pradesh as Chief Minister.

While it would be easy to find someone to take charge of the one of the two portfolios held by Mr. Nitish Kumar, Defence carries with it a certain sensitivity. The Prime Minister has so far shown no hurry in finding a regular successor to Mr. Fernandes at the Raksha Mantralaya. Mr. Fernandes stepped down on March 15 after the Tehelka expose, and at the time of his resignation everybody in the ruling establishment, from the Prime Minister downward, pretended that it was only a matter of four months be-



The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, being received by the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, and the Union Minister of Sports, Ms. Uma Bharti, at the airport in New Delhi, on Wednesday.

— Photo: S. Arjeja

fore the Samata leader's name got cleared (by the Venkataswami Commission) and that he would be back in South Bloc before anybody had even noticed his absence. That pretense can no longer be carried on. The Venkataswami Commission is not likely to give a certificate of good conduct (if at all) in four months, and the Prime Minister cannot possibly burden Mr. Jaswant Singh indefinitely with the charge of two very crucial assignments. Now thought is being given to accommodating Mr. Fernandes in some assignment which would give him the Cabinet rank.

The Cabinet expansion has also become an imperative as the ruling NDA is engaged in an exer-

cise to try to enhance its depleting number as the margin of comfort stands reduced after the Trinamool Congress left the coalition. Besides apparently having successfully wooed Mr. Ajit Panja and two other Trinamool Congress MPs to break away from Ms. Banerjee, the NDA is also trying to rope in Mr. Ajit Singh (whose Rashtriya Lok Dal has two members). Mr. Ajit Singh is not only bargaining for his induction in the Cabinet but also wants a commitment from the BJP leadership on some kind of seat sharing arrangement in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections.

PTI reports:

The Prime Minister said some "legal hurdles" delayed the signing of an extradition treaty between Malaysia and India. The signing of the treaty is expected to facilitate extradition of the Italian businessman, Mr. Ottavio Quattrochi, now living in Malaysia, to India to face trial in the Bofors payoff case.

'No early LS polls'

Mr. Vajpayee ruled out the possibility of early Lok Sabha polls in the wake of poor performance of NDA constituents in the Assembly elections.

"The Lok Sabha polls will be held on time," he said but noted that the results of the polls were a "warning" to the NDA.

Fiat to Ministers

NEW DELHI, MAY 16. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee has asked his ministerial colleagues to declare their assets. A spokesman of the Prime Minister's Office said tonight that the Ministers have been filing annual statements of their assets, for the last three years, on the Prime Minister's directive.

All Ministers in the Vajpayee Government since 1998 have been filing this statement, he added. — PTI

THE HINDU

17 MAY 2001

'FINE-TUNING FINE, NOT CHANGE IN DIRECTION'

Reforms paying off, says Vajpayee

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 12. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today categorically asserted that there would be no going back on economic reforms as India should effectively respond to changes in the global economic environment to defend its interests.

Participating in the golden jubilee international seminar organised by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO) here today, Mr. Vajpayee said the recent NSSO findings that the poverty ratio had declined by 10 percentage points (from 36 per cent in 1993-94 to 26.1 per cent in 1999-2000) had proved that the economic reforms initiated in the Nineties were beginning to achieve the desired results of poverty alleviation.

The Prime Minister said: "I am not saying this because our Government wants to take credit for this achievement. After all, our Government has been in office only for the past three years. The process of economic reforms was initiated by a Congress Government. It was later carried forward by the two United Front Governments. In different ways, State Governments ruled by various political parties are also pursuing economic reforms of their own. Thus, there is a broad consensus on the need for reforms for achieving faster and more balanced growth."

Since the NSSO data had shown that "our combined efforts" at reforming the economy had resulted in a significant reduction in poverty levels, there was no need to question the basic direction of the reforms process.

While some fine-tuning of the policies and programmes based on the experience of the past decade could be undertaken, "there

cannot be any change in the direction that India has adopted for itself. The need of the hour is to further strengthen the national consensus for reforms so that we can employ the full energy of the Central Government, the State Governments and all sections of our people for building a strong and prosperous India," the Prime Minister said.

Mr. Vajpayee drew attention to NSSO survey on employment, which had "corroborated the es-

sential soundness of our economic reforms." The survey revealed that unemployment rates among the educated in rural and urban areas had come down since 1993-94 and the reduction in the unemployment rate was more pronounced amongst women.

The Prime Minister also complimented the NSSO for conducting for the first time a survey of the entire informal sector.

Trade unions will be consulted: Page 8

PM reaches out to RSS

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, MAY 12. On the eve of the declaration of results of the Assembly polls, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has sought to make his peace with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) — the difficult customers in his own backyard. He hosted a lunch on Friday for three senior RSS functionaries, Mr. H.V. Seshadri, Mr. Madan Devi Das, and Mr. M.G. Vaidya. The RSS chief, Mr. S. Sudarshan, was out of town and could not partake of the delicacies at the Prime Minister's residence. The RSS and its various frontal organisations have been critical of the Vajpayee Government's economic policies. In recent days, it has voiced, both in public and private, criticism of the Prime Minister's handling of the Kashmir and Bangladesh issues. The Sangh Parivar and its functionaries have expressed themselves against senior officials in the Prime Minister's Office. On his part, Mr. Vajpayee is reported to have taken serious objection to the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh president, Mr. Dattopant Thengadi's comment calling the Union Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha, "a criminal."

Mindful of the impending tilting of the political balance against the NDA Government, the Prime Minister has reached out, first, to his own Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani and now, to the RSS. The idea seems to be to consolidate internal forces, against the likely onslaught of a rejuvenated Opposition.

For the record, the BJP termed the lunch as nothing special, and RSS sources also suggested that such meetings did take place now and then. However, it is understood that the Sangh Parivar functionaries have agreed to eschew at least their public criticism of the Government's policies. Still, the Sangh leaders made it clear to Mr. Vajpayee that their reservations remained unaddressed and, in any case, Mr. Thengadi was too senior a leader to be restrained by anyone. Mr. Vajpayee told them he would be receptive to their ideas and criticism, as long as these were privately voiced.

THE HINDU

13 MAY 2001

RSS, Centre differ on FDI in defence production

SUDESH K VERMA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 11. - The RSS and the Vajpayee government seem to have discovered another area of difference. This time it is over allowing 26 per cent FDI in defence production while permitting private sector participation in manufacturing defence equipment.

The RSS's Swadeshi Jagran Manch will soon bring out a paper on the policy of privatising defence production or a part of it.

The SJM organisation secretary, Mr Murlidhar Rao, said such a policy would lead to a situation where Indian foreign policy would be influenced and induced by foreign companies. "Who is going to believe the government," he said while asserting that those in power were bereft of ideas.

The RSS spokesperson, Mr MG Vaidya, also opposed the FDI provision and said the organisation's reservations were based on the fact that defence is a sensitive sector.

He indicated that nothing should be done that could be construed, even remotely, as compromising with the country's defence needs.

The BJP, however, defended the policy saying this would help the government make up for the absence of resources needed for modernisation of defence.

The government spends less than three per cent of the GDP on defence and this isn't enough to take care of modernisation needs, the party's economic cell convener, Mr Jagdish Shettigar, said.

Senior BJP leader Mr JP Mathur said this would help bring in the necessary skill and technology.

He indicated that this was admission of the failure of DRDO's attempt at rapid indigenisation of defence needs. The DRDO should be made more efficient by inducting young and upcoming scientists.

Mr Shettigar, who is a member of the Prime Minister's economic advisory council, said there was no need to fear as private manufacturers would not be given permission in sensitive and strategic areas such as nuclear programmes.

They would only manufacture defence components which would be assembled by government agencies. There would be no danger of its misuse or the equipment getting diverted to undesirable elements, he added.

Mr Shettigar said the inadequacy of defence equipment was exposed during the Kargil War when the jawans did not have the necessary equipment to fight.

The need to step up defence expenditure was felt, more particularly on account of the modernisation of equipment. Defence costs have almost been stagnant during the last 10 years, he said.

He justified 26 per cent FDI, saying no investor would like to put in money unless he was given a role in decision making. Less than 26 per cent would have made the proposition ineffective. The BJP had promised it would increase defence expenditure, but it could do so only marginally.

The BJP leader said as the delicensing route was not allowed for defence, the defence authorities and the DRDO would have complete control over the quality of goods.

Mr Rao, however, disagreed with the BJP's arguments though he said his organisation was not opposed to privatisation as long as it involved only Indian investors.

He quoted defence policy statements to point out that the need for indigenisation of defence was always stressed. Any attempt at inviting foreign investment would endanger that attempt, he held.

He lambasted the government's argument that it was in any case importing defence equipment manufactured by private sector abroad. "Shall we then allow the Bofors company to open up its production unit in India because we are importing Bofors guns?" he asked.

THE STATESMAN

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Defence production opened to pvt sector with 26% FDI

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, May 9. — Unshackling itself from mental and other blocks that have persisted for 50 years, the government tonight announced the opening up of the defence production sector to private Indian industry.

The Cabinet, at its meeting here, decided to remove defence production from the list reserved exclusively for the public sector and place it in the licensed category.

Private industry may now make a 100 per cent investment in such industry and have been permitted a maximum of 26 per cent of that to be foreign direct investment (FDI). This is essentially aimed at facilitating technology transfers.

The ministry of defence will draw up the guidelines which the industry would be required to follow, and what specific items will be licensed for production. The details are yet to be worked out. The ministry will be free to place whatever orders it wishes

on the private production units. The rationale for opening up the sector to private industry is that almost all the military equipment procured from abroad is produced by private firms. Hence, it was unfair to debar the domestic private industry from what could be lucrative ventures.

The cabinet decision follows a series of interactions with industry seeking its involvement in what could be described as a

national security endeavour. While in theory the response had always been positive, most industrialists were hesitant to function in very limited spheres and wanted the sector to be fully opened up. The announcement tonight did not mention whether exports would be permitted, subject to governmental controls, but the general feeling was that they would not be prohibited since limited FDI participation had been permitted.

The initial reaction in defence circles was positive, despite

some concerns over the future of the 39 ordnance factories and nine defence public sector undertakings. Positive because despite those government agencies the bulk of defence equipment - in terms of value - continue to be imported.

With the private sector now being given adequate scope to function there could be a vast

improvement in indigenous production of medium and even high technology equipment. Producing complete systems would attract the industrialists who had stayed away in the past since manufacturing components or sub-systems was not commercially viable.

The opening up of the defence sector has not been entirely unexpected, defence analysts pointed out. Not so long ago the Defence Research and Development Organisation had opened some of its laboratories to private industry.

While the defence sector had been closed to private

industry, many units have been involved in the effort to a limited extent.

The mobile launcher for the Agni missiles has been produced by Larsen & Toubro which is also involved in the development of a nuclear-propelled submarine. A variety of steam turbines have been supplied by Kirloskars to the defence shipyards.

Private units, generally in the small-scale sector, have been heavily involved in the production of ancillaries, but in removing the restrictions tonight, the government has opened up a whole new chapter, the experts said.

Banking sector: Even the banking sector was opened up today and a total of 49 per cent FDI (up from the currently allowed 20 per cent) will be allowed in this area, subject to RBI guidelines.

Non-resident Indians who invest in foreign exchange will be permitted to repatriate money in foreign exchange, while rupee investments will not be allowed for repatriation.

■ Govt eases FDI regime, page 10

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10 MAY 2001

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THE STATESMAN

Govt. red in the face over Hinduja-Brajesh episode

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, MAY 8. The Vajpayee administration found itself plainly embarrassed over the revelation that the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's Principal Secretary, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, was accompanied by two of the controversial Hinduja brothers when he called on the British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, in June 1998. The embarrassment becomes decidedly acute in view of the fact that the Hinduja brothers are among the accused in the Bofors pay-off scandal and are currently involved in a legal wrangle.

There was no attempt to deny the story. The BJP officially refused to respond and suggested that comments, if any, would have to come from the Ministry of External Affairs. On its part, the Foreign Office spokesman said that "the Hindujas offered to facilitate some meetings and the offer was naturally accepted in the national cause. It may be noted that chargesheets had not been issued against the Hindujas at that time." He also suggested that the kind of "facilitation" that the Hindujas provided was happening "on a regular basis".

Even the Congress was surprisingly unaggressive in its comments. The AICC spokesman, Mr. Jaipal Reddy, wanted to know the full facts before commenting and demanded that the Government "come clean". On the other hand, the CPI(M) called the Mishra-

Hindujas visit "a serious breach of security and elementary Government procedures".

In a statement, the party's politburo asserted that "the whole sinister episode cannot be brushed aside. First, Mr. Brajesh Mishra must be immediately removed from the posts of Principal Secretary and National Security Adviser. This is absolutely essential to restore public confidence."

While Government sources concede that the entire episode brings no credit, they offer a credible explanation why this *faux pas* took place. The key, according to sources in the Prime Minister's Office, is the context of May/June 1998. A new government had defied conventional wisdom and staged Pokhran II, inviting international condemnation. Having joined the nuclear club, the Government felt constrained to mend its fences with an offended international community, especially the P-5 nations.

There was no full-time Minister for External Affairs, and obviously the Prime Minister, who was in charge of the foreign affairs portfolio, could not do all the travelling. The burden fell on Mr. Mishra to lobby key international leaders.

But, it was not all that easy for the new Government to access key international players. The High Commission in London was headed by Mr. Salman Haider, a distinguished diplomat but who found himself out of sync with the

foreign policy priorities of the new Government. The new Government itself obviously did not have sufficient confidence in him to help build bridges with the Blair Government. That is when the Hindujas stepped in.

Having secured an appointment with Mr. Blair for Mr. Vajpayee's Principal Secretary, the two Hinduja brothers sprang a surprise and stayed on; and a sufficiently grateful Principal Secretary found himself, according to the sources, unable to ask the brothers to step outside. However, the sources insist, that the brothers were not privy to the contents of the Prime Minister's sealed letter for Mr. Blair; and, in any case, there was nothing secret about the explanations that Mr. Mishra gave for India's decision to stage Pokhran II as these arguments had already been publicly made.

These explanations apart, the real interest remains focussed on who could have leaked the story to the media in London. One school of thought is inclined to think that the Hinduja brothers themselves could have inspired the story. The brothers are reported to be miffed that they have been grounded here despite a "friendly" Government in the saddle and perhaps the Mishra-Blair story was meant as a reminder to the Vajpayee Government that it was not living up to its part of the bargain.

THE HINDU

9 MAY 2001

HINDUSTAN TIMES

The migrant card

THE IDEA of work permits for illegal Bangladeshi immigrants has been under consideration for some time. Among those who favoured it is Union Home Minister L.K. Advani. Now Atal Bihari Vajpayee has endorsed the view. There is much to be said for the concept. It has long been known that economic compulsions can undo all border restrictions. As the continuing controversy over illegal immigration into Europe and North America shows, the lure of a job market is so irresistible that the migrants are willing to pay any amount and take any risk to enter the countries of their choice. The recent freezing to death of illegal Chinese immigrants inside a truck bound for England underlined the tragic aspect of such journeys in search of a better life.

India's being the largest economy in this part of world, it is not surprising that it has always attracted both the ambitious and the desperate from neighbouring countries. Nepal and Bangladesh have been the most prominent among them. In the case of the latter, the fact that borders did not exist half a century ago has made such migrations appear all the more natural. Assam has been a favoured destination of hardy peasants from East Bengal for so long that a British

Governor-General had spoken of an Assamese leader's policy of "grow more Muslims" as the means for augmenting rice production. Partition has not affected the inflow in any substantial way. It has only made it illegal, thereby proving to be a boon for unscrupulous touts.

Politicians, too, have benefited. While those in the secular camp have used the immigrants as their vote banks, the saffron lobby has exploited the problem to consolidate its own support base by spreading fears about the impact of the Muslim inflow on population patterns as well as the country's integrity. Providing the Bangladeshis with work permits will ensure, however, that they can neither vote nor claim to be Indian citizens. Nor will they have to pay inordinate amounts to touts for a safe passage to India. A legalisation of the whole process is, therefore, the only answer to the problem. But instead of merely talking about work permits to allay the apprehensions of both the immigrants and the local people on the eve of an election, as Mr Vajpayee seems to have done, concrete steps should be initiated in this regard by the official agencies. Otherwise, it will be seen as yet another card being used by politicians to garner votes.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

MAY 2001

'PANJA WILL BE MY COLLEAGUE SOON'

Vajpayee hints at split in Trinamool Congress

By Malabika Bhattacharya

KOLKATA, MAY 6. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, dealt a blow to Ms. Mamata Banerjee, Trinamool Congress supremo, just before the May 10 Assembly election in West Bengal when he indicated today that besides the rebel Trinamool MP, Mr. Ajit Panja, a few other parliamentarians from that party were expected to sever ties with Ms. Banerjee and return to the National Democratic Alliance fold soon.

"I hope Mr. Panja will be my colleague in the coming days. When his other colleagues join us, the NDA will be absolutely secure," Mr. Vajpayee said amid loud applause.

The Prime Minister made these observations at an election rally at Kamarhati in North 24-parganas this evening. Mr. Panja was present at the meeting with a few supporters, who waved Trinamool flags and cried "Ajit Panja zindabad, Vajpayee zindabad."

That Mr. Vajpayee was determined to take full advantage of the dissidence in the Trinamool Congress became evident when he showered praise on Mr. Panja saying he had projected himself as an effective administrator during his tenure as the Minister of State for External Affairs. "He did a commendable job and also spread the message of spiritual India by enacting Ramkrishna Paramhansa Dev abroad."

'Sinking ship'

In his 40-minute speech, Mr. Vajpayee hit out at the Congress saying it was a "sinking ship" with no future in politics. Its president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, would pull down Ms. Banerjee, her newest ally, as well.

"It is a sinking ship. Anyone who steps into that ship will also go down without a trace. Hum to dube hai sanam, tujhko bhi leke dubenge (I am already sunk dear, I



The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, waving to the crowd at an election meeting at Kamarhati in West Bengal on Sunday. The rebel Trinamool Congress leader, Mr. Ajit Panja, and the Minister of State for Telecommunication, Mr. Tapan Sikdar, are also seen. — Photo: Sushanta Patronobish

will pull you down as well)," Mr. Vajpayee said in an oblique reference to Ms. Banerjee, his former ally. In his speech, dominated by criticism of the Congress, he touched on the party's attempts to block parliamentary proceedings on the Tehelka issue, its forging of electoral ties with tainted political parties and its labelling of the BJP as communal.

Even though Mr. Vajpayee refrained from a direct attack on Ms. Banerjee, he did not spare her for quitting the NDA just before the election to tie up with the Congress for gaining minority votes. "Some people dub me as

communal. For them, an alliance with me will alienate the Muslims and the minorities," he said.

In a bid to demonstrate his secular credentials, he said he enjoyed the support of the Muslims in his constituency in Lucknow. He had once won from Delhi's Chandni Chowk constituency, a predominantly Muslim-dominated area. "People do not think I am communal."

He attacked the Congress for its claim of being the prime propagator of secularism. "Secularism was not born with Congress in 1947. It's in our blood. All of us are part of a secular tradition."

The NDA Government had succeeded in maintaining communal harmony in the past three years.

Accusing Ms. Banerjee of reviving the moribund Congress by forging an alliance with it in this election, he wondered "is it absolutely necessary to revive it (Congress)?" He questioned her decision to quit the NDA over corruption and tie up with what he described as an equally corrupt Congress.

Corruption had grown roots and all political parties should put in their best efforts to uproot it. But Mr. Vajpayee reacted sharply to the Congress making allegations of corruption against his Government and demanding his resignation on moral grounds.

"I tell them (the Congress and the communists), don't try to give me a lesson on morality and ethics. Where is their morality when they tie up with Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav in Bihar and Ms. Jayalalitha in Tamil Nadu?"

The Trinamool Congress and the BJP could put up a stiff challenge against both the ruling communists and the Congress in the Bengal election as the Left had demolished industry, health and education in the past 24 years.

'Mamata can't be trusted'

PTI reports:

Mr. Panja, who shared the dais with Mr. Vajpayee, said that Ms. Banerjee could not be trusted saying "anyone who believed her even for a day would be destroyed." He said the resolution adopted by the Trinamool on March 15 reposed full faith in Mr. Vajpayee and had said that his image must not be allowed to be tarnished in anyway.

Stating that he had come to the rally out of respect for Mr. Vajpayee who had implemented the 'Bengal package', he said "if there is one person who has betrayed the NDA it is Mamata Banerjee. If anyone believes her for a day, he will be ruined."

THE HINDU

- 7 MAY 2001

Pant questions Hurriyat's indirect response

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 3 MAY

THE CENTRE's chief interlocutor on the Kashmir issue, Mr K.C. Pant, on Thursday, questioned the Hurriyat's indirect response to the government's invitation for talks, stating that "negotiations are nowhere made through newspapers."

The Hurriyat had, at a press conference in Srinagar last week, rejected the Centre's offer for talks and insisted upon the involvement of Pakistan in resolving the Kashmir issue. The Hurriyat chairman, Mr Abdul Ghani Bhat, had, on Wednesday, ruled out any formal communication of this decision to Mr Pant. He said: "We do not believe in indulging in useless formalities."

Reacting to Mr Bhat's statement, Mr Pant said on Thursday: "It (the Kashmir talks) is a serious matter...there has to be an increased level of understanding and one has to build a platform of trust."

Mr Pant's criticism of the Hurriyat's attitude came after a two-member team of the Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP) handed him a letter from their party chief, Mr Shabir Shah. The letter, released to the press earlier, seeks clarifications on the following issues:



IN LETTER ONLY: Salem Geelani (right), special envoy of Kashmiri separatist leader Shabir Shah, hands over a letter to K.C. Pant in New Delhi on Thursday. — AFP

Whether the Centre did not consider Kashmir as more than a law and order issue which had to be resolved

Whether bilateralism had not failed in the last five decades in Kashmir

Whether Pakistan's role had to be specified in the talks, what was the role of pro-Indian factions in the talks and if the Centre intended to hold talks with the Kashmir militant groups.

Describing Mr Shah's move to seek clarifications as "the proper way" of handling the Centre's offer, Mr Pant said: "It is very good that Mr Shah decided to send his

two members to me with a letter seeking clarification on some issues which will be duly replied."

Mr Pant clarified that the two JKDFP members — Saleem Geelani and Maulana Abdullah Tari — had only come and handed over Mr Shah's letter and "no talks were held on the Kashmir issue."

Replying to another question on whether he would be visiting the Kashmir valley, Mr Pant replied in the affirmative, saying he would "visit it at an appropriate time." He appealed to groups in the state again to avail of the "window opportunity" initiated by the Centre.

Deendar banned for Pak links, church attacks

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI, 3 MAY

THE CENTRE on Thursday banned Deendar Anjuman, a fundamentalist sect for "having links with Pakistan and indulging in activities...prejudicial to the security of the country and having the potential to disturb peace and communal harmony." This sect was found to have engineered blasts in churches across Karnataka, Goa and Andhra Pradesh last year.

Notifying the ban on Deendar Anjuman, the Centre observed that Deendar Anjuman had triggered bomb explosions between May and July 2000 in churches of 3 states, distributed objectionable anti-Christian literature and pamphlets, was engaged in espionage and had links with Mardan in Pakistan, was organising bands of disgruntled Muslim youth into a militant outfit for launching jihad. They had also planned to create disturbances aimed at promoting hatred and creating suspicion and ill-will among the Christians and Hindus and other communities, and had designs to target major public installations.

Stating that "the activities of Deendar Anjuman are detrimental to the peace, communal harmony, internal security and maintenance of secular fabric of the Indian society," the Centre in exercise of its powers under Section 3(1) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, declared the Deendar Anjuman to be an unlawful association.

The decision to ban the outfit follows consultations between the Centre and representatives of police forces of Andhra Pradesh, Goa and Karnataka in Bangalore during which it was stressed that there was a grand design of Pakistan's ISI to foment trouble by putting one community against another to weaken the moral strength and the secular fabric of the country. The ban is effective from April 28, 2001, when the said declaration was published in the Gazette of India.

The activities of Deendar Anjuman, mostly in the southern states, had come to light during investigations into the blasts that rocked churches across Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Goa in mid-2000.

Heat drives Atal to Advani home

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, May 2: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee drove over to home minister L.K. Advani's residence yesterday for a three-and-a-half-hour luncheon meeting.

In the one-on-one session at Advani's Pandara Park home, the two leaders discussed a gamut of issues, ranging from Sonia Gandhi's outburst at the Prime Minister in Parliament to the complex RSS-government equation and the criticisms hurled periodically at Vajpayee and his aides by the Sangh leadership. The latest round of invectives came from the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) ideologue, Dattopant Thengadi.

Government sources said the Vajpayee-Advani meeting was occasioned by the "hard" time the government had in the second leg of the budget session when almost no serious business was transacted with an intransigent Congress insisting on a Joint Parliamentary Committee to probe the Tehelka disclosures.

Although at the end of the day, the government managed to pass the railway and general budgets — the first through a voice vote and the second after a half-hearted discussion — the sources said Vajpayee was "very upset" by the Congress president's personal tirade against him soon after the House was adjourned on April 27.

The sources added that the Prime Minister was also "worried" that if the Congress-government standoff persisted beyond the Assembly elections, he would have a tough time handling

the monsoon session as well. The duration of the next sitting of Parliament is likely to be extended to accommodate the time lost in the curtailment of the budget session, as a result of which important Bills could not be passed.

The fact that Sonia chose to speak out before Advani — when he went up to greet her along with parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan — was said to have disconcerted Vajpayee all the more in the context of the perceived tension in his relations with the number two in his Cabinet.

Apart from Sonia, sources



Vajpayee and Advani

said, Vajpayee and Advani also discussed the Sangh's blow-hot-blow-cold attitude both towards the Prime Minister and his government.

Vajpayee had reportedly asked Advani to speak to the Sangh leadership since the home minister has a "better understanding" with its veterans like H.V. Seshadri — who, despite being number three in the formal structure, continues to call the shots — and Thengadi after the RSS demanded the removal of PMO officials Brajesh Mishra and N.K. Singh and the BMS boss slammed finance minister Yashwant Sinha in a public

rally in Delhi.

The sources said Vajpayee was keen on dispelling the impression that the Sangh was out to destabilise his government after reports that Thengadi had planned to launch a series of "satta chhodo" (quit the government) rallies all over the country, culminating in a big show in the capital in August.

Advani told him that he had managed to "repair the damage" to the extent that Sangh leaders had stopped attacking the Prime Minister, his foster son-in-law Ranjan Bhattacharya and Mishra by name in their recent diatribes.

The Prime Minister and the home minister also shared their "concern" over the National Democratic Alliance government's image. The feeling was that while the government had not been sullied by the stigma of major scams or "other blunders", a perception had gained ground that it was a "non-performing" administration.

"Three years have gone by and people have started saying what has this government delivered? Apart from the Pokhran blasts, there is not a single achievement to its credit and this is a source of worry," the sources said.

Vajpayee and Advani talked about the Assembly elections and the Indo-Bangladesh border bloodshed, they added. This is the second time the Prime Minister has dropped in at Advani's residence during his second tenure. The first was a dinner to which Vajpayee and his foster family were invited.

THE TELEGRAPH

- 3 MAY 2001

PM makes May Day promise to give labour its due

Centre to answer Shabir Shah's queries

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 1 MAY

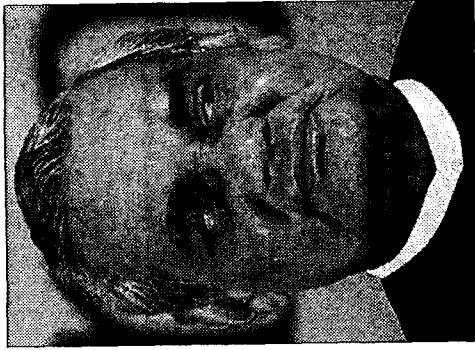
NOTWITHSTANDING THE bold labour sector reforms proposed to be introduced in the 2001-02 Union Budget, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, on May Day, utilised the occasion to assure the labour class that his government will not take any steps contrary to workers' interests.

Mr Vajpayee's statement comes barely a week after the country's leading trade unions observed a one-day token strike in Maharashtra to protest against the government's anti-labour economic policies.

Earlier, the Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) had organised a massive rally in New Delhi to protest against the lifting of quantitative restrictions as part of the WTO agreement as well as against the reckless privatisation of PSUs and the consequent retrenchment.

In fact, so sharp was the attack by RSS affiliate BMS against the Vajpayee government that Sangh ideologue and BMS founder Dattopant Thengadi compared the government to "an elephant gone berserk." This is not all, he labelled finance minister Yashwant Singh a "criminal" for intruding upon the jurisdiction of the labour ministry by announcing labour sector reforms like amendment to the Contract Labour Act for facilitating hire and fire, in the current Budget.

The pressure seems to have been preying on Mr Vajpayee. He assured workers on Tuesday that they "should rest content" as regards introduction of anti-work-er policies. Stating that his government was always concerned for the welfare of workers, Mr Vajpayee claimed that even while implementing the new economic policy, the interests of workers were prominently kept in mind. He said the government always held parleys with trade union organisations and had



Vajpayee: Placating

decided to do justice to them. "If some more steps are required, they will be taken," he said.

It may be recalled that the recent "unilateral" decision of the Union Cabinet to clear an amendment to the Trade Union Act, seeking to make registration of trade unions more stringent, besides proposals for amending the Industrial Disputes Act and the Contract Labour Act, had evoked strong protests from members of the Second National Labour Commission. The commission has been set up by the government to make recommendations on updating of labour laws.

The Prime Minister, on Tuesday, said his government's objective was to ensure an exploitation-free society and admitted that workers were the most exploited lot. "Steps are being taken for their benefit and in their interest," he added.

Meanwhile, addressing a function here on the occasion of May Day, labour minister Satyanarayan Jatiya called upon managements to "seriously consider" suggestions of workers while taking policy decisions. This will not only provide a sense of belonging to workers but make the establishment more productive, he said.

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 1 MAY

THE CENTRE will respond with an "open mind" to the clarifications sought by Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party (JKDFP) chief Shabir Shah on emissary K.C. Pant's formal offer of talks, the latter said here on Tuesday.

Mr Shah had announced in Srinagar on Monday that the JKDFP will send a three-member team to New Delhi to hand over a letter to Mr Pant questioning the "flaws" in the Centre's talks offer sent to various Kashmiri groups and organisations. The separatist leader had released the letter, which asks the Centre to clarify what it meant by "its own people", "peace" and why Pakistani did not figure anywhere in the offer.

On his part, Mr Pant who also met Union home minister L.K. Advani on Tuesday morning to brief him about the progress of the discussions, was quoted by the agencies as saying that "we will respond to the clarifications sought by Mr Shah with an open mind once these reach us."

Mr Shah, who otherwise supports the idea of entering into talks with the Centre to resolve



Post With A View: Two BSF men keep a vigil from a shikara in Dal Lake, Srinagar, on Tuesday. The tourist season has kicked off in the state. — AP

the Kashmir issue, had dubbed the Centre's offer as vague as it described the Kashmir problem as one merely relating to law and order. Also, he had inquired whether the talks were aimed at resolving the Kashmir issue and if Pakistan would be involved in them. Significantly, the JKDFP chief in his letter to be delivered to Mr Pant "in a couple of days," asserted

Lashkar avoids US terrorists list

Indrani Bagchi

NEW DELHI 1 MAY

IF INDIA was disappointed that its chief terrorist tormentor, Lashkar-e-Toiba did not make it to the US list of banned terrorist organisations, it hid it well. Instead, the government said "tangible evidence" of Lashkar-e-Toiba's "actions and statements by its own leaders" should "establish its terrorist credentials". Responding to questions on Tuesday, the MEA spokesman pointed to the decisions by other governments regarding the

Lashkar, notably the recent ban by the UK.

However, both the Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammed are new entrants to the "other" terrorist organisations list, as distinct from the banned list, which prevents international funding of these organisations. They were not part of this list in 1999.

There is a very good reason why the Lashkar-e-Toiba did not make it to the US's proscribed list: it is yet to strike a US citizen. According to the legal criteria applicable to designate a foreign

that "the Kashmir issue was a tripartite one and all kinds of bilateralism had failed to settle it in the past."

Mr Pant said: "if he (Mr Shah) has responded to the process, I will also respond certainly." At the same time, he refused to comment on the Hurriyat Conference's recent decision to set aside the Centre's offer until "Pakistan was also involved" in the talks, saying that the Centre was yet to receive any formal communication from the Hurriyat Conference in this regard.

The Centre's emissary had sent the 23-party Hurriyat Conference a written invitation for holding talks without any pre-conditions following which the amalgam met several times. On April 26, however, its leaders rejected the offer and insisted that "a just, everlasting and honourable solution to the Kashmir issue could be found only through tripartite talks involving Pakistan."

About his meeting with Mr Advani earlier on Tuesday, Mr Pant said "there was nothing significant (about it). Only that he had been away from the capital and some developments had taken place in Kashmir which were conveyed and discussed with him."

caught and delivered one of the accomplices of the Kenya embassy bombing to the US.

Although the 1999 report named Pakistan and Lebanon as two nations of concern, this year's report does not. Putting a country on the list or removing it is one of the policies of the US, depending on how it can use that threat. The last time Pakistan was put on that list was in January, 1993, by President Clinton.

The reason being that Christina Rocca, the new assistant secretary of state for south Asia, came up against the intransigence of the then ISI chief Gen Javed Nasir regarding submission of Stringer missiles. It was after the designation by the US, that Nawaz Sharif was forced to remove Nasir and Pakistan was removed from the list in July 1993.

organisation a banned one, there has to be at least one strike against an American citizen. Whether by accident or design, the LeT is yet to fall foul of that law.

However, there is a sense of vindication of continued Indian harangue in the stringent US criticism about Pakistan being a state that actively encourages and supports terrorist groups.

However, the US stopped short of describing Pakistan as a "state sponsor of terrorism" because under a 1996 amendment to the relevant Act, the list should take into account the extent to which the other country cooperates with the US against terrorism. And for all the terrorists that Pakistan sends into India, it has been careful about working with the US in apprehending terrorists. For e.g., in 1998, Pakistan authorities