

BJP-RSS tussle takes on new dimension

By Smita Gupta
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The RSS's disapproval of the Vajpayee-led government, Sangh sources say, has reached a critical stage. And it is not just the series of public statements emanating from top RSS leaders attacking the government's economic policies as well as criticising it for straying from the path of clean governance and asking for the exit of some PMO officials following the 'armsgate' revelations.

RSS insiders say there is a serious debate now on in Sangh circles on how long it can carry the burden of the present government. For the moment, there appears to be a two-pronged strategy: One, to build public opinion against the Vajpayee government which it feels is now not just thoroughly tarnished but is also compromising the economic sovereignty of the country. Two, it is going to monitor even more closely the functioning of the BJP and the government.

Indeed, veteran RSS leader and key Sangh figure Dattopant Thengdi—whose outburst against the government earlier this week when he challenged the government to mend its economic policies or lose power—is reportedly planning a series of public meetings around the country which will culminate in

HOME AND NOT ALONE



a massive rally in August this year.

The theme of the rallies will be much the same as the one on April 16, when he attacked the government's economic policies in the strongest terms and went so far as to refer to finance minister Yeshwant Sinha as a "criminal".

Not just that, RSS Sarsanghchalak K. Sudarshan—who is seen as being close to the PM—said Sangh sources, has been asked to change his 'kendra' (base), Delhi, for Nagpur. Instead, H.V. Seshadri—seen as the real RSS supremo—will be based in the capital to keep an eye on the BJP's functioning as well as that of its ministers.

Sources added that there would also be an attempt to "cleanse" the RSS. For instance, the R.K. Gupta episode has made the RSS realise that while inducting businessmen, it needs to be more careful. Mr Gupta was the businessman shown on the Tehelka tapes boasting about his connections in the government. He has also been in the RSS for more than three decades. The BJP, on its part, has been trying to claim that the RSS does not really control it and has expressed itself strongly against Mr Thengdi's criticism even while saying that it welcomes criticism from those of its ideological school.

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Dissatisfaction brews in Samata Party over allocation of portfolios

3 Manipur ministers resign

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

IMPHAL, Feb 25. — Three senior cabinet ministers, all of whom tendered their resignation papers late yesterday night from 11 days old Samata Party led Pooja's Point following dissatisfaction over allocation of portfolios.

The papers were given in late yesterday at 11 p.m. just after the ministers were given their portfolios.

Those who have tendered resignation are Dr. Nimai Chand Luwang Minister Health and Family Welfare from Wangkhem A.C. Kh. Amutombi, Minister Planning, Tourism and Cooperation from Mayangmhal A.C. and M. Manthar, Minister Veterinary, Animal Husbandry & Art and Culture from Hyanglam A.C.

Dr. Nimai Chand Luwang con-

firmed the report told Statesman that the papers were given to the Chief Minister yesterday at 11 pm. He however did not give any reasons for the resignation. He said, apart from him two other cabinet ministers have given in their papers.

However other could not be contacted. The Chief Minister when contacted by the Statesman said he have not received any resignation paper from any ministers as yet.

When pointed out that the report has been confirmed by Wangkhem A.C. Kh. Amutombi, Minister Planning, Tourism and Cooperation from Mayangmhal A.C. and happy with portfolios I cannot give every one good portfolio. If only good portfolios are considered then we may have only few Ministers.

On asked if he would accept

the resignation when he receives it he said he would have to see after he gets it.

The Manipur chief minister Mr. Kojiam also justified having two finance ministers, Dr. Kh. Loken from Sagolband and A. Biren from Jiri under him.

Finance is a serious business and as a Chief Minister I cannot be bogged down in it, he said. I have given my commitment to Union Finance Minister Mr. Yaswanti Sinha to pull Manipur out of fiscal deficit and as former Deputy CM holding finance I know how difficult it is. I think the two young Ministers will be able to handle situation with my supervision.

The Chief Minister also said he was constituting a Finance Commission and is on look out for an expert to guide Manipur. I have contacted the I.M.S

Office in this connection, he said.

The Center is also releasing Rs 100 crore of the 200 promissed to us in time to disburse the salary before the Id festival, he said.

He also said he was inducting a Security Advisor to tackle the militancy in the State. Panjabs top Cop KPS Gill is on the priority list. He is being contacted for the job, he added.

This is the first major problem Radhabir has run into since he was sworn as the first Samata party led government in the Nation on 15 of this month.

While he overcame the problem of allocation of ministerial berth after hectic central intervention, allocation of portfolios is a problem he had not been able to carry out smoothly.

But what is probably giving the new chief minister bad nights will be those waiting on the side for this moment.

Several MLAs and ministers including the BJP are reportedly feeling slight at the allocation of berth and portfolios.

The BJP is reportedly unhappy over the share of ministerial berth and portfolios given to it. BJP state president M. Bhorol is already vocal about the resentment.

He told a local daily that Samata should be honest with BJP. He said the BJP was promised 5 cabinet but only 2 cabinet have been given. The Chief Minister, Mr. Kojiam himself had asked BJP to give in writing and we did promptly, he told the daily.

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