

BJP to cash in on textbooks row

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, NOV. 27. The "saffronisation" of textbooks controversy raised by the Opposition parties has been seized upon by the Bharatiya Janata Party as an encashable electoral issue in the coming Assembly elections. Every effort is being made to emphasise that "Hindu", "Jain" and "Sikh" sentiments would have been irreparably hurt if the "offending passages" in the school history texts had not been deleted.

The BJP chief whip, Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said today that a meeting of party MPs had been called for tomorrow to discuss the issue and ask them to "aggressively" take it up in their constituencies.

It seems the party is preparing to use both the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) and the history textbooks issues as emotive ones for the coming elections, especially in Punjab and Uttar Pradesh. The textbook issue will be used to convey the message that the Opposition wanted retention of passages that were "anti-Jat" or "anti-Jain." Clearly, the party is hoping to win the Jats and

the Jains over to its side.

Mr. Malhotra criticised the inclusion of passages in textbooks which described some of the Tirthankaras of the Jains as not historical figures but possibly invested to give the new religion a flavour of antiquity. He also continued to assert that it would hurt Hindu sensibilities to teach small children that during the Vedic period, cattle sacrifice and beef eating were accepted practices.

Party leaders here are arguing their case for a correction of history books not by questioning the veracity of facts presented but "because people's sentiments would be hurt." Mr. Malhotra said: "We feel no negative aspect of any religion or religious leader should be included in any textbook."

The party has not responded to questions whether children should or should not be taught the prevalence of the caste system and the practice of untouchability against the 'shudras' by the upper castes. There was no answer to the question whether this should also be omitted for fear of hurting Brahmins. The BJP has gone to the extent of saying that

the history taught to school children should assert the historicity of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata. "How can we allow school books to say that Ram was not a historical figure or that the battle of Mahabharata never took place," Mr. Malhotra asked.

It seems the party has officially decided to allow history and mythology, fact and fiction to mix freely in the interest of "not hurting any community." The party's view is that Mr. P.N. Oak, the "historian" who claims the Taj Mahal is a "Hindu monument" should be given as much weightage as Ms. Romila Thapar or Mr. Irfan Habib.

One leader admitted today that till the textbook controversy broke out, the BJP had nothing going for it in Punjab, one of the four States where Assembly elections are due early next year. And why should the BJP alone be targeted. After all, the Congress Government in Delhi got a passage "offending" to Sikhs removed from textbooks with an eye on the Punjab elections. "Now we have this issue to rake up in Punjab, the political situation for us has improved," he claimed.

THE END

Advani condemns VHP's action

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 21. - The Union home minister, Mr LK Advani, today condemned the VHP action of entering the isolated area in the makeshift Ram temple in Ayodhya. He said the party had no right to interpret the ruling of the High Court and the Supreme Court in their own way. He assured the Rajya Sabha that the Supreme Court ruling in this regard would be honoured by the Centre.

Responding to a calling attention motion initiated by the Opposition on the issue, Mr Advani said, "The incident had caused concern and I never had a feeling of condoning the act. It should never have taken place in the first place. I had condemned the VHP action when I first heard it while addressing a foreign correspondents' meet and criticise it even today."

While maintaining that the Supreme Court directive was not breached, Mr Advani said, "The conduct of some prominent people had caused concern. It is also important that I make my position clear on the subject as the persons involved are perceived close to me."

The home minister distanced himself from the party members' view that the VHP members did not breach the law and were merely interested in having darshan from a closer distance.

The Opposition members said,



Mr LK Advani

if the law was not breached, there was no reason to suspend the officials and lodge an FIR.

The home minister said secularism was the biggest force in the country and making the minority community feel secure was a priority for them. Maintaining law and order and upholding the Supreme Court directive in this regard were primarily the responsibility of the state government and the Centre was only the custodian of the property around the temple premises, he said. Security arrangements have been enhanced following the incident, he added.

Mr Advani said the government was of the view that the Ayodhya problem could be

solved either through mutual consensus among all the parties concerned or on the basis of adjudication by courts. A judgment from the court was, however, unlikely in the near future as several cases were already pending, including one on title.

The Opposition charged the BJP and Sangh Parivar with raking up the Ayodhya issue with an eye on the coming Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh. "The BJP Government hopes to win the UP polls" by raising the Ayodhya issue at this juncture, Congress and CPI-M members said.

Raising the issue, Congress member, Mr Suresh Pachouri, said, "Actions of the Uttar Pradesh government have motivated the VHP activists. The state government is not serious and the VHP took advantage of the situation."

The Opposition, led by the Congress, however, staged a walkout, expressing displeasure over the home minister's remarks. Barring the Shiv Sena leader, Mr Satish Pradhan, other alliance partners of the NDA distanced themselves on the issue and chose not to comment.

Actress Shabana Azmi said the home minister's statement was contradictory. Muslims were feeling insecure and the community at large felt uncomfortable as it had to clarify its position every time some fundamentalist made certain remarks on any issue.

THE STATESMAN

22 NOV 2001

RSS leader's statement leaves BJP uneasy

SUDESH K VERMA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 7. — The BJP is caught in a cleft stick over the RSS spokesman's statement that the party was supreme and it shouldn't become an appendage to the government.

Mr MG Vaidya has also indirectly raised the issue of whether either of the two top leaders, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani, should have been retained in the party to keep the organisation strong. He gave instances of Congress Prime Ministers making their party weak by assuming the post of party presidents as well, or by nominating a pliant leader as the party chief.

In the latest issue of the RSS mouthpiece, *Panchjanya*, Mr Vaidya has quoted former RSS *sarsanghachalak*, MS Golwalkar,

as having said that if either Pandit Nehru or Sardar Patel had stayed back in the party instead of joining the government, the Congress would have been a different party.

The comparison is obvious because many BJP leaders see Mr Vajpayee in the mould of Nehru and Mr Advani, of Patel. A senior party leader said many workers too would say the same. The party spokesman, Mr Sunil Shastri, refused to comment.

Some leaders said the RSS's suggestion that either Mr Vajpayee or Mr Advani should serve the party was not new. The Union home minister had given serious thought to this before Mr Bangaru Laxman became party president. But even some RSS leaders had then suggested that Mr Advani stayed in the government. Mr Vajpayee too didn't want Mr Advani to work for party, a leader said.

The RSS statement is a serious indictment of the BJP's ways of functioning and attempts by some ministers to make the party play second fiddle to the government.

Mr Vaidya still feels the BJP is the party with a difference, but said it shouldn't wag its tail at the triumphs of the government and play hide and seek when the government is in trouble.

Party leaders are groping for words to give a fitting reply. Mr Shastri rejected Mr Vaidya's statement, saying that when a BJP-led alliance was in power, the party's role was advisory.

He also tried to delineate the finer distinction between the RSS's views and those expressed by Mr Vaidya and said anyone was free to express his opinion. The party will decide whether it'll accept or reject a suggestion.

"The RSS is the world's biggest organisation. It'll talk in the na-

tion's interest. But the BJP is a political party. If the suggestions suit our political decisions or actions, we'll accept them. Not only the RSS, we take suggestion from other parties too, even the Congress. We can decide on our own," Mr Shastri said.

His response to Mr Vaidya's suggestion that the post of party president and general secretaries be given to those who have no electoral ambition was convoluted. This was apparently Mr Vaidya's way of castigating the BJP for allowing the former RSS pracharak, Mr Narendra Modi, to become Gujarat's chief minister.

He said the BJP had emerged stronger and had been advising the government on important issues from time to time. The party's role is to strengthen the support base and keep the government informed of the cadres' feeling.



Mr AB Vajpayee



Mr LK Advani

THE STATESMAN

8 NOV 2001

Jana differs with RSS on labour reforms

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BJP GIVES SCRIBES THE JITTERS

AMRITSAR, Nov. 2. — The BJP president, Mr. Jana Krishna-murthy, today deviated from the RSS line, justified labour reforms to accelerate economy and appealed to all parties to support the government sponsored amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act and contract laws.

Mr. Krishnamurthy urged the government to expedite setting up of a social safety net to protect workers' interests. He said the compensation for retrenchment should be enhanced from 15 days' salary to 45 days' salary for each year of service to rehabilitate affected workers.

The suggestion is intended to appease the RSS affiliate, Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, which has been one of the strongest critics of the proposed labour reforms. He also appealed to the government to extend insurance coverage to private sector workers.

Amendment to the IDA and contract law has been opposed by the BMS and other trade unions on the ground that the reforms were only an euphemism

AMRITSAR, Nov. 2. — If the Agra summit brings to mind media mismanagement, the BJP's executive meeting at Amritsar is likely to be remembered for the party's disregard for the media.

Almost every journalist was subjected to harassment. The extensive security arrangements only made things worse. Not that the journalists refused to be frisked. Most of them are aware of the routine security drill, having covered such meetings earlier.

But they were at a loss when the Punjab police officers refused to recognise even the government accreditation issued to them. Finally some journalists' decision to boycott the press conference to be addressed by BJP general secretary Mrs Maya Singh somewhat put things back in order. — SNS

for easy hire-and-fire policy to attract multinational corporations. Mr. Krishnamurthy sought to distance itself from the BMS saying that the party had no trade union of its own as it believed that trade unions should not be politically oriented.

To shun out a controversy over labour reforms at least within the party, Mr. Krishnamurthy said the government's attempt to amend labour laws should not be viewed as against the interests of labour.

Among other things he sugges-

ted that the government set up special courts to handle land titles disputes, simplify and improve ground registration system for land titles, lower stamp duties to minimise tax evasion, cost assured possession of dwelling units and conversion of non-cultivated agricultural land in urban areas like Delhi.

Agro policy suggestions: The BJP today accepted that about 30 per cent of India's population is under-nourished. This seemed to contradict Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's assertion



Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, the BJP president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthy and Mr. LK Advani at BJP's national executive meeting in Amritsar on Friday. — PTI

that media reports about starvation were not correct.

The convenor of the BJP's economic cell and member of Mr. Vajpayee's economic advisory council, Mr. Jagdish Shettagar, tried to explain the contradiction saying the BJP was not talking about starvation but about people not being adequately fed.

Agricultural policy suggestions made by the Bhairon Singh Shekhawat committee was today placed before the national executive for discussion. The committee was set up by Mr.

Bangaru Laxman to handle objections to steps the government was contemplating like corporatisation of agriculture.

The committee welcomed the proposal to facilitate leasing of land but said it should be strictly on a voluntary basis.

The committee suggested that the government could lease wasteland under its control to the private sector for promotion of agricultural research and development.

Suggesting bold steps for agricultural reforms, the committee

advocated the concept of meaningful minimum support price to help farmers.

The minimum support price should strike a balance keeping in view consumers' interests.

To change farming patterns the committee suggested that the minimum support prices for oilseed, pulses and coarse grains be fixed at such a level so that it would be remunerative for farmers to grow these crops like wheat and rice. Mr. Krishnamurthy urged Punjab farmers not to stress on quantity but to grow quality food grains to fetch more price at the international market.

It also called for imposing minimum import duty rates on these commodities. Any subsidy or concession to vegetable oil mills or any government or non-government agencies should be discontinued as these could have a negative impact, it said.

The committee demanded that the NDA government at the next round of WTO negotiations at Doha try to get the provisions that favoured the developed countries removed.

BJP rides POTO to flaunt nationalism, taunt Congress

By Smita Gupta
Times News Network

AMRITSAR: For the BJP, the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) has become the perfect vehicle to carry its creed of "nationalism" and also a stick with which to beat the Congress, its main rival in national politics, in the run-up to assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttaranchal, Punjab, Manipur and Jammu and Kashmir, all slated for 2002.

In fact, BJP parliamentary party spokesperson V.K. Malhotra announced that POTO would be an election issue. And if a message emanated from the two-day meeting of the national executive of the BJP which concluded here on Saturday, it was that party workers should fan out across the country, "raise the temperature on the terrorism issue" and create public opinion for the passage of POTO by posing the line given to party members by home minister L.K. Advani on Friday: "Those who are opposing POTO are appeasing terrorists."

The tenor of the resolution that was passed on terrorism matched this rhetoric, stating that while India had chosen for the moment not to pursue the policy of hot pursuit, "if the situation demands, circumstances compel and national interest needs, nothing should come in the way of the country going all out to eliminate terrorism from both inside and outside the country".

To back this, the resolution pointed out that "the U.S., aided by the UK...has chosen to pursue the policy of hot pursuit, crossing countries and continents in their fight against international terrorism thereby justifying their stand".

But even as it was clear that terrorism was top of the party's agen-

da, with party president Jana Krishnamurthy announcing that November 18 would be observed as "National Unity against Terrorism Day", differences between the Prime Minister and the home minister on the approach to be adopted emerged. If Mr Vajpayee stressed the need for a consensual approach involving the opposition parties, Mr Advani made it clear that those who did not support POTO were "appeasing terrorists".

But even if this could be interpreted as the two men addressing different constituencies in tandem, what added to the confusion was Mr Krishnamurthy denying that Mr Advani had used such strong language, even though law minister Arun Jaitley, while briefing the press on Friday night on the home minister's intervention on the subject, quoted him as having said as much.

Meanwhile, it was evident that the BJP was trying hard to ignore the murmurs of protest against POTO coming from its allies in the NDA — whether it is the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam, the Telugu Desam Party, sections of the Samata Party or even the Akali Dal.

It has decided instead to concentrate its gunfire on the Congress, which a senior cabinet minister described as "our most reasonable partner in the opposition", given that it was the party which had given the country POTO's predecessor, TADA. And in UP, it will use the same issue to attack the Samajwadi Party, which is also opposing POTO.

Clearly, for the BJP, which has to face crucial assembly elections next year, it is hoping the terrorism issue will help it emerge as the sole protector of the national interest and make its rivals look "anti-national".

THE TIMES OF INDIA

4 NOV 2001

Distance with party makes PM late

FROM RADHIKA
RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Oct. 21: The flag was supposed to fly high and flutter in the golden jubilee glory of the Bharatiya Jan Sangh, the precursor of the BJP.

Instead, the flag went up in the absence of its most famous bearer — Atal Bihari Vajpayee — prompting him to speak of a “communication gap” between the party and the government.

The BJP national council, which assembled at the Talkatora Indoor Stadium this morning for a pep talk from Vajpayee, had to put up with a burst of pique from him because of the logistical gaffe.

To the surprise of the gathering of Cabinet ministers, office-bearers and chief ministers, Vajpayee arrived just in time to deliver his concluding address instead of flagging off the ceremony, which had begun at 11 am. This, despite him being a Jan Sangh founding-member along with L.K. Advani and Kushabhau Thakre, who were on the dais with BJP chief K. Jana Krishnamurthi.

Vajpayee voiced his hurt right at the start: “I am sorry, perhaps it is my fault for not comprehending the programme’s schedule properly. I was given to understand that I would deliver the concluding remarks and Advani was to give you *marg darshan* (guidance). I was all set to leave in the morning but I think there was some mix-up and I could not be present at the auspicious moment (when the flag was hoisted).” The flag was raised by Krishnamurthi who joined the party only in 1964.

“There is definitely a communication gap. This is an example of how distance develops between the party and the government. Not that I mean to blame the organisational functionaries but the fact that I was not there when the golden jubilee celebrations were inaugurated is a matter that needs to be looked into at once,” said Vajpayee.

A BJP office-bearer held the PMO responsible. “We submitted a detailed schedule to the Prime Minister’s Office (PMO) well in advance. But, somehow, they don’t seem to have conveyed the message to the Prime Minister and, therefore, some other programmes were fixed for him. When our office-bearers went to receive him at his residence for the inauguration, they were told that he was busy and would come in time for the concluding address.” PMO sources were succinct: “Vajpayeeji has conveyed what he had to in clear words.”

Observers felt that the incident reflected the “tension” between Vajpayee and the BJP president.

Advani temple thrust

Advani used today’s event to hammer home the BJP’s indebtedness to Ayodhya. He stressed the need to project the temple issue “in the right perspective and carry it forward”. (See Page 9)

THE TELEGRAPH

Temple barge-in: VHP leaders may face fresh charges

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, Oct. 20. — Even as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders asserted they had not committed any offence by forcibly breaking the "internal cordon" of the Ramjanambhoomi Temple complex at Ayodhya on Wednesday, the state government today said more cases could be instituted against them.

Yesterday, the Central Reserve Police Force filed a case against the top leaders of the VHP including the

president, Mr Ashok Singhal, for "preventing public servants from doing their duty". The CRPF was posted at the "internal cordon" of the complex.

After the inquiry report of the additional director general police, Mr Himanshu Kumar was submitted to the government more FIRs could be filed against the VHP leaders, said a home department official today. Mr Kumar was expected to submit his report tomorrow.

Meanwhile, the Union home minis-

try has convened a meeting on 23 October at Delhi to discuss the security at the temple complex. The Uttar Pradesh home secretary, Mr Naresh Dayal, Mr Kumar and the commissioner of Faizabad, who was the custodian of the disputed property, would be attending it.

The Uttar Pradesh DGP, Mr RK Pandit said what the VHP leaders had done was an act of "criminal trespass". Action would be taken against those responsible for it on the basis of Mr Kumar's report, he

said. Meanwhile, VHP vice president, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, who with others had forcible crossed the "internal cordon", today asserted the VHP leaders had not violated any court order on Wednesday.

He said a controversy was being created over the matter to "gain political mileage".

"There is no court order prohibiting or restricting 'darshan' of the idols at the makeshift temple", he said adding that the court had permitted puja in a

meaningful manner "from such distance which might not be disproportionate and too far with reference to the devotees and vision", the Acharya said.

He said the order had been issued keeping in view the security of the idol as well as the surrounding circumstances. Quoting the High Court order of 1993, he asserted it had not talked of fixing the *darshan* from a distance of fifty feet. This was an idea of the administration, he said.

THE STATESMAN

21 OCT 2001

Opposition for ban on Bajrang Dal too

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 28. The Centre's decision to ban the Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) evoked a mixed reaction from political parties. While the BJP, welcomed the decision, the Opposition parties described it as a "political motivated move taken with an eye on the coming Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections." The Opposition was unanimous in suggesting a ban on the Bajrang Dal too.

The BJP was unreserved in welcoming the ban on the SIMI, which, it alleged, had links with the ISI of Pakistan. It was confident that the Government had "adequate proof" of this and the SIMI's involvement in several bomb blasts here.

"The SIMI has become a recruitment centre for future terrorists," the party general secretary, Mr Narendra Modi, said, even as he came down heavily on "parties" — the finger was pointing at the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party particularly — who have "not yet decided whether they are with the terrorists or with the humanitarians."

Even as the BJP demanded a ban on other organisations as well which were active in the North-East, in Jammu and Kashmir, and those behind the Coimbatore blasts, it categorically stated that there was no need for a ban on organisations such as the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad because a tribunal had found them working within the Constitu-

tion. Mr. Modi said, in the case of the Shiv Sena, the Sri Krishna Commission had not said that it was a terrorist organisation.

Mr. Modi refused to name the organisations the BJP thought were fit for a ban. He was also not willing to admit that the SIMI ban may have more to do with the coming Uttar Pradesh elections and less with terrorism. The BJP-led Government, he said, had not imposed the ban with the narrow purpose of polarising the votes in U.P. along communal lines.

Ill-timed, says Cong.

The Congress termed the action as "ill-timed." In a statement, the party spokesperson, Mr. Jaipal Reddy, said "the international situation was very tense" and it is not in the national interest to disturb the domestic scene. He charged the BJP with being far more interested in reaping the electoral harvest in U.P. by seeking to divide people on communal lines.

Accusing the BJP of abandoning even the pretence of sectarian neutrality, Mr. Reddy said that while banning the SIMI, the Government had turned a blind eye to the "nefarious record" of organisations such as the Bajrang Dal. The Congress maintained that the "naked attempt to fan communal discord would not help the BJP in U.P."

The CPI(M) has demanded that the Government come out with full information on the basis on which it has imposed the ban. In a

statement, the party's Politburo pointed out that there were organisations such as the Bajrang Dal, whose activities were inimical to the national unity, and charged the Centre with remaining silent on such disruptive activities.

The party also condemned the "indiscriminate" police firing in Lucknow where three youth have lost their lives. The Rajnath Singh Government, given its communal bias, will try to use the prevailing atmosphere to target the minority community. All the democratic forces must strongly resist such moves, it said.

The Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) charged the Government with taking a "politically motivated step" with an eye on the coming Assembly elections, especially in U.P. and Uttaranchal. The move was an attempt to divert the attention of the people from the Government which has failed to perform, it said.

The party's Vice President, Ms. Mayawati, sharing the CPI(M)'s view that activities of the Bajrang Dal and Sangh Parivar outfits such as the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and RSS were not being taken into account, accused the BJP-led government of adopting double standards by not imposing a ban on these outfits, especially the Bajrang Dal. The move would vitiate the communal harmony. The Government did not even bother to take the Opposition leaders into confidence when the Prime Minister held a meeting yesterday to discuss the situation in the wake of terrorist attacks in the United States, she said.

THE HINDU

SEP 29

Party has no say in reshuffles, says BJP president

In an interview with *Hindustan Times*, **Jana Krishnamurthy** denies that the BJP top brass is unhappy because the PM didn't consult the party over the Cabinet reshuffle

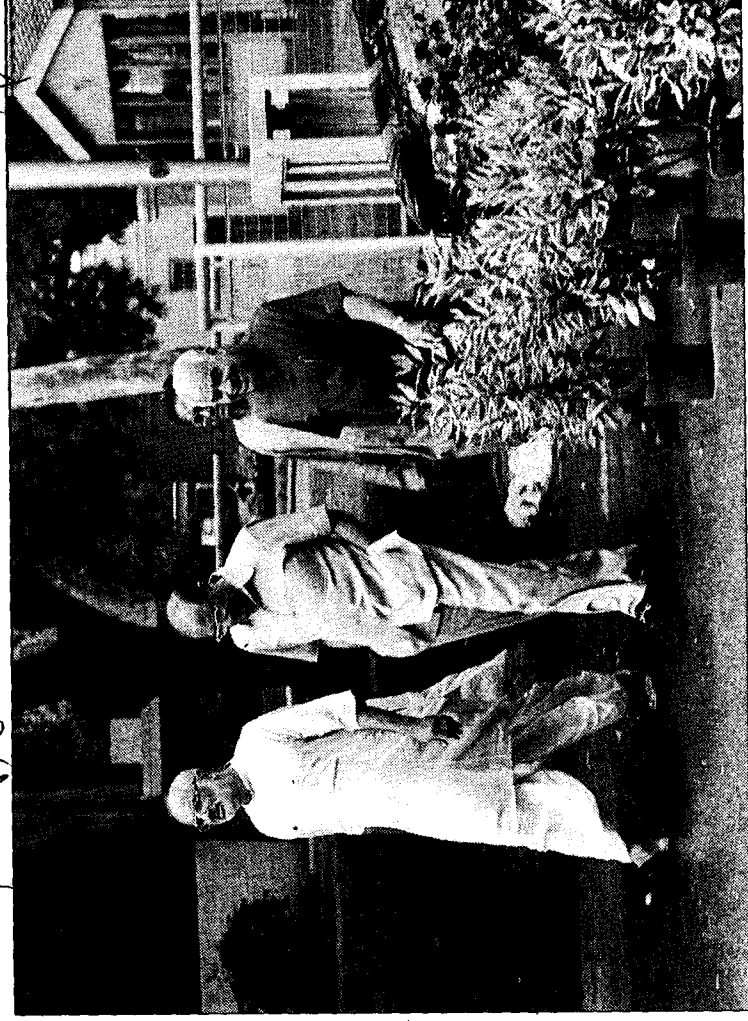
HT: There's unrest in the BJP, and its allies, over the recent Cabinet reshuffle. Was the BJP consulted before the reshuffle?
JK: No, the party was not consulted. But there's no need to consult the party over a Cabinet reshuffle. Appointments of ministers and reshuffling of portfolios is the sole prerogative of the Prime Minister in any democracy. There's no scope for anyone to have a grouse in this matter. And there's no question of any misunderstanding in the NDA.

Does the reshuffle convey any message?
 Too much is being read into the reshuffle. The media is making efforts to attribute motives where there are none. Everyone knew the reshuffle was coming.

But there's an impression of unhappiness within the party.
 The party has no say in these matters. This was made very clear at the Bangalore national executive meeting. In matters relating to the Government, the PM is the final authority. If it's a policy matter, then all NDA partners, including the BJP, are consulted. But a reshuffle does not constitute policy. And I'm sure that the reshuffle is in the overall interest of the country and the NDA.

Governance may be the PM's prerogative, but it's the party which has to canvass support and defend the Government's performance. What's the party's current priority?
 My emphasis is on meeting grassroots workers all over the country. I want all leaders and ministers to meet mandal (division)-level workers all over the country by November.

The only party concern which seems to have been accommodated in the reshuffle is Jaganmohan's transfer from the Urban Affairs Ministry. Has a clean minister become a liability for the BJP?
 This is a wrong perception. The



PACIFIED: Delhi BJP leaders Sahib Singh Verma, Vijay Kumar Malhotra, Lal Bihari Tewari and Madan Lal Khurana come out of the Prime Minister's residence after meeting Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Saturday.

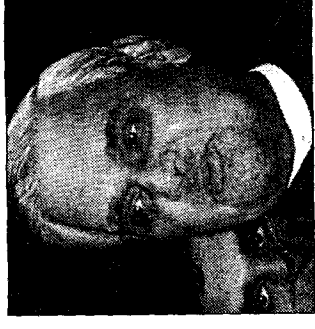
Amitabh Shukla
New Delhi, September 8

VIJAY KUMAR Malhotra, Madan Lal Khurana, Sahib Singh Verma and Lal Bihari Tewari today denied reports that they had resigned from their positions in the BJP. The statement was issued after a one-hour meeting with Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee who succeeded in mollifying them.

The four senior leaders had reportedly handed over their resignations to BJP chief Jana Krishnamurthy, who not only rejected the resignations but also tore the letters.

The news of the resignation in this morning's newspapers put the leaders on the defensive as their meeting with the Prime Minister had already been scheduled for the afternoon.

Khurana said Vajpayee gave them a patient hearing and assured them that their griev-



ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE

ances would be looked into. The Prime Minister said he has asked both Krishnamurthy and LK Advani to sort out the problems.

While Khurana was reluctant to divulge the details of the meeting, he said that he and his colleagues drew Vajpayee's attention to the importance of the Delhi municipal polls that are due early next year. For the BJP, these polls are as crucial as

PM mollifies Khurana & co

the Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh and Uttaranchal.

The leaders also complained about Jaganmohan, who had reportedly tried to equate them with the building mafia and blamed them for his ouster from the Urban Development Ministry. They alleged that Jaganmohan himself was responsible for the growth of unauthorised colonies during his tenures as the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi.

The Prime Minister reportedly asked them not to raise these issues as they were irrelevant now that Jaganmohan had been transferred to another ministry. All four leaders resented the recent Cabinet expansion in which several established leaders had been left out in favour of virtual green horns.

But Vajpayee assured them and urged them to go back to the field and strengthen the organisation ahead of the coming

party never demanded Jaganmohan's removal. Tourism is important for the economy and having a person with a vision in that ministry will help.

But his transfer from two key ministries in controversial circumstances conveys a different impression. Is the BJP still the party with a difference?

Certainly, both in outlook and in attitude. In our national council meeting, we adopted the Chennai Declaration, resolving to make the 21st Century India's century. The BJP's policies are centred on the country. That is its basic difference with other parties.

What about corruption, the slipping moral high ground? Has the BJP recovered from thehelka setback?

We've left thehelka far behind us. The allegation was only with regard to Bangaru Laxman. He subjected himself to the inquiry commission, and is quite confident that he'll acquit himself honourably. There's been no damaging impact on the party.

So, will Bangaru be rehabilitated?
 He attended the national executive. And after he is acquitted, he

egations must produce evidence. But unfortunately, party politics in this country is being degraded to such an extent that people level allegation after unfounded allegation, just to create suspicion in the public mind. This is being done out of sheer political self-interest.

With the kind of freedom of expression we have in this country, nobody in public life is safe today. Anyone can say anything about anybody, and it gets publicity. All of us - politicians, media and opinion makers - must act more responsibly. We owe it to the country. By recklessly accusing each other in this manner, we only create an impression before the world that India is nothing but corrupt.

So, you mean that there ought to be political consensus on not raising corruption as a political issue?

No. But there must be a sense of responsibility while making allegations in public. produce evidence, prove the allegations, and then let law take its course. My point is that anybody who makes allegations must be made responsible for production of evidence to back his charges.

In hindsight, was raising the

Bofors issue an act of responsibility?

That was different. The Press produced prima facie evidence. Even then, the Government of resisted inquiry.

What about moral high ground and symbolism? There are allegations even against those close to the mightiest in the land. When the BJP invokes Ram and Gandhi, shouldn't Caesar's wife be necessarily above suspicion?

I didn't say anything about Ram. A ton of allegations is nothing compared to an ounce of evidence. If you have even an ounce of evidence against Ranjan Bhatnacharya, go ahead and file a case against him. He'll face the charges. Is it a sin to be the Prime Minister's son-in-law?

You say you didn't say anything about Ram. Will the Ram temple be an issue in the UP Assembly polls?

I've made it clear that we will not make the Ram temple an issue.

But the RSS and the VHP have different ideas. The RSS and VHP are free to act on their own.

So, you're going the whole hog

Is the party happy with the Government's approach to economic reforms?

How can there be absolute happiness unless the whole economy is grand. There is a problem and the Government is taking steps to improve the situation. Politics and economics cannot be separated. We've inherited a planned economy. We're trying to move ahead through gradual liberalisation. But the basic question is still that of poverty and unemployment. But I'm happy that the Government is moving in the right direction.

How would you describe the state of the NDA?

It's one of the great experiments of the BJP, and is doing very well. The PM is even trying to take the help of the Opposition, especially the Congress. There can be some basic issues on which there may not be any confrontation.

Like corruption?

There's no compromise on corruption.

Ramakrishna Hegde says the Congressisation of the BJP is complete.

Hegde is free to make his own comments. The BJP is not bothered about his comments.

Are you looking for more alliances?

We already have alliance partners. In case there's requirement for more alliances, our local leaders will hold talks, finalise the arrangement and inform us.

BJP-Sena rift widens despite 'apology'

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, AUG 7. A letter of "apology" written by the Shiv Sena MP, Mr. Sanjay Nirupam, to the Prime Minister has failed to narrow the widening rift between the Bharatiya Janata Party and its ally in Maharashtra. For even before the ink on the letter had dried, the Sena chief, Mr. Balasaheb Thackeray, let it be known in Mumbai that he was ready to see the 15-year-old alliance break, if it came to that.

Senior BJP leaders freely admit that there is no certainty about the direction the relationship is taking. It will not be a surprise if the "temperamental" Sena chief makes "any announcement", senior party leaders said.

Allegations remain

What has irked the BJP leadership is that even in the so-called letter of apology, Mr. Nirupam expressed regret only for causing "hurt" to the Prime Minister. Far from taking back the allegations he had made against the Prime Minister's Office during the debate in the Rajya Sabha on the Unit Trust of India scandal, the letter dated August 6 said: "In my statement (during the debate in the House), I had mentioned the telephone number of an official of the PMO from which telephone calls had been made to the former chairman of UTI. My question was related to only one issue, was this conversation connected in any way to the Cyberspace-UTI scandal, and I had demanded a

probe into this aspect." His letter goes on to add that in fact the Prime Minister himself announced a probe into this in the House and "for this I am grateful".

And if he had hurt the Prime Minister's sentiments by asking this question, which appeared to be so since he had offered to resign after his speech on UTI in the Rajya Sabha, he offered an "unconditional apology." Perhaps to make it crystal clear that the apology letter was not his own idea, he added a footnote in his own hand at the bottom of the letter to say

that he had been directed by the Sena chief to send him the letter.

But as BJP leaders made it clear, the question was not one of allegations by Mr. Nirupam or an apology — the party spokesperson, Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said the BJP had not demanded an apology and it was now for the National Democratic Alliance to consider the entire issue, including the apology letter — it was related to the Sena's desire to remain in government and reserve the right to criticise as if it was part of the Opposition.

The crux of the problem be-

tween the two parties was the Sena's desire to topple the Congress-led Government in Maharashtra and the BJP's view that this was neither possible nor feasible, a senior party leaders said.

It has also been made clear that now no backroom talks are taking place to mend the relationship. In fact, it seems that the leaders of the two parties are hardly on talking terms. The BJP made its viewpoint clear: It will not make the first move to break ties with the Sena. The NDA has never pushed out anyone from the alliance. It is for the Sena to think and act.

Snap ties if you want: Thackeray

By Arunkumar Bhatt

MUMBAI, AUG. 7. The Shiv Sena supremo, Mr. Bal Thackeray, today categorically told his party's belligerent ally, the BJP, "you can snap the alliance, if you so desire". The Sena chief, however, defended his Rajya Sabha member, Mr. Nirupam Sanjay. In his view, the MP had not erred for his barbs were against the Prime Minister's Office and not the Prime Minister. He asked the BJP not to be over-agitated, reminding it that the over 15-year alliance was an ideological one.

"We respect and love Mr. Vajpayee," he said reiterating that the Vajpayee Government should continue. Mr. Thackeray was speaking to mediapersons

at a book-release function here.

He said it was the BJP which had come to the Sena for the alliance about 15 years ago when the former had no strength worth the name in Maharashtra and it owed its present political standing in the State to the Sena. "They must know their limits as we know ours; I am an independent man and take my own decision."

To a question on the Sena's continuation in the NDA at a press conference here before the Agra summit to air his strong views against any parleys, Mr. Thackeray had said, "our problem is that if set loose, this creature (the BJP) runs away and if held tightly, it tends to bite."

THE HINDU

8 AUG 2001

Scripting the BJP meltdown

By Harish Khare

The crisis is deeper and goes beyond Mr. Vajpayee's failing health or the presumed skeletons in the PMO's cupboard. It has to do with the total irrelevance of the Hindutva/BJP ideology.

IT WAS left to the little-known Mr. Rashid Alvi of the Bahujan Samaj Party to put his finger on the nature of the increasingly irreversible meltdown of the Bharatiya Janata Party. Mr. Alvi was participating in the Lok Sabha debate last week on the UTI scam, and was responding to the argument — made earlier rather cogently by the Law Minister, Mr. Arun Jaitley — that Mr. Yashwant Sinha was not guilty of any wrong-doing because he had done nothing different from his Congress predecessors. Addressing himself to the BJP, Mr. Alvi reminded the treasury benches that the voters had banished the Congress to the Opposition corner precisely because it could not stand up to the corporate crooks, and if the BJP was not prepared to do things differently, then the next time the same voters would inflict the same retribution on the BJP.

Mr. Alvi could be dismissed by the smug BJP benches as a partisan voice. But only a few days earlier the BJP leadership itself had heard similar sentiments from its own National Executive. The leadership's response was an admonition from Mr. L. K. Advani, exhorting the BJP cadres to graduate out of their own 'opposition mindset' and to start learning to appreciate the Government's difficulties and achievements. And when it looked like Mr. Advani's admonition had not worked, the Prime Minister threatened to walk away from the job. Well, Mr. Vajpayee may be entitled to his tantrums, but the threat cannot reverse the BJP meltdown.

It is obvious that even after three years of rule at the Centre the BJP has not come anywhere near fulfilling a task it defined for itself in the Chennai Declaration: "the obligation to give a new direction to politics and governance in India". The tehelka episode earlier revealed that the crooked impulses that once were the Congressmen's calling card had been easily internalised by the BJP *deshbhakts*; now, this US-64 business reveals that the linkages between the venal elements and the Finance Ministry have been working overtime. Within 18 months, the Chennai Declaration has become a dead letter.

No other judgment is possible. The Shiv

Sena feels no ethical diffidence in complaining that while it was the second largest party in the ruling coalition it did not have a single 'lucrative' Ministry. Nor is there any remorse that the UTI investor community is the very core of the BJP constituency — upper caste, upper slice of income, educated. This constituency has been palmed off with a lawyer's defence.

After all, the BJP's promise to its constituency was that it would redefine and recast three basic sets of relationships in a wholesome manner so as to take (a) the corrupt out of the state-citizen equation, (b) the crook out of the economy-consumer transaction, and (c) the criminal out of the society-individual interaction. The party has betrayed its cadres and its constituency on all three counts, because the top leadership has wantonly given in to expediency and op-

portunism of the commonest kind. The only tangible achievement is the fact that the terms of electoral mobilisation have been so redefined that the Muslim underworld, by and large, no longer enjoys the kind of political patronage and protection available during the Congress years of ascendancy; otherwise, the promise remains unfulfilled as life in the small towns as in the big cosmopolitan cities remains precariously hostage to the criminals and lumpens, in and out of uniform.

What is more, the party opted for status quo. It would not make any attempt to rearrange the institutional parameters. Its record suggests that it lacks the moral rigour and the ethical vision and the individual perseverance to rescue the institutional arrangement from its stagnation, leave alone re-energise the instruments of the Indian state. Only during the Kargil crisis did it show flashes of creative brilliance when some bright thing must have stumbled upon the idea to send the soldiers' bodies to their native villages for

patriotic funerals. The 1999 electoral victory, unfortunately, only reinforced the cynical manipulator's clout within the decision-making apparatus. Consequently, it is no surprise that the adverse judgments in various States have been comfortably attributed to the inexorable anti-incumbency factor. This has induced a morally debilitating thought process: it does not matter what you do or do not do, the voter is out to throw you out; hence, why make any extra effort to produce good governance. This mindset — and not the 'opposition mindset' that Mr. Advani keeps lamenting — has produced policy paralysis, moral indifference and political unimaginativeness.

Nor is it a surprise that there is no synergy within the BJP. Mr. Vajpayee, the liberal; Mr. Advani, the hardliner; Mr. Jaswant Singh, the Americans' favourite; Dr. Murli Manohar Joshi, the RSS-Hindutva favourite; and, that loose cannon, outsider-insider Mr. George Fernandes, all have been content to pursue solo agendas, each happy with his ordinariness.

This ordinariness is depressing enough; but what is bizarre is that each of these principals is prodding and egging on their apologists to argue that the other fellow has prevented their principal from making a fundamental breakthrough; this inspired name-calling continues to define the sangh parivar and its drum-beaters' discussion of the Agra summit; nonetheless, this unredeeming preoccupation with individuals has only prevented the party from collectively addressing its basic existential problem.

Not only that, power and office have not enhanced anyone's stature; Mr. Advani has been found out to be not exactly the tough man he has been marketed to be. The bright stars like Ms. Sushma Swaraj, Mr. Pramod Mahajan and Mr. Arun Jaitley

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have used their energy and cunning to stay just one step ahead of administrative embarrassments; except making effective telegenic apologists they have not been able to break out of the institutional inertia. Otherwise, the non-entities like the Kashiram Ranas and the Joel Orams remain non-entities. Expediency has become the opium of the ruling ministerial masses.

The crisis is deeper and goes beyond Mr. Vajpayee's failing health or the presumed skeletons in the PMO's cupboard. It has to do with the total irrelevance of the Hindutva/BJP ideology to resolving our collective ills. Instead of trying to understand this irrelevance, the official line is to downgrade any talk of 'ideology' and instead extol ideals and idealism of the leader(s). The Hindutva/BJP agenda, rooted in medieval animosity, has proved helpful in winning votes, but it is of no use in devising an agenda of governance. The Jhandewalan crowd — all nice men, all good *deshbhakts* — is hopelessly ill-equipped to provide ideas, leadership, inspiration for a world that is increasingly more complex than the simple Hindu versus Muslim dichotomy. For example, the search for a peaceful solution of the Kashmir problem and the Prime Minister's peace offensive are at odds with the theology of hatred and recrimination that the Jana Sangh/BJP have nursed all these years.

In democratic polities, the leadership has a moral responsibility to educate cadres on how things work. The BJP leadership has neither used the craft of politics nor the pulpit of the state nor the resources and reach of the Government to exorcise the party cadres of their simple-mindedness. If the BJP has to become India's natural party of governance, it must begin to imbibe the abiding value of a centrist, accommodative, pluralistic, inclusive politics as the basis of order in our continental polity. In other words, it must find the courage to exorcise itself of its Hindutva mindset. But individual ambitions prevent the top leaders from undertaking that task: in the process, they are scripting a BJP meltdown even before the party can take off.

THE HINDU

8 AUG 2001

'BJP's reluctance to topple DF government is main cause of Shiv Sena's anger'

01/18 ✓

By S. Balakrishnan
The Times of India News Service

MUMBAI: Is the Shiv Sena upset with its ally, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), because the latter is not keen on toppling the Democratic Front (DF) government in Maharashtra at present? Sources in the BJP say that this is the primary reason why the Sena is publicly embarrassing the Central government with great regularity. The most recent incident is when Sena MP Sanjay Nirupam targeted the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and even a close relative of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in Rajya Sabha on Monday in connection with the UTI scam.

The Sena was confident of toppling the DF government led by Vilasrao Deshmukh during the ongoing session of the Maharashtra legislature with the help of the BJP and the NCP led by Sharad Pawar. In fact, Sena chief Bal Thackeray had openly talked of joining hands with Mr Pawar on the condition that deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal, a Sena renegade, be excluded from the new power equation. But, after Mr Thackeray's statement nothing happened. A senior office-bearer of the state BJP said, "Our party and the Sena were definitely trying to unseat the Deshmukh government with the help of the NCP. But, Mr Thackeray hopelessly complicated the situation by jumping the gun and talking about his newfound love for Mr Pawar."

"Even as the NCP leadership was trying to tackle the issue of Mr Bhujbal, Mr Thackeray made a public statement. The secrecy of the

operation to topple Mr Deshmukh was lost," the BJP office-bearer added. It is learnt that a consensus was being worked out to have Sena's Narayan Rane as the chief minister. Mr Rane is



a staunch Thackeray loyalist, a Maratha and MLA from the backward Konkan belt with administrative experience.

There was also talk of having two deputy chief ministers, one from the BJP and the other from the NCP.

According to political observers, the Sena has

been unhappy with the BJP ever since the last assembly election in the state. The Sena was keen on the saffron alliance staking its claim to form the government even though it was short of a simple majority. The Sena's strategy was to first get the alliance installed in office and later "manage" support from MLAs from the Congress or the NCP without violating the anti-defection act. The BJP was then apparently keen on being given the chief ministership even though it had less MLAs than the Sena. This attitude of the BJP sabotaged the Sena's ambition of having a second term in office.

The Sena became more angry when its three ministers in the Union cabinet were given insignificant posts by Mr Vajpayee even though the party had as many as 15 MPs. The situation was somewhat corrected when Sena minister Suresh Prabhu was given the power portfolio. But the Sena continues to be unhappy with the shoddy treatment being meted out to it by Mr Vajpayee. Thus it has not missed any opportunity to embarrass Mr Vajpayee through its MPs like Sanjay Nirupam. Recently, Mr Thackeray had even talked of cutting of ties with the BJP.

A BJP leader said if the Sena felt so strongly about issues like Kashmir, talks with Pakistan and the UTI controversy then it should pull out of the government. "It cannot continue to be a part of the government and still criticise it. The Sena should not forget that former constituents of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) like the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) and Trinamul Congress are keen on returning to the NDA fold," he added.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

11/18

BJP leaders slam economic policies

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 27. — More than a dozen BJP leaders took the Centre to task today for its economic policies that had brought unemployment, industrial slowdown and the GDP's reduced growth.

Even some Union ministers criticised the government for the farmers' plight. The party's national executive that began its two day conclave seemed to be one in attacking the government for the UTI fiasco.

The finance minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha, and the disinvestment minister, Mr Arun Shourie, intervened during the discussion on the draft econom-

ic resolution and clarified the Centre's position on UTI and disinvestment. Mr Sinha assured that the government would settle the problems of two crore investors of US-64 by next January.

Meanwhile, Mr Shourie lambasted the critics of the Centre's disinvestment policy and said the situation was very bad as there were no buyers. He had already decided to furnish all details about any disinvestment decision available to the CAG for review and report to the Parliament.

The Chhattisgarh chief minister, Mr Ajit Jogi, had backed out after alleging kickbacks in the Balco deal, he added.

Sensing the mood of the party cadre in general, the BJP in consultation with Mr Yashwant Sinha had prepared a hard hitting economic resolution that said everything but spared the government of a direct attack.

Some executive members, however, went beyond it and sought explanations from the government on sensitive economic issues.

But the Union minister, Mr Ananth Kumar, and the Bihar Assembly's Opposition leader, Mr Sushil Kumar Modi, reportedly appealed for caution and wanted the resolution toned down. They argued that a message shouldn't go down that the party was censuring the gov-

ernment. Mr Jagdish Shettigar, who moved the resolution, was later asked to make a few changes to the draft. About 20 leaders spoke on the resolution.

The draft reportedly suggested that the government should investigate the connections between private corporations and UTI. It also said mutual funds shouldn't be invested in private companies and talked about making investments.

It was the senior BJP leader, Mr KR Malkani, who criticised the Centre over the UTI debate. He is known for being pro-swadeshi and anti-USA. He demanded that the government should do everything to restore

people's confidence on the UTI as this was the only mutual fund on which investors had complete trust.

US-64's failure would create problems for fund mobilisation, Mr Malkani reportedly said while pointing out that small investors had very few opportunities for good investment due to the already reduced interest rates on fixed deposits.

Mr TN Chaturvedi also expressed concern for the UTI crisis and said small investors weren't getting fair treatment and pointed out to the way the NBFCs used to dupe them followed by the plantation companies.

He also questioned the role of

FIIs in making the market volatile.

The Union minister for textiles, Mr Kashiram Rana, demanded that the government should take quick decisions to allow free movement of food-grains to help farmers get better price.

Pointing to the farmers' plight due to the bumper crop, he said the central government must evolve a mechanism to ensure

that the state governments paid the minimum support price announced by the Centre. The FCI was also deliberately lowering the category of rice, causing hardship and disenchantment among farmers, he added.

THE S
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BJP for tough steps to avoid UTI rerun

29/7
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HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 28

IN THE economic resolution adopted by its national executive, the BJP today expressed serious concern over the UTI fiasco and urged the Government to take immediate corrective steps such as strict vigil on financial institutions.

The party demanded that mutual funds like UTI should be barred from investing in private placement of shares at prices higher than those prevailing in the market.

It also called for a thorough probe into the nexus between the corporate sector and the UTI besides the investment decisions of financial institution in the last 10 years.

The resolution, which had to be redrafted after widespread criticism on the issue by members yesterday, also suggested that the UTI be brought within the ambit of Sebi guidelines to make its transactions more transparent and accountable.

Besides, the Sebi must be empowered along the lines of the Securities Exchange Commission of the US, it stated.

"The recent crash of the US-64 Scheme has shaken the confidence of around two crore small investors, endangering resource mobilisation efforts for development purposes," the document noted while underlining the need for immediate steps to restore the investor confidence.

In a brief intervention during the discussion on the issue yesterday, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha had told the members that a probe into the UTI muddle was on and those

PM DEFENDS YASHWANT

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee on Saturday brushed aside the allegation made by former UTI chief PS Subramanyam's counsel against the Finance Minister on the issue of Cyberspace investment.

"Are you going to believe him (Subramanyam's counsel)?" Vajpayee asked reporters.

PTI, New Delhi

found guilty would not be spared.

He also denied that there was any political pressure on the UTI to influence its investment decisions.

The national executive also expressed concern over the slowdown in the economy, partly due to the overall sluggishness in the world economy and partly due to systemic weaknesses.

Drawing the Government's attention to the decline in the purchasing power of farmers, the party asked it to check this tendency by reverting the falling prices of agricultural produce, reducing cost of farming operations and protecting the agricultural sector from the threat of imports.

There was an urgent need for the Government to deplete its overflowing food stocks, it was felt.

For this, it could also examine the possibility of cutting the issue price of PDS food-grains for below poverty line (BPL) families in the same way as the issue prices for the above poverty line (APL) families had recently been reduced.

19 Jul 2000

NEED TO REVISE 'AUTOMATIC CABINET BERTHS': KRISHNAMURTHI

Shed 'Opposition mindset', Advani tells BJP cadre

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, JULY 29. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, has asked the BJP cadre to shed the 'Opposition mindset' and remember the responsibility of being members of the ruling party even as the party president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, warned that the "credibility of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) would be affected" unless the business of "automatic Cabinet berths" to all entrants is revised.

Speaking at the concluding day of the BJP's three-day national executive committee meeting here today, Mr. Advani is reported to have asked the party to "modernise", ensure that its cadre is "in-

tellektualised," and make its functioning "more scientific".

Later, senior BJP leaders said that by "modernise" Mr. Advani did not mean modernising the ideology (which some see as conservative and even anachronistic), but modernising to respond to the changing times when news travels fast and the party has to respond quickly to critical situations.

Mr. Advani stressed that over the 50 years of its life since the Jan Sangh was born in 1951, the party had progressed to become the largest even as "all other political parties" had shrunk or become insignificant. The Congress had lost its mass base and the Com-

munist party, which had occupied the second position, was now "limited to two or three States". But, with its emergence as the ruling party the BJP was facing "new challenges and responsibilities".

Mr. Krishnamurthi's view was "entry into the NDA should not mean automatic Cabinet berths". And this has been conveyed to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, who has to take the final decision.

Making it clear that the BJP did not want to dictate to the NDA, Mr. Krishnamurthi reiterated today what he had spelt out in his presidential address to the executive meeting: that it was for the

NDA to fix "norms" for "re-entry" of those constituents who had left the ruling coalition a few months ago "for their own purposes". He also made it clear that he was not talking specifically about the PMK or the Trinamool Congress, but "in general" to safeguard the "credibility of the NDA". He was certain "this subject will come up" for discussion at the next NDA meeting.

Briefing reporters later, Mr. Krishnamurthi said he was pleased with the "free and frank" discussions on important issues at the executive committee meeting, and "criticism" by the many members who participated should be seen as "feedback" to the Government. "It was not like criticism coming from an Opposition party." The party was the interface between the Government and the people.

"The party did not hesitate to place its views before the executive" in the presence of the Prime Minister and other Ministers, and Ministers were able to explain Government decisions, he said. "Both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister welcomed the frank articulation of views by the members".

Acknowledging the "problems" faced by the economy, Mr. Krishnamurthi hoped the Government would heed the suggestions made by the party. There should be a move away from producing larger quantities of food to focus on "quality" for exports to establish the India brand in view of the problem of surplus foodgrain and crashing domestic prices. While there should be no swerving away from the path of liberalisation, there was a need for an assessment of 10 years of liberalisation to enable corrections, where necessary.

The party would set up a committee to decide how best to celebrate the "golden jubilee" of the founding of the Jan Sangh, from which the BJP was born, on October 21.

I intend to 'finish' SP, BSP before polls: Rajnath

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 29. The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh, has expressed his determination to "finish" the Samajwadi Party (SP) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) — the Bharatiya Janata Party's rivals in the State — before the next Assembly election.

Speaking on the sidelines of the BJP national executive committee meeting here on Saturday, Mr. Singh said he was planning to hold the election in February 2002, and before that "workers of the SP and the BSP will be tearing their hair in public and running away" as "I intend to finish the two parties."

He, however, did not elaborate. But, his rivals are certain to interpret this as a threat to physically eliminate the leadership of the two parties. In the aftermath of the SP MP, Phoolan Devi's murder, the party president, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, had alleged that Mr. Singh was conspiring to "eliminate" senior SP leaders.

"Deliberate reduction" of security cover to leaders of main Opposition parties by the BJP-led Uttar Pradesh Government was mentioned by him as a pointer to the "conspiracy."

To counter this, Mr. Singh criticised what he described as an "attempt by the SP to politicise the murder of Phoolan Devi" and warned "this will bo-

merang on the SP" as evidence on who really killed her comes out before the people.

Clearly, there is the view that while the Phoolan Devi murder would shore up 'thakur' support for the party (Mr. Singh himself is a 'thakur'), the party would ensure that the fall out did not lead to a consolidation of the backward castes in favour of the SP.

He was confident that the "caste-based" parties of Mr. Yadav and Ms. Mayawati, general secretary of the BSP, had already been pushed into a corner by his declared intention to provide reservations for the "most backward castes" and the "most oppressed among the Dalits."

In short, his intention is to snatch the very platform of "social justice" that had allowed these parties to flourish. His was not an election gimmick, but an attempt to "correct the imbalance" that had allowed the more dominant castes among the backward castes and the Scheduled Castes to corner benefits that should have gone to the weakest and most disadvantaged, he said.

The Uttar Pradesh election scene was also discussed at the BJP meeting yesterday. The State unit president, Mr. Kalraj Mishra, gave details of the effort made by the party to reach the people through its programmes. The party national president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, today said he would visit the State for four days from August 21 to meet "key party workers" from 10 Assembly constituencies each day.

THE HINDU
30 JUL 2001

No immediate berths for new entrants, says Jana

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 29. — The BJP President, Mr K Jana Krishnamurthy, today hardened his position on norms for entry or re-entry of parties in the NDA government. and said that there should be a waiting period for joining the Union Cabinet for new entrants. Mr Krishnamurthy is apparently encouraged by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's endorsement on his stand about the norms.

In Bhubaneswar today, Mr Vajpayee parried a question on Trinamul's re-entry to the NDA while speaking to reporters after making an aerial survey of the flood hit areas in Orissa. He, however, appreciated Mr Krishnamurthy's view that norms should be evolved on entry or re-entry of any party to the NDA. It's a good suggestion and we are already working on that basis, he said.

This complements the stand of many NDA parties which don't want the Trinamul to directly join the Cabinet. There has been a feeling that the Trinamul chief, Miss Mamata Banerjee, should not be given a berth of her choice even if she was allowed to join the NDA.

A Union Cabinet minister told The Statesman that like the PMK, the Trinamul should be allowed entry into the NDA only on the condition that it wouldn't be immediately accommodated in the government.

Mr Krishnamurthy said his suggestion wasn't given to keep the Trinamul out of the government. It was intended to create a mechanism to increase the credibility of the

NDA. He refused to state the duration of the wait for such parties and said it was for the NDA to evolve a formula. He also denied that his suggestion was in any way coming in the way of the Prime Minister's prerogative on who to induct in the Cabinet.

Parties leaving the NDA and rejoining it would make a poor spectacle and could give a message that they were in the NDA only for getting into power, he said. What the NDA would decide would be applicable to all, including the Trinamul if it sought a re-entry, he added.

Mr Krishnamurthy created a sensation by giving the call in his presidential speech to create norms for entry or reentry of parties into the NDA. However, his stand was appreciated by the Prime Minister who welcomed it and said the NDA would try to create such norms. By talking about norms when the Trinamul is reportedly seeking a re-entry into the NDA, both leaders have tried to placate hardliners within the party who have been unhappy with Miss Banerjee for leaving the NDA during the Tehelka crisis and for refusing to align with the NDA for the West Bengal Assembly elections.

A senior BJP leader admitted that Mr Krishnamurthy's strongly worded statement had sent a positive signal to the BJP's West Bengal unit, which has been opposed to any truck with the Trinamul. The state unit leaders have told Mr Vajpayee and the party president that any relation with the Trinamul would endanger the BJP's long-term perspective in the state.

30 11 2007

Advani, Jana differ on right to differ

Move with the times, but don't speak against Govt'

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 29

L K ADVANI TODAY wound up a three-day conclave of the BJP, outlining a three-point action plan to rejuvenate the party. He suggested efforts be undertaken to "intellectualise" party workers, modernise its outlook and adopt a more "scientific" style of functioning in keeping with the "demand of the times".

Advani appealed to BJP cadres not to air their criticisms of the Government or the party in public, reminding them that they are workers of a ruling party and should shed their five-decade Opposition mindset.

Speaking in the absence of the Prime Minister, who normally delivers the concluding address to the BJP national executive, Advani said the BJP had a major responsibility as the largest political formation to identify and articulate the people's problems. Advani's remarks were preceded-

meet at Mussoorie recently. Krishnamurthy said the BJP leadership expected cadres to play a dual function.

As ruling party members, they must not only educate the people about the Government's role but also give the Government feedback about the public's views on its performance and image.

It was for this that party members did not hesitate to criticise the Government at fora like national executive, he pointed out.

In the economic resolution and the resolution on the North-east adopted at the conclave, the party openly voiced people's views on the Government.

The deliberations at the conclave reflected the BJP leadership's desire to re-orient the cadres at all levels to equip them for meeting the challenges faced by a ruling party rather than continue in the mindset of the Opposition, a role which they have been accustomed to play.

Apparently, the leadership is concerned that the rank and file have still not got used to the new situation and often act in a manner that causes problems and even embarrassment to the party.

Open criticism of the NDA Government's policy and actions or failure to act as a "bridge" between the party and the people are some of the common manifestations of this syndrome.



JANA KRISHNAMURTHY

cise the Government. He asserts that "a critical assessment of the government in party fora reflects inner-party democracy". He contends that there is a difference in criticism made by the Opposition and that by the ruling party.

"Criticism by the ruling party does not mean that it is against the government. It only shows that the BJP has a democratic set-up. If the party does not bring forward its views then what machinery does the government have to elicit the people's views?"

What has not changed is that Vajpayee continues to enjoy

unchallenged support from party leaders, who were thrilled to hear him give the lowdown on his meetings with Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf.

Vajpayee may keep saying that he will go to Pakistan but the BJP leaders are convinced that another summit is out of question unless there is a dramatic change on Pakistan's part to give up "the jehadi mentality".

L K Advani's elucidation of the summit after hard-hitting speeches by BJP leaders is taken as a good indication why another Agra is not possible in the near future. Vajpayee, however, did not intervene directly to answer criticism on economic issues even though he supported Yashwant Sinha on the UTI issue.

At the same time, there were no efforts to silence National Executive members, who were quite candid in their assessment of what they thought of the Government's performance on the economic front.

Krishnamurthy says the BJP will not give up liberalisation but wants a review of the impact of economic reforms, which began in 1991.

The crux of the crisis, as the BJP sees it, is that farmers are unable to dispose of their produce while government godowns are overflowing. Poor people in the villages do not have purchasing power, he says.

Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, July 29

'Criticism a sign of inner-party democracy'

CENTRAL MINISTERS may have been peeved at the open criticism of the UTI fiasco and the summit at the BJP National Executive meet but it is a sure sign that the party's relationship with the Government is changing.

Upset by the problems faced by the Government because of its failures, the BJP leadership has shown that it is adopting an assertive role for corrective steps to prevent further slide in its popularity.

For the first time since it came to power, a BJP conclave has come out with resolutions urging the Government to take specific steps to overcome the economic crisis, turn the tide in the North-East and set the tone for future India-Pakistan talks.

But BJP chief K Jana Krishnamurthy refuses to say BJP Government ties are changing. But he defends the party's right to criti-

BJP secretly satisfied at failure to sign declaration

By FARAZ AHMAD

New Delhi, July 17: Contrary to expectations there is a general feeling of satisfaction, if not outright jubilation among members of the Bharatiya Janata Party at the failure of the Indo-Pak summit held in Agra for the last three days.

There is also information doing the rounds that Union minister L.K. Advani and foreign minister Jaswant Singh prevented Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee from having given in to Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf.

Though most BJP leaders are avoiding saying this in so many words, some are willing to say off the record that prior to the summit here was serious worry and concern in the party and the Sangh circles over the possibility of Mr Vajpayee giving away something and then the National Democratic Alliance and the BJP regretting it later.

It is likely that the after the BJP

national executive meeting scheduled for the end of this month, the party may go to the Uttar Pradesh polls on the slogan that this is the first occasion when an Indian Prime Minister did not lose on the negotiating table what it gained on the ground, "ground" referring to India's victory at Kargil.

The Lahore Declaration signed jointly by present Mr Vajpayee and former Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif seems however to be a sore point that the BJP would rather skip over.

Given this reaction it now transpires that the Advani-Musharraf meeting held on July 14, where Mr Advani persisted with his demand for the extradition of Dawood Ibrahim to the chagrin of the Pakistani delegation, and the Sushma Swaraj decision to address the media were not off the cuff remarks but part of a well thought out plan.

In fact sources close to Ms Swaraj insisted that she had the

clearance for this from the top.

It however made very little sense that the Prime Minister would attempt to sabotage the talks, conceded some sections in the party, leaving only two men at the "top" who had the means to do so — Mr Advani and Mr Jaswant Singh.

BJP sources said that contrary to the impression that the decision to invite Gen. Musharraf was jointly taken by Mr Vajpayee, Mr Advani and Mr Jaswant Singh, it seems that the invitation was an independent decision by the Prime Minister.

There was general consternation and bewilderment in the party circles as soon as the BJP got to know of this. The BJP and the Centre however soon set about on a corrective exercise and Mr Advani and Mr Jaswant Singh were apparently delegated by the BJP to ensure first that there be as little as possible any one-to-one meeting between Mr Vajpayee and Gen. Musharraf.

BJP calls meeting of its CMs on July 10

By Neena Vyas

HD-13 ✓

NEW DELHI, JULY 4. Worried about the political impact of the economic slowdown — with two State Assembly elections ahead early next year — the Bharatiya Janata Party president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, has called a meeting of the party's Chief Ministers in five States on July 10. The Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha, is scheduled to attend the meeting.

Although the party has been denying that the mismatch between the demand and supply position in foodgrains — the farmers had to resort to distress sales with granaries overflowing and no buyer for their produce and those depending on the public distribution system had to pay

higher prices for foodgrain, only marginally lower than the market prices, if at all — the fact is that the BJP is rather ill at ease with what has been happening.

Mr. Krishnamurthi decided to hear at first hand from the Chief Ministers what the ground situation was. And more importantly, what should be done to try and change the situation for the better. That explains why Mr. Sinha has been called.

Since this meeting will be held ahead of the party's national executive committee planned for three days from July 18 in Amritsar, it is expected that the party will be able to draw up a concrete plan which could be adopted at the executive committee meeting.

Another important issue worrying the party is the impact of free

imports under WTO on agriculturists, small and medium industrialists and entrepreneurs and the dumping of cheap Chinese goods. The recent news that the overall growth rate last year was less than expected — just 5.2 per cent — and persistent reports of economic slowdown this year has added to the party's worries. For these issues, even if not highlighted by parties, would create a general discontent which could affect the party's popularity and poll prospects.

The Chief Ministers of Uttar Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Gujarat, Uttaranchal and Jharkhand are expected to attend, and they have already been briefed about what the agenda of the meeting will be.

BJP sees resounding win in Jaya's retreat

Shekhar Iyer
New Delhi, July 3

JAYALALITHA'S DECISION to back off from a confrontation with the Centre on the issue of arrest of two Union Ministers is a feather in the NDA's cap since its aborted bid to display its might in Laloo Prasad Yadav's Bihar.

Senior BJP leaders say the Centre has been able to assert its authority to convey a message that it would not tolerate any attempt by a State Government to go against the rule of law. By issuing a strongly worded advisory to Tamil Nadu to take action against civil and police

officials involved in the arrest of Karunanidhi, the Centre has sent a warning to the bureaucracy too against "partisan and arbitrary" action.

Secondly, the BJP, as the main party in the NDA, has been able to come to the rescue of an ally, the DMK.

Senior BJP leaders said several DMK figures had begun to acknowledge the role of the party in saving their leaders from an ordeal of their lifetime. "This episode has cemented the BJP-DMK ties and strengthened the NDA," said a top BJP functionary.

Jayalalitha's decision to drop cases against Union Ministers

Murasoli Maran and T R Baalu in the wake of Damocles' sword of Article 356 was not a tactical move but a belated realisation that she could take on the Centre, another BJP functionary said.

With a Chennai magistrate also coming down heavily on the police for violating established norms in the arrest of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M Karunanidhi, even more harsher indictment from higher Courts against Jayalalitha were on the cards, BJP leaders said.

Many BJP leaders could not help complimenting the NDA managers, who were in charge of

the crisis management since Karunanidhi was literally dragged out of his home last Saturday.

They said the NDA's threat of non-release of Union Ministers and withdrawal of charges had an "electrifying" impact on the AIADMK chief, who found herself in a trap of her own making.

While BJP chief K Jana Krishnamurthi was the first leader to talk of the possibility of President's rule, NDA convenor George Fernandes, Law Minister Arun Jaitley and Rural Development Minister M Venkaiah Naidu came out with a theory on immunity for Union Min-

isters against arrest for any offence.

They held that even if Jayalalitha's version of events was to be taken for an argument's sake, her government had no business to arrest Maran and Baalu. She should have only forwarded a complaint to the Prime Minister for action.

According to a Union Minister, Jayalalitha's predicament was all too apparent when a delegation of the AIADMK leaders met Law Minister Arun Jaitley on Monday. They reportedly wanted an early end to the impasse as confrontation with the Centre was not on Jayalalitha's agenda.

Without mincing words, Jaitley told Tamil Nadu Law Minister C Ponnaiyan that there was no alternative other than to release the Ministers and drop all charges.

Although the AIADMK delegation conveyed to Jaitley that the Ministers would be released, only after the NDA co-ordination panel demanded that Jayalalitha also withdraw charges against the Ministers, she decided to back out.

The AIADMK leaders as well as the State bureaucracy were told that the consequences for the Jayalalitha Government would be serious once the Cabinet met on Tuesday.

BJP sees 'anarchy' in T.N., Cong. flays call for President's rule

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 2. The release of the two Union Ministers in Chennai did little to prevent the BJP and the Congress from taking up the cudgels for their allies. Mr. Venkaiah Naidu, Union Minister for Rural Development, issued an oblique warning saying that the Centre was studying the situation and would 'act appropriately at the appropriate time and it will not be too late'.

The Congress called for a code of conduct for Union Ministers visiting the States.

The Congress once again voiced its opposition to the demands for the imposition of President's rule in Tamil Nadu. In its view, the incidents in the State did not amount to breakdown of "the constitutional machinery". The party chided those making such a demand. "Those making such a demand are neither being impartial nor objective," said the party spokesperson, Mr. Jaipal Reddy.

He also referred to the video tape released by the Tamil Nadu police and said that it "showed that there was more than one side to the story". The party, however, refused to be drawn into the issue of the release of the two Ministers. "We are not interested in getting

into the charges against the two Union Ministers."

The BJP, on the other hand, came down heavily on the AIADMK Government. Speaking to newsmen at the party headquarters, Mr. Venkaiah Naidu described the situation in Tamil Nadu as 'anarchic'. The Centre, according to Mr. Naidu, was duty-bound to ensure that the rule of law prevailed and "would not be a silent spectator and allow anarchy to prevail in the State."

Mr. Naidu said the decision to arrest the two Ministers had brought the State Government in confrontation with the Centre. If such a situation was allowed to prevail no Union Minister would be safe.

The Government's decision to recall Ms. Fathima Beevi also came in for severe criticism from the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP). Its general secretary and former Solicitor-General, Mr. Devendra Dwivedi, described the decision as a 'retrograde development'. He also charged the Vajpayee-led NDA Government with 'subverting the Constitutional and political process for short-term partisan personal ends'.

Describing the developments in Tamil Nadu as "competitive irresponsibility", Mr. Dwivedi

also regretted that Ms. Jayalithaa, who was herself a victim of vendetta, had resorted to the same methods. However Mr. Dwivedi saw little merit in the NDA's charge that the arrests amounted to breakdown of the Constitutional machinery. He pointed out that under the Constitution only the President and Governor enjoyed legal immunity.

Picking holes in the NDA case, Mr. Dwivedi said the two were not arrested while discharging their duties as Union Ministers and the validity of the charges against them had to be decided by the courts and not the Central Government. He also pointed out that under the Constitution, the State Governments were not subordinate to the Centre nor was it the duty of the Central Government to supervise the working of the States. The Supreme Court had observed "that the States were as sovereign in their sphere as the Central Government."

Mr. Dwivedi also questioned the right of the Union Government to issue a directive to the State Government. "There is no scope for adventurism in the Constitution nor is there a provision for the Centre to direct the States," the NCP leader added.

BJP decries opportunism among NDA

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, JULY 27. For the first time since the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government came to power, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has expressed disapproval of the manner in which the NDA has functioned — with its constituents leaving it for their own purposes, and then seeking to re-enter as unceremoniously.

This is being seen as an indirect attack on the style of functioning of the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, who apparently did not consult either his party or the other parties involved on taking back the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) into the NDA.

A senior BJP leader in the Government confirmed that the party's Tamil Nadu unit was unhappy with the reinduction of the PMK, and that Mr. Vajpayee had telephoned the DMK leader and former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Mr. M. Karunanidhi, on Thursday, a day after the PMK's entry into the NDA was announced.

The BJP's stance has so far been that it was for the NDA to decide, but now it has signalled

that as a "major part" of the grouping, it had the right to be consulted.

"Certain norms" need to be put in place to regulate the behaviour of NDA constituents, and this is exactly what the BJP president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, suggested today in his opening address at the party's three-day national executive committee meeting here.

In his 11-page address which touched upon the Agra summit, the Tamil Nadu drama, the Manipur crisis and the troubled economy, Mr. Krishnamurthi left none in doubt that he was not too happy with the manner in which some NDA constituents had "left us before the State Assembly elections", thus raising doubts about the NDA's stability, and then after "achieving the purpose for which they left" they were trying to re-enter.

He suggested that it would be in the "best interests of the NDA" if "certain norms are formulated for entry or re-entry of any party into the NDA".

Mr. Krishnamurthi's remarks perhaps reflect the party's disapproval of the reported demand for two Cabinet berths by the PMK as well as the suggestions that the Trinamool Con-

gress was also trying to drive a bargain with the Prime Minister. What was more, it was the BJP which had to put up with these unreliable and unstable alliances in the States.

On the Agra summit, the BJP chief made the point that the party stood solidly behind the Prime Minister's "peace offensive" on Kashmir, which included his invitation to the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf.

No one need feel sorry that the summit did not produce a declaration, and India neither feared talking to Pakistan, nor did it talk to that country with fear. India was capable of meeting any challenge to it from any quarter, he asserted, in an indirect reference to the cross-border terrorism inspired by Pakistan.

Mr. Krishnamurthi did not forget to criticise the "deliberate flouting" of diplomatic courtesies by the guest from Pakistan and his "parrot-like" repetition that "Kashmir is the core issue".

And finally, the BJP reminded all that democratic India was bound by the 1996 Parliament resolution on Kashmir, asserting that the whole of Jammu and Kashmir was an indivisible and inalienable part of India.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

Declare 2001 J&K census void: RSS

BY OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, July 1: The national executive of the RSS asked the Centre on Sunday to declare the 2001 census in Jammu and Kashmir as "null and void," alleging that figures were manipulated and fabricated. It also blamed the state government for its dubious role in the census. It has also urged the government to prepare a national register of citizens, issue identity cards to all citizens and send back all infiltrators from Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The national executive which was held at Kanpur, adopted a resolution to express concern over the 'grave bungling' and 'manipulations' in the latest census in the

Kashmir valley and said this was nothing short of a conspiracy to legitimise the injustice perpetrated on the people of Jammu and Ladakh. It also urged the Centre to expose those behind the fudging of figures. The resolution said it seemed that the census figures were prepared without surveying the people.

"The active involvement of the state

government in the fraud could not be ruled out." Pointing out that the census in 1991 could not be held in the state in the wake of extraordinary circumstances, the resolution said the difference between figures of 1981 and 2001 census was just unbelievable. As per the figures, population in the valley

jumped to 54.41 lakh in 2001, representing an enormous increase of 73.5 per cent over 31.54 lakh in 1981. Population in Jammu, on the other hand, went up to 43.95 lakh from 27.18 lakh, showing a rise of just 43.95 per cent. The all India increase during the period was 50.3 percent, the resolution

pointed out.

After 1991, there had been forced

migration of approximately 2.5 lakh Hindus from the valley and most of them had settled in Jammu. Besides, over 35,000 Muslims from border areas had migrated to Jammu, the resolution said. The figures showed that population in Kupwara district increased by 95 per cent between

1981 and 2001, whereas it rose by just 47.4 per cent in the Hindu majority district of Kathua in Jammu. "These discrepancies clearly prove that figures were manipulated and fabricated," the resolution alleged.

Another resolution adopted on "challenge to national security" at the concluding session of the two-day meeting of the national executive, urged the government to ensure that the incidents like Bangladesh rifles invasion and the gruesome murder of 17 soldiers in Pyrdiwah and Boraiwadi in Meghalaya should not be repeated. The executive also demanded the Centre to tighten measures so that madarasas and masjids are not allowed to be used as hide-outs by mischievous elements.

KANPUR MEET

THE HINDU

BJP charges Jaya with violating human rights

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

CHENNAI, July 1. - The BJP today came out strongly against the Tamil Nadu chief minister, Miss Jayalalitha, accusing her of violating human rights following the manner in which the former chief minister, Mr M Karunanidhi, had been arrested.

Moreover, by arresting two Union ministers, Mr Murasoli Maran and Mr TR Baalu, the chief minister has also gone against Constitutional norms, the BJP president, Mr Jana Krishnamurthy said here today.

Speaking to reporters after attending the state executive meeting of the party, Mr Krishnamurthy said the happenings yesterday were "most unfortunate and deserved all condemnation." The chief minister has brought to nought all democratic norms, he said. He also said, all the political parties should support efforts to discipline the Jayalalitha government which had upset the "delicate Constitutional balance" between the Centre and the states.

Mr Krishnamurthy said the NDA and the Vajpayee cabinet would take a decision on the future course of action in Tamil Nadu "in a day or two." Asked about the option of imposing President's rule in Tamil Nadu, the BJP chief said the Supreme Court in the SR Bommai case had not barred the imposition of President's rule in a state, but only ruled that such a decision should have the consent of both the Houses of Parliament. "If the Congress, (which has come down heavily on the Jayalalitha government following yesterday's incidents) changes its stand and if the Opposition parties extend their support to the party, then imposition of President's rule was not difficult anywhere in the country, including TN."

Karunanidhi's mother-in-law dies

CHENNAI, July 1. - It was a sad day for the Karunanidhi household at Oliver Road in the heart of the city. While the members of the family, including the former chief minister's wife, Mrs Rajathi Ammal, and their daughter, Kanimozhi, were still to recover from the trauma of their father's arrest, they had to face yet another sad news - the passing away of Mrs Rajathi Ammal's 80-year-old mother, Sowbhagyam, this morning. - SNS

Asked if the situation in Tamil Nadu warranted the invoking of Art 356 of the Constitution for dismissing the 48-day-old AIA-DMK government, the BJP chief said: "It may not be there in the conventional sense of breach of law and order. But this government has chosen to do what no other state had dared to do so far, - arresting two Central ministers. By this, the government has upset the delicate Constitutional balance between the Centre and the states by choosing to defy the Constitutional norms and traditions. Constitution will protect only those who protect the Constitution."

Earlier, the BJP state executive held an emergency meeting and demanded dismissal of the Jayalalitha government invoking Art 356. The resolution said that police had behaved in "brutal manner" assaulting Mr Karunanidhi and others, including the womenfolk in their homes. If a person who had been the state's chief minister for 12 years could be treated thus, then no one was safe in the present regime, the state BJP said.

BJP to appoint state watchdogs

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, June 20: In what is being seen as a wake-up call to its Lok Sabha MPs, the BJP has announced its decision to appoint *pramukhs* who will oversee the working of one or a cluster of three to five parliamentary constituencies.

The *pramukh* will be appointed by the Central leadership and not the state units.

The decision was taken today in a meeting of *prabaris* (in-charge) of various states, chaired by BJP president K. Jana Krishnamurthy.

Although the official explanation in a press statement, issued by general secretary Maya Singh, for taking this decision was to "strengthen the party organisation and make it more viable at all levels in the next few months", BJP sources said the concept of appointing *pramukhs* was primarily to enable central leaders to get feedback and inputs on the goings-on in the states through their hand-picked nominees rather than state leaders.

The *pramukhs*, sources said, will be in a "better position" to give a more "objective" assessment of the political scenario since they were expected to remain aloof from the factional feuds that plague the BJP.

"They will act as coordinators and facilitators between the state and the Central high command," explained a BJP functionary. The decision, sources said, came about after the situation in Uttar Pradesh was sized up after last week's working committee meeting in Saharanpur.

It was felt that given the "factional feuds" among Uttar Pradesh's big four — chief minister Rajnath Singh, his Cabinet col-

leagues Om Prakash Singh and Lalji Tandon and state BJP president Kalraj Mishra — it is "virtually impossible" for the high command to get an honest picture of what exactly is happening in the state.

"Without this we cannot accurately plan our strategies and issues for the Assembly elections," sources said.

The *pramukh*, who is expected to get a bird's eye view of the parliamentary constituency that he has been assigned, will also be in a position to take stock of the Assembly segments as well, sources said.

"He or she will be able to tell us objectively what our strengths and weaknesses are and what those of our opponents are, which social sections have turned away from us and why," they added.

The decision was also perceived as a means of raising an alternate structure of leadership because by the BJP's own admission, most of its state units have been unable to throw up strong leaders after the existing ones have moved to the Centre.

Sources said if, in the central high command's view, a certain *pramukh* does his job well, he may stand a chance of contesting the elections from the very constituency he has supervised.

It was also decided at today's meeting that active members should be identified and after being duly trained, involved more closely in party work.

The state in-charges have also been directed to organise units of the front organisations and cells — like the farmers' morcha, mahila morcha, youth morcha down to the lowest tier of the BJP structure — and activate them.

Manipur BJP and Samata at loggerheads again

HT Correspondent
Imphal, June 5

STATE UNITS of the BJP and the Samata Party, likely to meet at the negotiating table to form the Imphal Municipal Council, are at loggerheads again.

This time, the BJP's State president Meinam Bhorot and former Chief Minister Radhabinod Kojiam, who is also leader of the state Samata Party are fighting it out in court. Hearing for the election petitions filed against Kojiam began yesterday at the Imphal Bench of the Gauhati High Court. Justice PG Agrawal is heading the hearing.

The court has fixed June 6 for the next session of hearing. Three candidates from the Thangmeibandh constituency defeated by Kojiam in the last Assembly polls in February 2000, including Meinam Bhorot of the BJP, Dr Sharat of the Federal Party of Manipur and N Binoy of the Manipur State Congress Party, have filed a petition challenging Kojiam's election.

The petitioners said Kojiam had bought the votes of certain voters and alleged improper counting for two polling booths, 9/29 and 9/33. Kojiam, elected on

3 rebels killed, 5 cops hurt in Assam encounter

THREE HARDCORE Ulfa militants were killed while five policemen were injured, one seriously, in an encounter at Dholajan Phatagaon area in Jorhat district on Monday.

Police said militants opened fire from automatic weapons when a patrol party raided a house, where ultras were suspected to be hiding. Three ultras were killed in the encounter.

During the gun battle, which lasted nearly an hour, five policemen were injured including one seriously who was rushed to the Assam Medical College in nearby Dibrugarh.

One AK-47 rifle, a Chinese pistol, two grenades and over 200 rounds of ammunition besides documents were recovered from the spot.

PTI

a Congress ticket, polled 5,983 votes while Meinam Bhorot Singh who was contesting as a BJP candidate got 5,120 votes. The Samata party and the BJP have begun trying to strike an alliance of its elected councillors to form the Imphal Municipal Council.

The apparent friendliness follows instructions from NDA leaders at the Centre after the two parties failed to form a new Government in the State. The Samata Party secured seven seats while the BJP won five in the May 26 Imphal Municipal Council polls. There are 27 seats in the IMC.

The poll produced a hung ver-

dict. The Samata wants to follow the NDA line. "Whether the BJP agrees to the proposal or not depends on it," the Samata president said. However, sources close to the BJP president said the party had also been given the go-ahead to form the IMC. O Lohrii, president of the Samata Party in Manipur has written to his BJP counterpart Meinam Bhorot asking him to spell out his party's stand at the earliest.

The Samata Party's alliance initiative is a result of instructions of its Central leaders. If the two parties come together in the civic body that will be the first such instance in the State.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES
6 2 2000

BJP, SAMATA LEADERS TO MEET ON MAY 28

Manipur stalemate persists

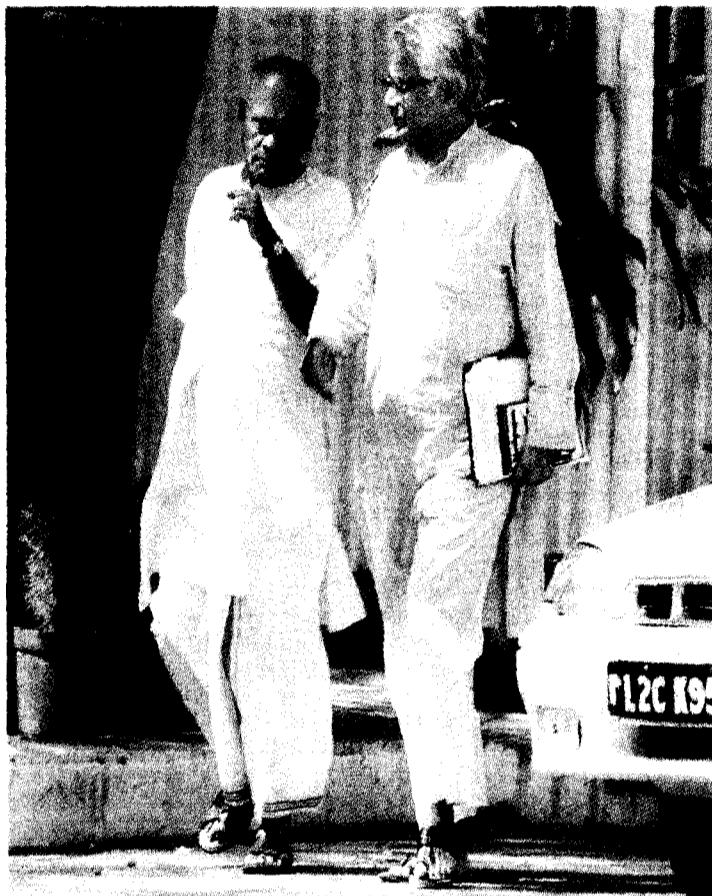
By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 22. The high-level meeting between the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and the Samata Party leader and NDA convener, Mr. George Fernandes, today produced no tangible resolution of the stand-off between the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Samata, even as in Manipur, 41 MLAs formed a new front and waiting to stake claim to form a government under the leadership of Mr. R. K. Dorendra Singh, BJP legislature party leader.

The meeting at the Prime Minister's residence was also attended by the BJP president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, and the BJP in-charge of the Northeast, Mr. Padmanabha Acharya. Another meeting would be held on May 28 here between the two parties with two State leaders from each party participating to project the ground realities.

After the meeting, Mr. Fernandes virtually conceded that no headway had been made. "No specific formula was discussed, we looked at the ground situation." Later the party spokesperson, Dr. Shambhu Shrivastawa, said the meeting had been unsatisfactory.

The "ground situation", BJP leaders said, was that the party had little or no control over its MLAs in Manipur. As for the rest, the Samata leaders continued to sulk but refrained from issuing threats to the National Democratic Alliance or to other State governments led by the BJP which



The Samata Party leader, Mr. George Fernandes, and the BJP president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, coming out of the Prime Minister's residence after a meeting on the Manipur issue in New Delhi on Tuesday. — Photo: Shanker Chakravarty

they support. At the BJP headquarters, the distinct feeling was that the party was keen on seeing another government take over in Manipur. Mr. Acharya rejected

the idea of imposing President's rule in the State — one of the compromise options apparently acceptable to the Samata. "If MLAs group together and form a front which has a majority and which can give a stable government, why should there be President's rule?" Mr. Acharya justified the formation of a new government quoting the Constitution, democratic principles and even people's mandate, while ignoring the disease of defections.

The signal from the BJP seemed to be that while it would not like to see a new government in Manipur sporting a BJP label (to replace the ousted Samata government), it did not mind its MLAs giving themselves a new party label and then staking claim.

The party was also not inclined to take any disciplinary action against its MLAs for defying the

whip. The BJP leadership continued to insist that a whip ordering its 26 party MLAs to vote in support of the Kojiam Government, which fell on Monday, was issued. But, Mr. Narendra Modi, general secretary, added that perhaps the whip "did not reach all the MLAs. We do not know how successful our man was in issuing the whip to all party MLAs."

Clearly, the Samata was not satisfied with the outcome of the meeting. Dr. Shrivastawa harped on the "main issue" — "breach of

New political front floated

By Our Correspondent

IMPHAL, MAY 22. Hectic political activity is on in Manipur for the installation of an alternative Ministry after the defeat of the three-month-old People's Front Government of Mr. Radhabinod Kojiam on Monday.

A new political front — Progressive Democratic Alliance — headed by the BJP leader and former Chief Minister, Mr. R. K. Dorendra Singh, was formed this morning.

Legislators of the Manipur State Congress Party, the Federal Party of Manipur, the Nationalist Congress Party and the Janata Dal (Loken) along with the BJP MLAs are in the PDA.

BJP claim: Page 13

trust by the BJP" — and said before the confidence vote senior BJP leaders had assured Mr. Fernandes that the Kojiam Government would not be allowed to fall.

Sangma adds his bit

The Janata Dal(U) spokesperson, Mr. Mohan Prakash, suggested that an NDA team be sent to Imphal to unravel the mess. But it appears matters will remain much as they are till May 28 — and in Manipur those waiting to form the government may get restive and may not wait till then.

BJP chief warns Dorendra Singh

IMPHAL, MAY 22. The BJP national president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, today sternly warned the Manipur State party leader, Mr. R.K. Dorendra Singh, who had said that he was awaiting the nod from the Central party leadership to form a new Ministry, and forbade any BJP legislator in Manipur to join a new Ministry.

In a letter to the BJP legislature leader, Mr. Dorendra Singh, the BJP national president said, "I am given to understand that you are trying to form a Ministry under your chief ministership. Kindly note that no BJP MLA should approach the Governor to form a government and no MLA of ours should join any Ministry.

"If anyone tries to join a Ministry he should resign from the BJP before doing so or otherwise he will have to face the consequences," Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi warned in his letter released to the press here. He pilloried party legislators in the State for voting against the People's Front Ministry headed by Mr. Radhabinod Kojiam on the floor of the House yesterday. Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi said "we have clearly instructed you and other MLAs of the BJP to vote for confidence vote. It has not been followed." — PTI

THE HINDU

23 MAY 2001

BJP review session begins

UNITED NEWS OF INDIA

MUSSOORIE, May 20. — The BJP national office bearers today commenced their two-day brainstorming session to review the party's poll reverses in the Assembly elections to four states and Pondicherry and formulate a strategy for forthcoming Assembly polls.

The focus would be on Uttar Pradesh, where elections are due later this year or early next year.

The session, chaired by party president, Mr K Jana Krishnamurthy, is being held after the BJP came out with its seven-step formula to rejuvenate the party at the grassroots level. Union home minister, Mr LK Advani is expected to attend the meeting later today.

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The state units in the four states and one Union Territory that went to the polls, have been asked to submit a detailed assessment of the situation.

In Assam, the party said, the "tilting" of Ulfa guns in favour of the Congress was the main reason for the debacle of the AGP-BJP alliance. In Tamil Nadu, the party is likely to express its concerns about falling values.

The party has put up a brave face claiming the number of MLAs in the five states had gone up to 14 from eight. The stress, now, would be on formulating an effective strategy to rejuvenate the party in Uttar Pradesh, where the BJP has very high stakes.

Mr Krishnamurthy said there was nothing extraordinary about holding meetings at Mus-

soorie, a hill resort in Uttaranchal, as the party had already taken a policy decision to hold its meetings in smaller states.

The seven-point strategy finalised by the two day Jhunjholi session included recruiting more primary members to broaden the social and political base and training the cadres about basic party commitments enunciated in the Chennai declaration.

Central BJP leaders will undertake extensive tours to maximise interaction between the workers and leaders, Mr Krishnamurthy said. The BJP president also said the affairs of the NDA would not be discussed in the session, as the focus would be on the major partner in the alliance — the BJP.

On Manipur crisis, the BJP

chief said the problems with the Samata Party had been sorted out and the BJP would vote in favour of the government during tomorrow's confidence vote in Imphal. He said he had written to NDA convenor and Samata Party leader, Mr George Fernandes in this connection.

Mr Krishnamurthy said he would effect changes in the party's central office-bearers to tone up the BJP's organisational structure, adds PTI. The party general secretary, Mr Narendra Modi said the changes would take place "at the earliest." "I believe in the dictum that there is place and work for everyone of us. Our collective and cooperative efforts will see us through the present challenges in Indian political arena," he said.

THE STATESMAN

Centre must not extend ceasefire, says VHP
By Prafulla Das
BHUBANESWAR, MAY 20. The international vice-president of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, today said the Centre should not extend the unilateral ceasefire in Jammu and Kashmir.

"The Government was extending the ceasefire due to lack of confidence on its part. Ceasefire takes place between two countries, but not with militants," the VHP leader said at a press conference here.

He charged that the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government had not been able to contain ISI activities.

The BJP, though being the major NDA partner, was not able to take proper steps to curb ISI-backed terrorism "due to political compulsions," Mr. Kishore said.

Though he did not utter a word against the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, on curbing terrorism, he charged that the BJP was "compromising" with the country's security and trying to stay in power at any cost. The BJP

was not taking bold measures to stop cross-border terrorism as it was not getting full support from some of its allies, he said.

Expressing concern over the planting of bombs at the Red Fort, the South Block and the Sena Bhavan, he said this showed that the Government was not able to check ISI-sponsored terrorism.

Giving details of the damage caused by militants, arms and ammunition seized, loss of lives of civilians and defence personnel and the huge amount of money spent to curb terrorism in Jammu

Centre must not extend ceasefire, says VHP

was in regard to the controversial structure which had been demolished in December, 1992 and there was no other stay order in force at present, he said.

He urged the Centre to hand over to the VHP the land acquired after the demolition of the disputed structure. "Even if the Centre did not hand over the land, the VHP will go ahead with the construction."

Mr. Kishore said the VHP would not announce the day on which construction of the Ram temple would begin.

and Kashmir during the past three years, Mr. Kishore said the Government should act tough. The VHP leader expressed concern over the alleged supply of foreign funds to militant organisations through churches in the north-eastern States.

Ram temple

Reiterating that the VHP would start building the Ram temple at Ayodhya anytime after 'Shiv Ratri' next year, the VHP leader maintained that there was no stay on the construction. The court stay

21 MAY 2001

Atal ready to make room for Sangh

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, May 7: Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who has often tested the patience of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), seems to be mending fences with his alma mater.

Well-placed BJP sources said the Prime Minister appeared to be willing to "give in" to the Sangh's requests, barring a "bombshell" demand.

The sources said Vajpayee may induct Seshadri Chari, editor of the RSS mouthpiece, *Organiser*, as one of his media advisers. Chari is reportedly being backed for the job by the RSS veteran, H.V.

Seshadri. The Sangh elder has been regularly in touch with the Prime Minister ever since *sarsanghachalak* K.S. Sudarshan moved his base back to Nagpur from the capital.

But an issue that could become a sore point is the Sangh's move to step up pressure on Vajpayee to ease out finance minister Yashwant Sinha when the Cabinet is recast.

The Sangh is believed to be keen to replace Sinha with human resources development minister Murlidhar Joshi.

A section of the BJP is resisting the move, saying the finance minister's post was far too senior a position to be "compromised". "We respect Dattopantji, he is a

senior and learned person. But his direct attack on the finance minister did not go down well with us," said a BJP office-bearer, referring to the swadeshi ideologue and Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh founder Dattopant Thengadi's description of Sinha as a "criminal" at a recent rally in the capital.

"How can Sinha be blamed for the WTO (World Trade Organisation) which is within the purview of the commerce minister? How can he be faulted on agriculture matters when the person to be attacked is the agriculture minister or industrial policies for which the industry minister is directly responsible?" asked the BJP leader.

Sources said the BJP's view was that Vajpayee must not cave in to the demand to remove Sinha just because the Sangh's swadeshi lobby was unhappy with him.

"He was their nominee for the job in the first place. They fought tooth and nail to get him in as finance minister. The Prime Minister should not give in to their whims and fancies because, after all, he has presented so many budgets and seems well settled in the job," the BJP leader said.

Sinha was initially backed by the Sangh, which was instrumental in vetoing Vajpayee's original choice for finance, Jaswant Singh. But the Sangh started distancing itself from Sinha after it started

seeing a pro-reforms tilt in his policies and budget.

It is learnt that another RSS member and editor of Hindi mouthpiece *Panchajanya*, Tarun Vijay, is also interested in a slot in the Prime Minister's Office. But Vajpayee is not too keen as his journal has been extremely critical of the government of late, according to BJP sources.

Chari, on the other hand, has managed to do the balancing act by tempering criticism of the Centre's policies with the argument that a government has to maintain continuity in crucial spheres, whatever be the ruling party's ideology.

A former *pracharak* (wholtime), Chari was "loaned" to the

BJP in the eighties and became general secretary of the Mumbai unit. However, with the ascendancy of Pramod Mahajan in Maharashtra politics, Chari returned to the RSS and took over *Organiser* in 1993.

The RSS-BJP equation was one of the main subjects of discussion at a recent one-to-one luncheon between Vajpayee and home minister L.K. Advani.

BJP sources said both felt that a "stronger" bridge should be built between the Sangh and the government, mainly to dilute the RSS' periodic tirades against the ruling establishment. The possible induction of Seshadri is being seen as part of that effort to build "such a bridge".

THE TELEGRAPH

Bajrang Dal activists dunk Big Mac in the soup

By A Staff Reporter

MUMBAI: A group of more than 500 slogan-chanting Bajrang Dal activists ransacked the Thane outlet of American fast food giant McDonald's, and threatened customers at its Fort outlet, to protest the alleged use of beef tallow to process French fries in the U.S. McDonald's has categorically stated that beef products are not used in India.

At 7.15 p.m. on Friday—a day after news of an Indian-American filing a lawsuit against McDonald's for reportedly using beef products was published—a mob shouting 'Jai Maharashtra' broke into the outlet at Gokhale Road, breaking glass panes, furniture, cash registers and an ice-cream machine. A McDonald's spokesperson has put the damage caused by the attack at about Rs 20 lakhs.

The mob was led by Anil More, chief of the Bajrang Dal's Thane branch, who made a passionate plea to Hindus to stop frequenting the outlet. The Thane police have reportedly detained some people for their involvement in the incident.

McDonald's has emphasised that in India, they do not use any non-vegetarian products in vegetarian food items. According to Amit Jaitia, managing director of Hardcastle Restaurant Private Limited, the joint venture company for McDonald's in Mumbai and Pune, no meat or egg products are added to the

Yogesh Bhand



FROM THE FRYING PAN TO THE IRE: Bajrang Dal activists ransack the Thane outlet of McDonald's on Friday evening.

vegetarian food items. "Right from the beginning, we have respected Indian culture. Vegetarian food products do not even have eggs," Mr Jaitia said, speaking to this newspaper.

"At McDonald's, vegetarian and

non-vegetarian items are prepared separately, in different sections, with different utensils and by different people," he said, adding, "This segregation is ensured right from the suppliers' level." He also claimed that in India, French fries

were prepared in "100 per cent vegetable oil" and even mayonnaise and ice-cream products did not have eggs.

About the U.S. incident, Mr Jaitia said it was up to officials in that country to provide an explanation.

Incidentally, he said, there had been no queries from customers about the ingredients used in McDonald's products.

Earlier on Friday, activists of the Bharatiya Yuva Morcha held a demonstration at the Fort outlet of the fast food chain, smearing sign boards and gates with cow dung and threatening the MNC with dire consequences. At about 4 p.m., a group of more than 50 people raised slogans and asked customers at the Fort outlet to leave.

BJP MLA Atul Shah, who was part of the demonstration, said the fast food giant had hurt the sentiments of the Hindu community by using beef products. "Their food items taste the same across the world and we are definite that they must be using beef flavour even in India," Mr Shah said, adding that McDonald's should therefore allow an independent investigation to check their food items. Maintaining that the day's protests were only a warning, he said, "We won't let them run any of their outlets in the city unless they agree to our demand."

Remarking that the reported use of beef products was an insult to vegetarians and the Hindu community, the BJP's Yuva Morcha said many people considered eating beef "inhuman". The Yuva Morcha has reportedly registered a complaint with the Azad Maidan police against McDonald's for "cheating" the public.

Cong forced us to push Rly Budget through, says BJP

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 20

THE BJP is happy with its strategy against the Congress's stalling tactics in Parliament, but feels that it will have to guard against the political fallout.

"Though we are satisfied with the passage of the Railway Budget, we are concerned over the manner in which it was passed without a discussion," BJP chief whip and spokesperson V K Malhotra said. He said this was probably the first time that the Railway Budget was passed in such a manner.

BJP spokesman Malhotra described the Congress's behaviour as "unparliamentary and undemocratic". Passage of the Railway and General Budgets was a constitutional obligation, he said. "If the Budgets are not passed, the nation will come to a standstill."

He urged the Opposition to allow Parliament to function normally for three days from Monday and take up the tehelka issue after the demands for grants of ministries and the Budget were passed.

The BJP has blamed the Congress for forcing the Government

to push through the Railway Budget without discussion.

Government and BJP leaders say the Congress "failed" to seize the opportunity it had earlier, when the Government was ready for any kind of debate, followed by "any kind of inquiry" on the tehelka revelations.

But the Congress could not come up with a strategy that was convincing to even its own MPs. Now, the Government and the BJP are against accepting any Congress pre-condition for normalcy to return in Parliament. Besides, in their view, a JPC would not be proper now when the Venkatasamy Commission has begun work.

The Government cannot ask the Commission to wind up when it was set up in consultation with the Chief Justice of Supreme Court. Hence, no purpose will be served by initiating a debate on the tehelka issue in the Rajya Sabha, BJP leaders say.

The BJP's strategy got a shot in the arm after Andhra Chief Minister and TDP chief N Chandrababu Naidu supported the Government. He said the Congress's demand for a JPC probe was "undemocratic" without a proper debate in Parliament.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 APR 2001

BJP releases candidates list

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, April 16

THE STATE BJP has kept aside 17 seats primarily to accommodate disgruntled Congress MLAs and Trinamool leaders, who are still being wooed to join the BJP fold.

Releasing the final list of candidates here today, the State BJP Vice-President Muzaffar Khan told a Press conference that the party would contest in as many as 239 seats, while 38 seats are being earmarked for its allies like Samata Party, Lok Jana Shakti and Janata Dal (United). "We are withholding names for 17 seats at this juncture," Khan said.

Khan maintained that talks were still on with a number of dissident Trinamool and Congress leaders. "But we will only nominate those with strong winning chances," he explained. He said the Janata Dal (United) has been allotted 15 seats, Samata Party 13 and the Lok Jana Shakti 10 seats.

In contentious seats like Englishbazar in Malda, the BJP has not announced its candidate, since the party would prefer to judge the situation further in the wake of continuing tussle between the Congress and Trinamool over the constituency. Party leaders hope that the Trinamool candidate in Englishbazar Krishnendu Chowdhury would come to the BJP, if the seat finally goes to the Congress.

Against Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, the BJP



HINDUSTAN TIMES PHOTO

State BJP vice-president Muzaffar Khan releases BJP's candidate list for the Assembly election in the city on Monday.

has decided to field Radheshyam Brahmachari, an academician. In almost all the seats in Kolkata, the BJP has fielded its own candidates, including Burrabazar where sitting Congress MLA Rajesh Khaitan was reportedly a strong contender to clinch the BJP ticket.

The party has also decided to put up candidates in all the three hill constituencies - Darjeeling, Kalimpong and Kurseong. Dissident BJP leader Rahul Sinha has been chosen for the Karandighi

seat in North Dinajpur.

In the list are nine women candidates, while 13 belong to the minorities and 56 to the backward caste categories.

There are 22 advocates, 20 college and university teachers, 10 doctors, three barristers and one former director-general of West Bengal police in the list, with the former police chief Subhas Gosai contesting from Rampurhat.

The senior leaders in the State BJP, including its president, two

vice-presidents and the general secretary have kept themselves away from the fray.

"There were doubts if we would be able to field candidates in all the 294 seats. The list proves that the BJP has not weakened at all by the desertion of Trinamool, but has been growing at a rapid pace. People from all parties are joining us in hordes and we have the potential to emerge as a strong political force in the hustings," Khan added.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 APR 1997

HPD-1

BJP leaders rush to Assam

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 13. The revolt by a section of the Bharatiya Janata Party in Assam took a serious turn and the central party rushed three senior leaders to Guwahati today to pacify the agitated state unit.

Till Thursday, the senior leaders here were dismissive of the suggestion that the BJP in Assam had virtually split, but with reports now coming in that 13 district committees had deserted the party and many more may follow suit, the central leadership here is worried.

The party vice-president, Mr. Pyarelal Khandelwal, the general

secretary, Organisation, Mr. Narendra Modi, and the general secretary in-charge of Assam affairs, Mr. Sunil Shastri, rushed to Guwahati today although Mr. Shastri had said on Thursday that only he would attend the two-day State election committee meeting.

It seems the new organisation floated by the disaffected State party leader, Mr. Hirenya Bhattacharya, the Asom Bharatiya Janata Party, is attracting a number of party workers who have lost hope of being given the ticket or being able to work for their own party candidates after the BJP's electoral pact with the Asom Gana Par-

ishad under which it will contest only 44 seats.

The State unit is particularly angry since it had helped to build the party in Assam virtually from scratch and it had been able to secure 33 per cent of the votes cast during the 1999 Lok Sabha elections. The dominant view in the State unit is that the party would perform better if it fought the elections on its own, but the high command had another view.

**THE HINDU wishes
its readers A Happy
Vishu & Tamil New Year**

THE HINDU

14 APR 2001

#D-13 BJP releases first list 11/4

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 10. The Bharatiya Janata Party today released its first list of 20 candidates for the Tamil Nadu assembly elections, 5 for Pondicherry and 48 for Kerala, and announced its nominees for two Lok Sabha byelections. The lists for the West Bengal and Assam elections will be finalised after the Prime Minister's return from Tehran later this week.

The BJP candidate for the byelection to the Tiruchirapalli Lok Sabha constituency in Tamil Nadu, caused by the death of Rangarajan Kumaramangalam is Mr. M. N. Sukumar. State secretary of the party, and the son of the well-known villain actor M. N. Nambiar.

The party's candidate for the Midnapore Lok Sabha constituency in West Bengal, where a vacancy was caused by the death of veteran CPI leader Indrajit Gupta, is Mr. Rama Prasad Tewari, who is the party's district president in Midnapore. The party has yet to declare its candidate for the third Lok Sabha byelection in Shahjahanpur. Uttar Pradesh, where the death of Congress leader Jitendra Prasada caused the vacancy.

The party's first list includes all the candidates for the five seats in Pondicherry which is its share in the DMK-led front, and 20 of the 21 seats in its quota from Tamil Nadu. The only candidate from Tamil Nadu yet to be finalised is for the Mylapore assembly segment.

The Tamil Nadu list includes the two sitting MLAs — Mr. C. Velayudhan from Padmanabhapuram and Mr. B. Venkataswami from Hosur. The party's State unit president, Mr. S.P. Kirubanidhi has been given the reserved constituency of Manamadurai. The State unit general secretary, Mr. H. Raja has been nominated from Karaikudi, while two State secretaries, Mr. S. Gna-

nashekharan, and Mr. N.R. Nanjappan, have been given ticket from Mannargudi and Coimbatore East respectively. The sister of Rangarajan Kumaramangalam, Mrs. Lalitha Kumaramangalam has been accommodated in Tiruppur.

In Pondicherry, the candidates are the State unit president, Mr. A.M. Krishnamurthy, (from Reddiarpalayam); Mr. M. Viswesvaran, a national council member, (Cotcherry); Mr. N.K. Ragindran (Mahe); Mr. C.P. Ganeshan, a State executive member, (Paloor) and Mr. Gollapalli Gangadhara Pratap, also a State executive member, (Yanam).

In Kerala, although the party plans to contest at least 100 seats, the party has declared candidates for only 48 assembly segments. The list includes two writers, Dr. Punathil Kunjabudalla from Beypore and Mr. Madampu Kunhikuttan from Kodungallur; the State unit president, Mr. C.K. Padmanabhan will contest the Manjeswar segment; the president of the State women's forum, Mrs. Rema Raghunandan, is the candidate from Palghat and the youth forum president, Mr. M.T. Ramesh has got the nomination from Chengannur. Other party office-bearers have also been accommodated — the State general secretary, Mr. P.K. Krishnadas from Kasargod, the State secretary, Mr. M.S. Kumar from Nemam segment and a newcomer, Mr. K. Sankaranarayan, earlier in the Congress (S), is the candidate from Trivandrum North.

In Bengal, the vice-president in charge of State affairs, Mr. Kailashpati Mishra, did not care to hide the fact that the party was waiting for deserters from the Trinamool Congress and the Congress Party before finalising nominations. If these new entrants are deserving, they would get the ticket, he said. He refused to respond to the ques-

tion whether the NDA's doors would be open to the Trinamool again if the party did not win the West Bengal Assembly elections, while indicating that the Trinamool leader, Ms. Mamata Banerjee, may be spared from attack in the election campaign.

BJP, Sena drifting apart?

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, APRIL 10. A day after the National Democratic Alliance meeting asserted that the allies of the BJP were fully with the BJP on the Tehelka issue, the Shiv Sena chief, Mr. Bal Thackeray, has proven that to be not quite correct.

Through the Sena mouthpiece, *Saamna*, Mr. Thackeray has hit out against the remarks attributed to the Prime Minister made during his visit to Mumbai on April 8, that "Mumbaiwalas" (read Sena followers) did not quite like the idea of "outsiders" in Mumbai.

While officially all that the BJP general secretary, Mr. Narendra Modi, said was "editorials are written by the editor, and Mr. Bal Thackeray is not the editor of *Saamna*," it is no secret in the party here that relations between the BJP and the Shiv Sena have been strained. Soon after the Tehelka tapes became public, *Saamna* had hit out against the Prime Minister's Office, which was seen as an indirect attack on Mr. A.B. Vajpayee. Then the BJP had to cancel its Mumbai rally because Mr. Thackeray refused to participate in it.

Party insiders believe that the Sena anger had less to do with Tehelka and was more the result of Sena desire to see the Congress-NCP Maharashtra Government destabilised. However, it seems that the BJP does not want to oblige the Sena which has been insisting on keeping the Chief Minister's portfolio.

BJP warns Sonia of tit-for-tat attack

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 9

THE NDA today threatened to take the battle into the Congress camp, if the latter continued with its "obscene demonstrations" against Vajpayee, the obvious reference being to the Mumbai incident yesterday, where Vajpayee was greeted with black flags and raucous slogans.

It warned that if it were not stopped, similar agitations would be launched against Congress President Sonia Gandhi. "Wherever the Congress President goes, similar demonstrations will be held against her but minus the obscenity," NDA convener George Fernandes said, while briefing reporters about the hour-long NDA coordination committee meeting.

The coordination committee decided that the Congress would

SWAMY ALLEGES SONIA-KGB LINK

CLOSE ON the heels of the Koujalagi videotapes, Congress president Sonia Gandhi now has another problem to contend with. Janata Party president Subramanian Swamy has accused her of having maintained shady links with the now defunct Russian Intelligence agency KGB and her son, Rahul, of being a KGB agent.

Swamy says Sonia's family, the Mainos, made money on Indo-Soviet trade deals and deposited the money in foreign bank accounts. "I will present that evidence in my next press conference," he told media persons here today. "Sonia Gandhi has been fooling the whole country by saying that she studied at Cambridge University. In fact, all that she did in London was to attend a coaching class in English." Swamy alleged that Atal Behari Vajpayee and Sonia have a secret understanding to not disturb each other. "It is evident from the lukewarm response of the Congress over the Tehelka tapes. If the ruling party do not take any action I will be forced to file a PIL in court". Swamy went to the extent of saying that the Soviet Union played a key role in getting Sonia married to Rajiv Gandhi. "Indira Gandhi had opposed the marriage but the Soviet Union mobilised the then foreign secretary T N Kaul to convince Mrs Gandhi not to object since they regarded the Mainos as 'reliable contacts' in Italy."

HTC Mumbai

be "publicly told to stop forthwith the demonstrations and the kind of slogans thrown at the

Prime Minister". By proclaiming the Prime Minister, and not the NDA, as the Congress target, the

party hopes to shift focus. It is now pretty obvious the NDA is once again cashing on Vajpayee's "clean image" to diffuse the Opposition's attack on the Arms-gate issue. "It is up to the Congress to decide whether they would like to persist with such demonstrations," George said.

Fernandes said once the present phase of its public rallies on the tehelka expose and the assembly elections were over, the NDA would expose the continuing corruption by the Congress, wherever they were in power.

They would particularly focus on the "extraordinary assets" acquired by Vincent George, personal secretary to Congress President Sonia Gandhi.

"It needs to be explained how a person who was drawing Rs 400 a month has come to possess assets of crores of rupees," Fernandes said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 APR 2001

Legislators above BJP ethics code

FROM RADHIKA
RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, April 6: The BJP has decided that the proposed code of ethics announced with fanfare by K. Jana Krishnamurthi in the first news conference he addressed as party president will not be enforced on its MPs and MLAs.

Instead, the BJP has set up a five-member committee to "draw up a code of ethics for partymen who hold offices in various elective bodies other than in Parliament and state legislatures", vice-president Pyarelal Khandelwal said. The panel will be headed by former party chief Kushabhau Thakre.

Party sources said the committee's brief would merely be to evolve a framework for working out the code and not implement or even monitor its implementation. "That work will be done by another authority," they said.

In his news conference of March 28, Krishnamurthi had declared: "There is a need to evolve a code of conduct for the party's elected representatives, which would govern their conduct. I will ask my party colleagues to prepare a note on that subject, which I will place before the national

executive at its next meeting."

Krishnamurthi had made it clear that even Central ministers would come under the purview of the envisaged code.

BJP sources had then said that such an announcement was necessary, given the circumstances in which Krishnamurthi was anointed — after his predecessor, Bangaru Laxman, was seen taking money in the Tehelka tapes.

The "need of the hour", they maintained, was to show the party was "serious" about cleaning up its own stable after none other than the party president was caught "red-handed".

Asked what caused a climb-down, BJP spokesman V.K. Malhotra said: "MPs' and ministers' conduct would come under the ambit of the Lokpal Bill. The BJP wants to include even the Prime Minister within the purview of the Bill. Besides, the Rajya Sabha's ethics committee has already prepared its report while the Lok Sabha committee is still at work. So the conduct of MPs will be governed by these committees."

When it was pointed out that the Lokpal Bill had still not been tabled in Parliament, there was no reply. Neither did Malhotra have an answer to why the BJP had linked parliamentary legislation

on the conduct of MPs of all parties with its own proposals for a prescriptive code, especially when it claimed to be a "party with a difference".

If these elected representatives were excluded from the purview of the code of ethics, it would only apply to members of smaller local bodies like sarpanchs and zilla parishad members, who were described by BJP sources themselves as "small fish in a large pond".

Sources said in states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, Krishnamurthi's declaration had raised the hackles of MPs and MLAs who saw the code as an "infringement" on their "working".

They said a couple of days ago Atal Bihari Vajpayee had sounded out Thakre on reconsidering Krishnamurthi's proposal. Thakre enjoys a better rapport with the Prime Minister than Krishnamurthi and is still the main conduit between the BJP and the government.

They added that the idea of the BJP's writ running over its ministers and MPs was resented by a section. The distinction between the party and the government had to be "respected and maintained".

■ See Page 6

THE TELEGRAPH

37 APR 2001

BJP ethics code exempts party bosses

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 6

NEW BJP chief Jana Krishnamurthi's much-professed idea of a code of ethics to cleanse the party in the wake of the tehelka controversy has turned into a bit of an anti-climax.

A five-member panel, appointed for the cleansing drive, has been told that their brief is not to cover party MPs and MLAs. The dos and don'ts prescribed by the panel will only apply to those in the lower ranks of the party, who are elected to municipalities and panchayats.

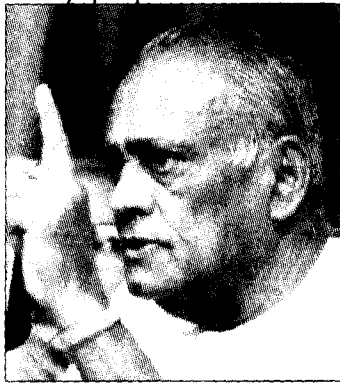
A BJP release said the committee would draw up a code of ethics within a month "for members who hold offices in various elective bodies other than Parliament and State Legislatures."

The panel would comprise former president Kushabhau Thakre as the convenor, and senior BJP leaders Kailashpati Mishra, J P Mathur, V P Goel (party treasurer) and Basvaraj Patil (president of Karnataka BJP) as its members.

The BJP's explanation is that the MLAs and MPs are to follow rules framed by the ethics committees of the respective Houses. Hence, the party need not fix any code for them.

J P Mathur said: "I will consult Thakre and the BJP president on the guidelines for the panel, which is not going to implement the code. We are to only draw the code."

When Krishnamurthi made the March 29 announcement about the ethics code, he had in mind a code of conduct for "all elected representatives including the MPs and MLAs." This, he said, was to show that "our party



should be able to demonstrate that it is willing to apply standards to itself which it expects from other parties" and to regain the tag "it is indeed a party with a difference."

Many BJP leaders are surprised that the MPs and MLAs have been left out of the panel's agenda when their conduct has come under much criticism.

Also, what has baffled some partymen is that "if the tehelka issue is a conspiracy (as made out by the BJP National Executive) why do we need a code of ethics? Secondly, the expose was on the top leaders and not on municipal and panchayat leaders."

The party's reaction to proposed code is anything but positive. A UP BJP leader asked: "What do they expect us to do? Wear khadi and move around with begging bowls?" Other UP leaders and ministers echoed similar responses.

Last year, former BJP general secretary K N Govindacharya mooted the idea of a code of conduct for ministers to salvage the BJP's image, but it was met with scorn.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 APR 2001

BJP gains AGP, may lose Samata

HT Correspondent
Guwahati, April 6

TROUBLED BY dissent within their respective parties following the alliance, the Asom Gana Parishad and the Bharatiya Janata Party now face the prospect of being shunned by the Samata Party, one of the National Democratic Alliance constituents.

The Samata Party's State unit led by former Congressman Afzalur Rahman is "keen on an electoral tie-up with the AGP and BJP", but would do so only if the combine leaves 32 seats for it.

The argument of the Samata Party is that 90 per cent of these 32 seats demanded are in minority-dominated areas. It claimed that among the non-Congress parties, Samata had the strongest influence in these constituencies, and was the only party among the NDA constituents capable of emerging victorious.

"Since we are a partner of the NDA Government at the Centre, we want to maintain that partnership in the State," Rahman said. "We have had several

rounds of discussions with both AGP and BJP leaders, and submitted our demand of contesting 32 seats. If things do not work out, we shall go it alone and contest some more seats."

Most of these seats are in Dhubri, Goalpara, Sonitpur, Darrang, Barpeta, Nagaon, Morigaon, Karimganj, Hailakandi and Cachar districts.

The Samata Party is committed to defend the contentious Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunal) Act prevalent only in Assam to detect and deport aliens. He claimed Samata president George Fernandes had given an assurance that the party leadership would lobby in the NDA for the retention of IM(DT) Act.

The Samata stand on IM(DT) Act clashes with that of the AGP and BJP, both preferring either amendment or scrapping of the Act. The contention of these two parties is that the IM(DT) Act is loaded in favour of illegal immigrants, mostly from Bangladesh, and comes in the way of their deportation.

Meanwhile, Samata general secretary Swapan Dutta said the

party has divested Madhav Bhat-tacharyya of his vice-president post and suspended him for anti-party activities. He said Suraj Naiding has been appointed the new general secretary of the party's State Committee while Ajit Bora has been made the president of the State Juba Samata.

BJP eyes 50 Assembly seats in Assam: THE BJP is hopeful of reaching an agreement with Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) on the 50 seats that it wants to contest for the coming Assembly elections in the State after two rounds of talks between the two parties here, adds PTI from New Delhi.

Two rounds have passed and the parties are to discuss details of the distribution of seats only in subsequent rounds of talks scheduled on Thursday night and Friday. The two sides discussed to strengthen the alliance the main thrust being to fight the Congress and ensure its defeat, a BJP leader said.

In the 126-member Assembly, 18 seats have been allotted- 13 to Bodos and 5 to hill areas, leaving 108 to be divided between the BJP



and AGP. The BJP, which has 5 MLAs in the current Assembly wants 50 seats whereas AGP has expressed its desire to contest 80 seats.

The AGP has sought more time to discuss the issue with its president and Assam Chief Minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta.

'Politics of confrontation hasn't helped the country'

HAVING taken office in the most unpropitious of contexts — the previous party president was caught taking a "donation" — Jana Krishnamurthy, the new BJP chief, has a tough remit, which, for this Tamil RSS pracharak, includes learning Hindi.

Mr Krishnamurthy joined "active politics", after six years as a RSS man, at the behest of MS Golwalkar. This parivar pedigree is further distinguished by the fact that Atal Behari Vajpayee guided Mr Krishnamurthy's political career in Tamil Nadu and LK Advani suggested he come to Delhi.

There was a time, after Mr Krishnamurthy's refusal to accept the Karnataka governorship offered to him by the party leadership, when his political fortunes were down. And he fell out, almost at the last moment, of the party presidency contest. Bangaru Laxman won that round. In an extensive interview with **SUDESH K VERMA***, Mr Krishnamurthy insisted his disgraced predecessor be given at least the benefit of the doubt. Excerpts:

What are your priorities?

To see the party through the present difficulties, to face the coming polls in five states successfully and expand the organisational, electoral and social bases of the party.

What are the post-Tehelka challenges?

The Opposition is trying its best to create an impression that something was seriously wrong in the BJP because of the Tehelka tapes. The BJP leadership immediately understood the design behind the Opposition's move. The NDA's decision to hold public meetings in several parts of the country will enable us to dispel any doubt in the people's minds.

But the party's image has suffered after the Tehelka exposures?

The party's image was sought to be sullied. But there has been no noticeable damage done. I think I can safely say that no damage has been done to the party.

The RSS has described Mr Laxman as a failed swayamsevak. What do you say on this?

MG Vaidya (RSS spokesman) has given a clarification, subsequently, that the RSS will consider him a failed swayamsevak only after he is found guilty.

Are you saying that he is not guilty?

He is not guilty. He has said he is not guilty. And he is ready to subject himself

to any inquiry. We will await the result. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and we have said a person found guilty will have to face...pay the penalty for it.

You said at the national executive meeting that Mr Laxman would be given responsibility befitting his personality?

There were reports expressing doubts whether Mr Laxman would be reinstated as president after he gets himself cleared by the Venkatswamy commission. So, I stated that once he is found not guilty, the party will assign him such work commensurate with his personality and in the best interests of the party. When I say a place, it does not necessarily mean any post as posts are very limited.

There seems to be discrimination while dealing with Mr Laxman and Mr Fernandes?

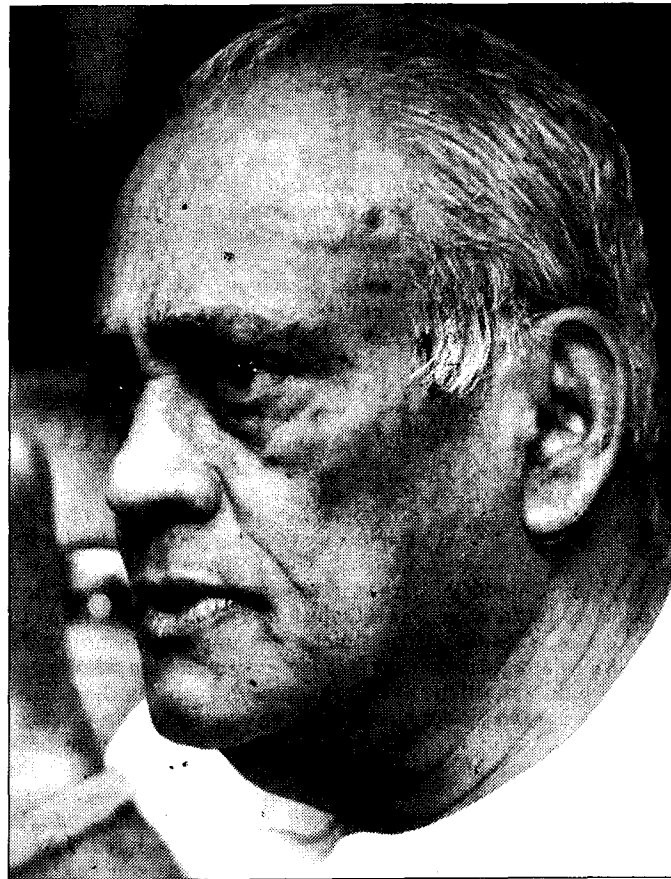
There is no direct allegation against Mr Fernandes even in the Tehelka tapes. The tapes have shown Bangarui as if he received some money. The best course for him would be to establish his innocence before a commission.

Mr Laxman said in an interview that even some of his party colleagues did not want him to continue...?

You must understand Bangarui's mindset at that time. There was no such comment within the party. There may be views of a few individuals and Bangaru Laxman knows them well. The decisions of the executive and council bind the party and not an individual's comment.

The BJP has been stressing that the party would accept donations above Rs 1,000 only through cheques. How could a party president take Rs 1 lakh in cash?

That was a suggestion made by Advaniji sometime back, but that was not adopted as a policy. We were insistent that any donation above Rs 10,000 should be credited in our account to show from whom it has been received and by whom. Now



BJP president Jana Kirshnamurthy: Only sees BJP's natural face.

has no time or patience to probe. **You are not a favourite with the RSS?**

Even today, I am a swayamsevak of the RSS. I have dedicated my life to the RSS cause. It is due to the RSS chief that I came to politics. My bond with the RSS is still there and it will continue. But I am working in a particular field and it is my responsibility to carry my party in that particular field. The basic thing that the Sangh expects from every *swayamsevak* is that he must be true to the work he does. The nation comes first. He has to carry a team with him and his commitment is to serve the people and not benefit from his service. I will uphold all these things in my political life.

Which face of the BJP would you like to project — the hardline Hindutva represented by the Ayodhya movement or the liberal, secular image represented by the National Democratic Alliance?

I don't see any face other than the BJP's natural face. The labels of hardliners, softliners, liberal, secular or communalists have been the Opposition's attempts to prevent the minorities and others from drawing closer to the BJP.

As we progress and reach every section of society, the misunderstanding about us will be cleared.

There has been a shift in the BJP's stand in comparison to the days of the Babari Masjid's demolition?

There has been no shift in the BJP's basic approach. From (6 December) 1992 onwards, some party leaders have been seriously analysing and assessing the Indian political scene. We feel the politics of confrontation has not in anyway helped the country. There should be consensus on some basic issues. For the politics of consensus, we had to leave out some items from our party agenda.

But these are still there in the party's agenda?

It is very much there. If tomorrow, or

sometime later, a consensus evolves on some of the other issues, we will adopt it. Otherwise, we will keep them in abeyance till such time we are able to build a consensus.

The RSS chief has asked the government to remove hurdles in the way of the Ram temple's construction at the disputed site?

This government is keeping an open mind on all issues and would welcome all suggestions honestly made. But it is for the government to see which of these can be accepted and which not, under the present circumstances.

You come from the south. The party's main base is in the north. How will you make yourself more acceptable in the north?

I am not a stranger to party workers and leaders in north India. I have been interacting with them for the last seven years. It is true that I have not toured the northern states to address public meetings but once I start touring, that will be taken care of. I have started using Hindi as my medium in this part of the country. And I have decided that I will speak only in Hindi while visiting the northern states.

Mamata Banerjee's withdrawal from the NDA must have sent the wrong signal about the government's stability?

Everybody realises that the government is stable. Our voters and workers feel that Mamata Banerjee's withdrawal from the NDA has affected the NDA's image only to the extent that it has lost one of its partners.

Why did Tehelka happen with the BJP? Merely blaming the Congress may not be enough?

We are not blaming the Congress. That's not our objective. But we did not expect such irresponsible behaviour from the main Opposition. They have got every right to attack us. But a person like Sonia Gandhi openly accusing Vajpayeeji of being a *gaddar* (traitor)? She crossed all limits and forced us to hit back. Why should the Congress ask their *yuva morcha* people to attack BJP offices in various states?

But why did Tehelka happen?

A proper inquiry by a judicial mind alone can bring out the truth of the Tehelka tapes. Suppose the commission finds Bangaru Laxman is not guilty, what does one conclude from it. Will one not conclude that there was a conspiracy and a frame-up?

*Special Representative, The Statesman, New Delhi.

AGP & BJP seal tie-up, seat hiccups likely

Utpal Parashar
Guwahati, April 2

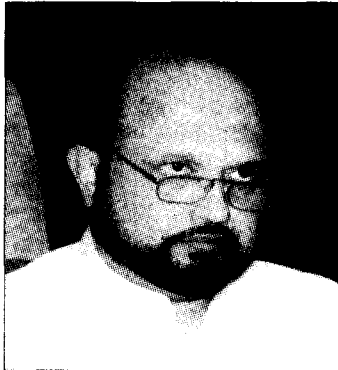
THE GENERAL body of the ruling Asom Gana Parishad today approved the party high command's decision to form a seat-sharing alliance with the Bharatiya Janata Party for the forthcoming Assembly elections in the State.

Following Monday's development, both the parties will now have prolonged deliberations on sharing of seats for the 126-member Assembly.

Sources from both the parties stated that there would nevertheless be severe differences on this issue.

Discussions to finalise the list of candidates will take place in New Delhi on Tuesday. BJP sources said the party is likely to demand nearly 50 tickets. But insiders in the AGP said the BJP might be given only 30 tickets.

"In the 1999 general elections, our candidates finished first in 33 Assembly constituencies and came a close second in many others. Hence, it is only proper that we are given tickets in around 50 constituencies where we have a



Prafulla Mahanta

strong presence," said a senior state BJP leader.

He said the party was likely to demand tickets in most of the urban constituencies. "Our presence is more marked in the urban areas of the State, while the AGP is strong in the rural areas. So, it would be in the interest of both the parties that BJP candidates are given tickets in urban areas while AGP candidates contest from rural areas," he stated.

The BJP leader admitted there may be confusion on some seats.

"Nalbari is one such constituency. The last general elections showed that we enjoy a lot of popularity in the area, but since AGP's Alka Desai Sharma won the by-election from this constituency with a huge margin, the AGP would definitely want to have her contest again," he said.

The BJP demand is likely to spell doom for some AGP leaders including some sitting Ministers. According to the BJP sources, the party will demand tickets from constituencies like East Guwahati, Amguri, Jorhat, which are the constituencies of AGP ministers Biraj Sharma, Pradip Hazarika and Hitendra Nath Goswami respectively.

Apart from the Ministers, the AGP might have to forgo some of its sitting MLAs as the BJP demand includes at least 10 seats, which are at present being held by AGP leaders.

"It is apparent that there will be several hurdles while trying to finalise a list agreeable to everyone. But it should divert us from our main aim of stopping the Congress from coming to power in Assam," he said.

Govindacharya blasts govt on reforms

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 26: A day after Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee managed to get an endorsement on his economic policies from the BJP national executive, senior party hardliner K.N. Govindacharya today attacked his government's economic reforms saying it has "compromised" the nation's economic sovereignty.

Questioning the logic of continuing in the WTO, he said the removal of quantitative restrictions (QRs) from April would further damage the economy.

Govindacharya, on a sabbatical after being dropped as BJP general secretary for attacking the government's economic policies, said ever since the country signed the WTO agreement, "Our problems have been compounded. The national economic sovereignty has been compromised.... Small

scale industries have suffered a lot and our industries have not been able to compete."

An ardent proponent of Swadeshi, he said the government's policies led to an increase in rural poverty and shrinkage of job opportunities.

In an open letter addressed to about 500 people, including party colleagues, economists, experts, intellectuals, decision-makers and reporters, Govindacharya said reforms in the past five years "have resulted in increase of rural poverty, worsening the plight of farmers, decrease in employment opportunities, skewed and disadvantaged work opportunities for women and less skilled youth".

Copies of the letter, which raised 18 "important questions", were circulated among journalists at the BJP office after the daily briefing. It said the path of free market in the last 15 years has "led us to (a) blind alley

of indiscriminate globalisation".

He said planners have assumed the role of insensitive referees sitting in judgment against "our producers, be it in agriculture or industry".

Govindacharya, who toured nine states in the past five months, said he wanted to communicate some of his experiences during his "study tour" to the people.

He attributed the mindset to three "hangovers" — colonial, partition and hollow socialism. "The hangover at the thought level was reflected in the way that every commodity, idea and institution of the West was the best and needed to be aped to progress or to be certified as progressive."

Referring to the "partition hangover", he said the minority identity even today remained an issue to be tackled. "Nationalism gets dubbed as communalism and mi-

norityism' walks away with pride in the garb of secularism. On the one hand some extremists view all Muslims as Pakistanis and in reverse some Muslims tend to treat Pakistan as mentor and guide. Both positions are equally incorrect and harmful and are symptomatic of partition hangover."

Criticising "hollow socialism", the RSS ideologue said: "Duty consciousness was replaced by rights consciousness. Statism got entrenched, governance was centralised. Consequently, work culture got destroyed, licence permit quota raj, nepotism, red-tapism, corruption, black money raj got strengthened. Decentralisation and distributive justice were forgotten and varieties of socialism sprang up."

He said because of these hangovers, the system is in a way coming to a grinding halt

THE TELEGRAM

1 MARCH 2001

BJP plans code of ethics

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 29. In what is seen as a direct response to the unsavoury Tehelka episode, the Bharatiya Janata Party president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, today announced his resolve to put into place "a code of ethics for party MPs, MLAs and all elected representatives of the people at all levels."

He made clear his intention to set up a committee of office-bearers who would be asked to prepare a note suggesting a code of ethics, which would be placed before the next meeting of the national executive committee in about three months.

"Our party should be able to demonstrate that it is willing to apply standards to itself which it expects from other parties," Mr. Krishnamurthi said while addressing his first press conference here after being confirmed party president. He requested the Opposition to continue to fight its political battles from party forums and allow Parliament to take up urgent legislative business.

He covered a number of issues — the role expected of responsible ruling and opposition parties,

the BJP's right and duty to make constructive criticism of the Government, the urgent need to introduce and adopt a Lok Pal bill and the party's expectation from the coming Assembly elections.

Mr. Krishnamurthi made it clear that as far as the National



Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi

Democratic Alliance agenda was concerned the party would "lend its full weight to it," and the "possibility of the BJP spelling out its individual agenda did not arise under the circumstances." To a question on the NDA partners coming in and going out of the alliance in moves that appeared opportunistic, he said, "the NDA had not come together on a common ideology but had evolved a common programme. It was a voluntary association of political parties and the only compulsion was that imposed from within those parties." It was an indirect way of reasserting what the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K.Advani had stated in Chennai, that little or no ideology

was required in governance.

For the first time, perhaps, the party categorically stated that "if and when the (Tehelka) inquiry committee found Mr. Bangaru Laxman (former party president) guilty, the party would not hesitate to take action." Mr. Krishnamurthi was responding to a question whether the party would like Mr. Laxman to resign his Rajya Sabha seat.

He admitted there were some "passing references to this issue" during the recent national executive committee meeting, but Mr. Laxman had resigned as party president and agreed to submit himself to an inquiry, and therefore, for the moment, there was no need for any further action. That was the collective decision of the national executive.

The so-called Nagpur message of the party given by Mr. Laxman was "not a new idea".

There was no clear response from the party to Mr. Advani's recent statement in an interview that it was not useful to go after the "political conspiracy" theory to demolish or rubbish Tehelka. Only an inquiry would help establish the conspiracy theory, was the feeling.

THE HINDU

30 MAR 2001

30 MAR 2001

LAXMAN:

(Continued from page 1)

51-8 2713
Shanta Kumar and Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, were very critical of Mr Laxman.

Mr Kumar took the initiative in this regard. He said what Mr Laxman had done could not be defended because the party had all the while been claiming that those involved in taking commission in defence deals were anti-national.

He proved to be the weakest link in the entire Tehelka episode. How long the party should carry this guilt and why carry it.

The executive should work out something whereby it was no longer the responsibility of the party to defend it. Mr Laxman should thus either quit the party or the party should remove him, he said at the meeting.

Mr Shekhawat said the party should not try to push the dirt under the carpet and should handle such situation without fear or favour. His arguments were supported by Mr TN Chaturvedi and Mr Shatrughan Sinha.

THE STATESMAN

THE STATESMAN

27 MAR 2001

For one man I've suffered the greatest insult: PM

Barbs for Laxman at BJP meet

988
BOP

SM

SANJAY SINGH
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 26. — The public show of support and sympathy that the BJP put out for its sacked president, Mr Bangaru Laxman, was apparently just a show.

Behind closed doors, say senior BJP leaders, the party's national executive was highly critical of Mr Laxman. His critics included Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee who reportedly lamented that thanks to the misdeeds of one man, he (Mr Vajpayee) had to listen to slogans that were more insulting than anything he had heard in his long political career.

Mr Vajpayee reversed the line taken by the new party presi-

dent, Mr Jana Krishnamurthy, who defended Mr Laxman and even spoke of an honourable rehabilitation package that could await for him.

Mr Vajpayee replied to the arguments made by his party colleagues that it was a conspira-

27/3

■ Editorial: Salvaging honour, page 6

cy hatched by the Opposition. "Even if it was a trap, why did we walk into it." A deeply aggrieved Mr Vajpayee emotionally said: "If the individual concerned had acted in a responsible manner and didn't commit the wrong then I wouldn't have heard what was unthinkable till the other day. The Opposition had shouted 'chor, chor'

when I used to enter the House in Parliament. The images that are being shown on TV would have long and lasting effect on public memory. The wound is too deep to be taken lightly."

Mr Vajpayee's remarks struck an immediate chord with current public perception and feeling of a majority of party leaders. His speech at the Ramlila Grounds acted as the much required booster dose for a beleaguered party cadre. This also sealed all speculations of Mr Laxman's rehabilitation in the government or party. Though Mr Krishnamurthy in his maiden presidential speech had set the tone by defending his predecessor, leaders like Mr

■ See LAXMAN: page 8

THE STATESMAN

27 MAR 2001

Govindacharya on globalisation

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

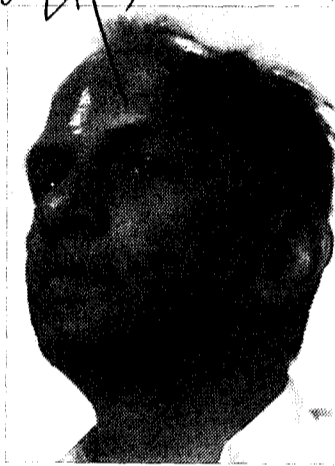
NEW DELHI, March 26. — Former BJP general secretary, Mr KN Govindacharya, has written letters to influential people to win them over in opposing globalisation and reversing economic priorities, which he felt was compromising national economic sovereignty.

The letter opposes the removal of quantitative restrictions saying this would damage the economy.

He said India's sufferings on account of signing the WTO have been more than its gains.

Among the people who are being sent copies of the letter include Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, Union home minister, Mr LK Advani, other important BJP and RSS leaders, the NDA leaders, Mr George Fernandes, Mr Nitish Kumar and Mr Ram Vilas Paswan.

All chief ministers, former prime ministers and Opposi-



KN Govindacharya

tion leaders, including Mrs Sonia Gandhi, Mr Somnath Chatterjee, Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet, Mr AB Bardhan and Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav are included in the list.

The letter seeks suggestions of these leaders on 18 issues that he is analysing in his study. One of them is whether India should walk out of the WTO.

SUDERSHAN ON SWADESHI CHURCHES

NAGPUR March 26. — All Christian intellectuals in the country should set up a Federation of Swadeshi Churches, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh chief, Mr K Sudershan, said here today, adds PTI from Nagpur.

Mr Sudershan said the Christian intellectuals in the country should initiate the process by sitting together and discussing the shape of the federation.

Reiterating his concept of a swadeshi church, the RSS chief said churches should not have any foreign links or have any financial transactions with them.

The management of churches and its properties should be solely under the control of Indian devotees, he added.

He claimed that his predecessors like Guruji Golwalkar and Balasaheb Deoras had previously echoed similar sentiments.

While calling upon Christians to join the mainstream, Mr Sudershan lambasted church leaders on the Dalit Christian issue.

He claimed that Dalits converted as Christians were not getting reservations for employment in institutions run by Christian missionaries.

"When Christianity believes in equality, why not give priority to Dalit Christians in their own institutions instead of asking the government," he asked.

Mr Sudershan also criticised the recent Vatican admission of sexual exploitation of nuns.

He was speaking on the occasion of releasing a book *The Indian Church*. — PTI

It's introspection time, Advani tells party colleagues

By Smita Gupta

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: In what can be considered the first real admission that something has gone terribly wrong within the BJP, home minister L.K. Advani exhorted his partymen to "look inwards".

Speaking at the party's national executive here on Saturday, Mr Advani, who is reportedly calling the shots in the BJP, said the Tehelka episode had served as a reminder to party workers to look within and counter the negative influences that had gained ground within the organisation. "People will ignore the wrong-doings of the Congress and other parties, but will be deeply dismayed at seeing the image of the BJP being sullied," he said.

Mr Advani's statement, along with the fact that the national executive's first act was to confirm K. Jana Krishnamurthy's appointment as party chief until the end of the present term, underscored the intentions of the BJP to distance itself from the unsavoury Bangaru Laxman episode. Formalising Mr Krishnamurthy's appointment also meant that all doors regarding Mr Laxman's return as party chief, even if only after the completion of the 'armgate' probe, had been shut.

Not just that, food and civil supplies minister Shanta Kumar, during the discussion on the political resolution, remarked that the party must ask Mr Laxman to step down

as Rajya Sabha member as well. Although Mr Kumar's demand did not evoke any response, the message was clear. It would be difficult to carry the burden of that grainy, but real black and white image of Mr Laxman grabbing a bundle of notes and stuffing it into a drawer.

The only kind words for Mr Laxman came from his successor. In his presidential speech, Mr Krishnamurthy stated that a few people in the party had felt that Mr Laxman should not have resigned. He was obviously referring to the party's SCST members who were upset by the treatment meted out to the former president. Mr Krishnamurthy, however, was quick to add that Mr Laxman's resignation had been accepted at his insistence. In short, he made it clear to Mr Laxman's supporters that he had not been asked to step down.

Remarking that Mr Laxman's actions were "true to the tradition of the BJP", the party chief said, "All of us look forward to the day when Shri Bangaru stands vindicated and is found to be an innocent victim caught in a web of conspiracy. I can assure you that once he passes this *agnipariksha*, his services will be available again."

But even as the effort to push the Laxman chapter away from public view, the party leadership accused the "frustrated opposition" of deliberately trying to discredit the BJP-led government.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

27 MAR 1997

BJP drive to rebuild image

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 24

A CONCLAVE of top BJP leaders today unveiled a four-pronged strategy to rebuild the party's image as a "party with a difference" and strengthen Prime Minister A B Vajpayee's call to remove the dirt in public life.

Firstly, the probe announced by the Government into the tehelka tapes will be a credible inquiry to establish the "full truth." Secondly, the party will enforce strict accountability standards after a serious introspection. Thirdly, the law will be allowed to take its own course. The guilty shall be punished but

an honest man's reputation will not be allowed to be sullied. Last, wherever institutional changes are required to reform the system, the BJP will take initiative.

The BJP National Executive decided that the government and the party should address the principal issue of funding of political parties, which as a legitimate activity should be made more transparent.

Anxious to erase the public impression of its chief accepting money, as shown by the tehelka tapes, the BJP conclave resolved to show that it would go for decentralised fund collection, reduce the dependence on big money and instead collect small

JANA FOR BANK RATE CUT REVIEW

K Jana Krishnamurthi has asked the Government to review its decision to cut bank interest rates on deposits. He said the reduction of interest rate for deposits by one and half per cent had caused resentment among small depositors.

More reports on Page 9

amounts from larger sections of supporters and sympathisers.

A political document was adopted by the conclave to convey this message after BJP leaders led by Home Minister L K Advani said the "conspiracy" to

destabilise the Government this time should be seen in the context of the Congress' failure in the past.

Advani said the tehelka episode had served to remind the BJP to look within and counter the negative influences that "have gained ground within the organisation."

He said the people, who would have ignored the wrongdoings of the Congress and other parties, were deeply dismayed at seeing the BJP's image sullied by such events.

In his first speech as BJP president, Krishnamurthi said the tehelka tapes were aimed at demolishing the party's image.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

25 MAR 2001

ADVANI CALLS FOR INTROSPECTION WITHIN PARTY

BJP absolves Govt., attacks Cong.

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, MARCH 24. The political resolution adopted by the Bharatiya Janata Party's national executive committee today almost entirely focussed on the aftermath of the Tehelka episode, and as expected, took the line that it was part of a larger conspiracy. The Congress, it said, could hardly claim high moral ground and the "truth" about the episode would be established.

The three-page resolution was a declaration of faith in the BJP-led Government and the leadership of the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee. It ended with a quote from the Prime Minister's address to the nation after the resignation of Mr. George Fernandes as Defence Minister, which admits to the dirt in the system needing to be cleansed, a resolve to get to the truth through an inquiry and the promise that the problem will be converted into an opportunity to make the country stronger and cleaner.

But there were some glaring contradictions. While the general-



Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, who was formally elected BJP president at the party's national executive meet in New Delhi on Saturday, with the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee. Also seen are Union Ministers, Dr. Murlidhar Joshi, Mr. L.K. Advani and Mr. Jaswant Singh. — Photo: V. Sudershan

secretary, Mr. Narendra Modi, virtually declared the Vajpayee Government innocent, the resolution quoted the need to "clean up the dirt that has come into view". The BJP continued to maintain that it was a party with a difference, a party with a mission, and was resolved to deliver a clean and transparent adminis-

tration. The only concession it made was in calling for "introspection within the party." The Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, intervening during the discussion on the political resolution, said the party must "look within and counter the negative influences that have gained ground within the organisation."

Mr. Advani's "explanation" for the effect of the "expose" was that the people used to Congress scams would have ignored wrongdoings of that party, but "they are deeply dismayed at seeing the image of the BJP being sullied."

The resolution made an all-out attack on the Congress and took exception to the remarks at the Bangalore AICC session that corruption in the Defence Ministry amounted to "treachery". The BJP detailed the "history" of scandals related to Congress governments, and naturally, Bofors took the pride of place.

Aware of the damaging potential of the episode in relation to national security, the resolution patted the Vajpayee Government for making India a nuclear power, and for Kargil, noting that the Congress had "gone against the national mood" during both events. Finally, it charged that the Congress was unable to stomach a non-Congress government completing its tenure, and hence the "conspiracy" to "circumvent the people's mandate".

Tomorrow the executive will adopt a resolution on the budget and the economic situation, and one on the Bamiyan Buddhas, and complete the discussion on the situation in the five States going to the polls.

Jana Krishnamurthi's appointment ratified

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 24. The BJP national executive committee today showed the seriousness of its concern at the allegations against its former president, Mr. Bangaru Laxman, virtually closing the doors on his possible return to his post.

Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi's position as president was unanimously ratified by the national executive this morning after the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, moved a resolution on this. Later, it was officially announced that Mr. Krishnamurthi would continue as president for the remaining period.

Although the party is still claiming that Mr. Laxman (who stayed away from the executive committee) is innocent, and that he had taken the money (as exposed by the Tehelka tapes) for party funds, the bottomline is that it has almost acknowledged that he has become a huge embarrassment.

In his opening remarks, Mr. Krishnamurthi referred to the painful situation in which Mr. Laxman had to submit his resignation. But he tried to turn this round to suggest that this was part of an Opposition conspiracy "to create a situation of doubt about the credibility of our leadership." Rather gallantly,

Mr. Krishnamurthi said the party looked forward to Mr. Laxman's name being cleared sooner rather than later. He did not evade the fact that the party was indeed facing a problem as a result of the defence dealings scandal, but he likened it to a ship sailing smoothly suddenly finding itself in the midst of a storm. Just as Tenzing Norgay found the last 100 metres to the top of Mount Everest the most difficult, the BJP was facing difficulties in the last leg of its journey to power, having already emerged as the biggest political party.

But Mr. Krishnamurthi reserved the main attack for the Congress, accusing it of nursing an "unbridled ambition for power," of having an "irresponsible leadership" and a "hysterical" party president, and of "flouting democratic norms with impunity". The main Opposition party was not playing the role demanded of it in a democracy, he said adding its demand that the Government must go was "fascist".

As for the communists, Mr. Krishnamurthi wished to see them out of power in both West Bengal and Kerala. This, he said was the "main objective of the party", provoking some to conclude that perhaps the BJP had arrived at a "deal" with the Congress in Kerala.

'Armsgate' set to dominate BJP meeting

By Smita Gupta
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: It was meant to be a brainstorming session on the forthcoming assembly elections in the Left citadel of West Bengal. Instead, 'armsgate' will dominate the discussions at the BJP's two-day national executive meeting, beginning here on Saturday and culminating with the first of the 'Save the NDA' rallies on Sunday.

This was made clear when former BJP president Bangaru Laxman decided—after a 20-minute discussion on Friday with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee—not to attend the meeting to facilitate a "free and frank discussion" on the Tehelka tapes.

Late on Friday evening, Mr Laxman personally delivered a letter to his successor K. Jana Krishnamurthy, conveying his decision not to attend the meeting and that he had already "apprised Shri Atalji" of it. Party sources say it is customary for all former presidents to sit on the dais at national executive meetings and that it would have been embarrassing for Mr Vajpayee and home minister L.K. Advani to be seen seated next to Mr Laxman.

Also on Friday, RSS joint general secretary Madan Das Devi, the linkman between the RSS and the BJP, came calling on Mr Laxman. Although described as a "casual" meeting, sources say it was to convey the views of the RSS, which has taken a dim view of Mr Laxman accepting money. However, RSS sources indicated that although Mr Laxman had been described as a

"failed swayamsewak", he might be permitted to take the examination later. Clearly, the Sangh is still grappling with how to obliterate the videotape image of Mr Laxman accepting money and at the same time not lose the "social identity" that his presence at the head of the BJP had given the party.

Meanwhile, at the BJP's parliamentary party meeting here, Mr Advani said the party needed to go on the offensive, especially since the Tehelka tapes' credibility had been questioned and the opposition had lowered the prestige of parliament by stalling business.

But, clearly, many BJP MPs were not satisfied with the pep-talk. Among those who asked sharp questions was Rajya Sabha MP B.P. Singhal, a former police IG and, more significantly, brother of VHP chief Ashok Singhal, who had recently spoken about the need to inquire into the allegations against PMO officials.

On Saturday, party sources said the national executive was likely to begin with the confirmation of Jana Krishnamurthy as the party chief, probably by Mr Advani who will make the opening speech, putting an end to all speculation about another change at the top.

The discussions on the post-Thelka political resolution, the post-budget economic resolution and a brief resolution on the destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas will follow. On Sunday, the assembly polls and organisational matters will be discussed, followed by a concluding speech by the Prime Minister.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

24 MAR 2001

BJP sets terms for Mamata

LK
HFI
23/3

HT Correspondent
Kolkata, March 22

THE BJP will not go to the polls in alliance with the Trinamool unless Mamata Banerjee comes out with a clear statement expressing support to the NDA. And there are, Tapan Sikdar said today, "clear instructions" from L K Advani to this effect.

BJP's all-India secretary Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, here for the party's State Executive Committee meeting, was, however, quick to assert that there was no "deadline". The BJP still has ties with the Trinamool but now the party must decide what it wants to do, he said. He accused Mamata of "indirectly supporting" those who conspired to tarnish the image of the NDA by resigning.

The tehelka scam, Sikdar said, was already getting *halka* (light) and the Congress had no chance of bringing the Government down. "There are clear instructions from LK Advaniji that unless she comes forward with her statement the BJP cannot go with her in the polls."

The BJP hopes the alliance will remain, State president Ashim Ghosh said. "WBut so far, we have not received any positive response from the Trinamool. In case the alliance breaks we will contest in 115 seats."

Related report on Page 4

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 MAR 2001

Sangh Parivar backs Vajpayee, targets PMO officials

Blackwill named U.S. ambassador to India

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI: The Parivar 'university' has opened up, but with double-speak. On Thursday afternoon, the Swadeshi Jagran Manch (SJM) blamed the officer on special duty in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), N.K. Singh, and planning commission member Montek Singh Ahluwalia for all the economic ills of the country and even the present crisis. SJM convenor Murlidhar Rao, who was also a delegate to the recently held Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) conclave, stopped short of naming Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's foster son-in-law Ranjan Bhattacharya and principal secretary Brajesh Mishra saying, "I won't name people from A to Z. All non-political persons who are not

accountable to the people are responsible. The government is not being led by political leadership but by people who are insensitive to national interests." Later in the evening, the Sangh, terming itself a "university" and calling Mr Vajpayee its "best pupil ever", came all out in defence of the government. After RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan backtracked on his famous call for the removal of "incompetent officials" and extra-constitutional authorities from the PMO, it was the turn of Vishwa Hindu Parishad chief Ashok Singhal to defend the government. Mr Singhal, addressing the press, blamed corruption and loss of values on the Nehru family. He termed the Tehelka expose part of a conspiracy to destabilise the country. The VHP, which swears by 'Maryada Purushottam Ram', was

asked whether it was a Ram-like quality to hang on to power when allegations had been levelled against the PMO. Mr Singhal merely said, "I don't know anything about the allegations."

Between the government's stability and morality, Mr Singhal chose stability, equating the government's stability with that of the country's. He maintained that Mr Vajpayee was the country's tallest leader who was competent to take action because of allegations against the PMO. Mr Singhal sought a parliamentary debate on the issue. When he was reminded of the debate on defence deals on December 23, 1999 in the Rajya Sabha, which did not result in any action, Mr Singhal merely said parliament should be the authority to devise mechanisms to check corruption.

By Ramesh Chandran
The Times of India News Service
WASHINGTON: Following his confirmation by the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Robert D. Blackwill will arrive in India as the next U.S. ambassador at a crucial time—a time when the Bush administration will have to chart a policy in South Asia with more precision and acuity. In opting for Mr Blackwill, the administration's policy wonks have apparently made a sagacious choice.

He might be an unknown figure in India, but Mr Blackwill has a formidable reputation in the world of academia—notably Harvard—as well as at arcane diplomatic forums interpreting international security issues. However, he is not without his critics—especially the hawkish, conservative sections of the Republican Party which have viewed the 'Engage China' policy advocated by him and the likes of Condoleezza Rice with some suspicion.

Alliance onus on Mamata, says BJP

Arindam Sarkar
Kolkata, March 20

THE BJP is upset at news that the Congress is trying to work out a relationship with the Trinamool in Bengal. However, the Tehelka-stung party is resigned but firm. "If Mamata betrays us now, we will leave her", both Central and State BJP leaders said.

"We want the Trinamool-BJP alliance to last. But Mamata too has a responsibility to make it work. When she left the NDA, our leaders didn't say a thing. But now she is playing with our political enemy (read Congress). This is very unfortunate, to say the least," State BJP president Ashim Ghosh said.

Even Central leaders haven't overlooked the prospect of the Trinamool and the Congress coming together. The BJP's national president Jana Krishna-murthy and vice-president Kailashpati Mishra were not less forthright.

"Time is with us. We are in no hurry to do anything rash. But we are certainly watching what Mamata is doing," Krishna-murthy said over the phone from Delhi.

Apparently, Kailashpati Mishra has let it be known to the State BJP leaders and Union ministers Tapan Sikdar and Satyabrata Mukherjee apart from State president Ashim Ghosh that the party should be ready for all eventualities.

"The onus to maintain the alliance does not lie only with the BJP alone. Mamata also has some responsibility," Kailashpati Mishra said.

Meanwhile, senior State leaders like Trinamool policy-making body chairman Pankaj Banerjee, former Union Minister Ajit Panja, party chief whip Sudip Bandyopadhyay, MP Jayanta Bhattacharya and others are not very eager at all to go with the Congress.

"Trinamool is a new party. Ever since its birth, it has had the BJP as an ally. People voted for this alliance in the 1998 and 1999 Lok Sabha polls because they saw in Mamata a true crusader against the Congress and someone who

was not a member of the CPI(M)'s B-team in Bengal, as they call the Congress here. So why should we commit such a harakiri now?" a senior Trinamool leader said.

They also argue that going with the Congress (and allowing it to contest against the BJP) would send a wrong political signal to the people.

"Mamata would be seen as a political opportunist. And to leave the BJP at this juncture when Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee is doing everything to clear the Defencegate mess caused by scam would upset the Trinamool applegate.

The Congress has no future in Bengal or nationally. It is wel-

come as part of the Bangla Bachao Front but not at the BJP's expense," a senior Trinamool leader said.

Meanwhile, the BJD, the Samata Party, the Shiv Sena and several other NDA partners are pressuring Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to forget about Mamata. "But the PM is still keeping his doors open. Now if she still mucks it up, God help her," said Ashim Ghosh.

But Mamata has made one thing abundantly clear. She won't buckle under pressure from the BJP or the Congress. "As I said before, I will say again, people are with me. If necessary, I will fight the CPI(M) alone," she said.

Jaswant to hold fort as George battles

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MARCH 18

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh was today given additional charge of ministry of defence which fell vacant following the resignation of George Fernandes.

There was no word as to who would take charge of another key ministry — railways — vacated by Mamata Banerjee who quit the government after the Tehelka expose as also the vacancy created by the resignation of her party colleague and Minister of State for External Affairs Ajit Panja.

Jaswant Singh is a former Indian Army officer and an expert on security issues.

The handing over of defence portfolio to Singh is obviously a temporary arrangement as Fernandes has been assured of a return to it once he is cleared by the judicial inquiry into the expose.

"The President of India, as advised by the Prime Minister has directed that Jaswant Singh, Minister of External Affairs, may hold the charge of Minister of Defence, in addition to his current charge," a Rashtrapati Bhavan communique said.

Meanwhile, the stalemate continued on the resignation of three Samata representatives in the Vajpayee ministry — Agriculture Minister Nitish Kumar, Minister of State for Railways Digvijay Singh and Minister of State for Consumer Affairs V Srinivasa Prasad.

Though Prime Minister Vajpayee has not accepted their resignations, the three ministers have not withdrawn them.

There was no word on filling vacancies caused by the resignation of Mamata Banerjee and Ajit



Jaswant Singh leaves South Block just after the announcement that he would hold additional charge of the Defence Ministry — Photo by Ravi Batra

Panja, both belonging to the Trinamool Congress, from the Vajpayee ministry. Both demanded the resignation of Fernandes on the Tehelka issue before quitting.

Earlier, Fernandes said he was considering taking Tehelka to court on charges of defamation

and libel claiming the tapes were "manipulated and concocted".

"What are those tapes, what kind of crimes have been committed in the process," Fernandes told Karan Thapar in BBC's *Hard Talk* programme.

To repeated questions on

whether he was "considering" taking the portal to court, he said "if I get such legal advice, why not."

However, Fernandes said he was aware how litigation was "time-consuming and ... Keeps meandering."

To questions on the tapes, he

said "to suggest that the entire defence procurement establishment of ours is having at every stage persons who could be bought. Is there anything more absurd or obnoxious?"

Asked whether he would re-
CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

from the front page

Jaswant to hold fort as George battles

join the government in case he was called back, Fernandes said. "I have not thought over it", but quoted British labour party leader Harold Wilson as saying "a week is a long time in politics". "If I go to court, I will need a lot of time to deal with it. Between now and then... In four months (the time required by the judicial probe commission to complete its task), there could be lot many developments," he said.

Asked whether he was made the "sacrificial lamb" as the Prime Minister "took note" of charges by R K Jain (Samata Party leader) against Sinha, Fernandes said "I refute it".

Meanwhile, senior army officers, including deputy Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen S S Mehta, in charge of armament purchases, and Lt Gen J S Dhillion, master general of ordnance, may be asked to depose before the Army's high-level court of inquiry into the Tehelka expose, which opens formal proceedings tomorrow, Army sources said today.

While Gen Mehta, a highly decorated armoured corp officer, may be asked to depose as he is the immediate superior of Maj Gen P S K Chaudhary, the officer suspended for accepting money in the sensational Tehelka tapes, Gen Dhillion may be questioned as he heads the Ordnance Corp, five of whose officers are in the dock.

The sources said Vice Chief of Army Staff Lt Gen Vijay Oberoi may also be asked to make a statement before the three-member court of inquiry, headed by Lt Gen S K Jain, which will also include two officers of the rank of senior major generals.

Gen Oberoi heads the tainted equipment and weapons establishment at the Army headquarters. Others who may be asked to depose include Lt Gen Shankar Prasad, director general, infantry, whose name figures in the tapes.

The court of inquiry will begin proceedings in the backdrop of Army chief Gen S Padmanabhan's warning to deal sternly with the guilty and asking troops not to indulge in gossip or rumour mongering.

INDIAN EXPRESS 19 MAR 2001

Rid PMO of bad elements, says Sudarshan

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The heat of the 'Armstrong' expose has perhaps started searing the Prime Minister.



K.S. Sudarshan

On Sunday, RSS chief K.S. Sudarshan, sought the removal of "extra-constitutional authorities" and "incompetent officers" from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). "Incompetent people" in the PMO caused the scam, Mr Sudarshan said.

Former BJP president Bangaru Laxman was heard on the 'Armstrong' video tapes as referring to the PM's principal secretary and national security adviser Brajesh Mishra as one who swung defence deals and the PM's foster son-in-law Ranjan Bhattacharya as one involved in "other deals", particularly in the power sector.

Asked about the role of Mr Ranjan Bhattacharya in the PMO and the allegations

against him, the RSS supremo said "extra-constitutional authorities" should not be allowed to function in the PMO. When a newsman drew a parallel between Mr Rajan Bhattacharya and Mr Sanjay Gandhi as constituting extra-constitutional authorities in the PMO, Mr Sudarshan refused to comment. He, however, said those who "are not accountable to the people should be kept away from power".

Though Mr Sudarshan was in no mood to slam the government over 'Armstrong', he told newsmen that he had spoken to the PM and sought the removal of "incompetent people" in the PMO. Mr Sudarshan, however, refused to say what exactly he had told the PM and what his reactions were. "If the PMO had competent people, such allegations would not have come up," he said.

Mr Sudarshan began by defending the government and stressing that there was no need for the government to step down. Since a probe has been ordered, the most appropriate thing to

do was to establish the truth and let parliament debate the issue. He said former BJP president Bangaru Laxman was seen on tapes taking money for the party funds. "Let us wait for four months to see what the truth is," he added.

Earlier, RSS spokesman M.G. Vaidya said the government should be prepared for a war with Pakistan. The RSS's three-day conclave here passed a resolution on Jammu and Kashmir, terming the J&K cease-fire as futile and calling for destruction of the terrorist training centres in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. When asked whether this would not lead to the Indian Army crossing the Line of Control, thus causing a war with the neighbour, Mr Vaidya said, "Let us be prepared for war."

Asked whether this call was aimed to divert the nation's attention away from 'Armstrong', Mr Vaidya said, "Even before the Tehelka controversy erupted, we had drafted the resolution and it would have come out even if the controversy had not erupted."

THE TIMES OF INDIA

19 MAR 2001

RSS adds temple to govt's woes

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 17: The RSS was struck when the Vajpayee government has its hands full.

The Sangh today virtually rejected the judiciary's role in the Ayodhya issue, urging the Centre to explore "every single avenue" to facilitate construction of the Ram temple on the disputed site.

A resolution adopted by the Sangh's Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha — in session here for three days — also endorsed the time frame set by the VHP-sponsored *dharam sansad* for the Centre to hand over the land to the Ramjanmabhoomi Trust. "The sabha feels the ball is in the government's court and it is up to it to explore every single avenue to respect the deep-felt sentiment vis-à-vis the Ayodhya Ram temple," the resolution said.

"The sabha also welcomes the wise decision of the *dharam sansad* to allow sufficient time for the government to do away with the hurdles which have been needlessly obstructing the temple construction over almost a decade," it added. The *sansad*, in its conclave during the Maha Kumbh, had given the Centre a year's time to do away with the "hurdles" which "obstructed" the construction of the Ram temple.

The timing of the statements is significant. The Sangh, which yesterday said there was nothing untrue about the Tehelka exposé, wants to keep Atal Bihari Vajpayee under pressure and remind him that the issue was still alive.

The RSS claimed that people had "unanimously" expressed their "will" in favour of the Ram temple several times and cited the 100 million signatures from all sections which were submitted to the President in 1993 as an example and a "world record".

Another resolution denounced the razing of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban and argued that it was not a response to the demolition of the "so-called Babri structure" in Ayodhya. It noted that Islamic countries like Malaysia and Egypt have condemned the Taliban decree and blamed the majority of the Muslim clergy in India for upholding the Islamic rule of the seventh and eighth centuries as their "ideal".

The resolution appealed to "enlightened" Muslims to "come forward to extricate the Muslim community from the seventh-century mentality and establish that form of Islam which would be in tune with the present times".

THE TIMES OF INDIA

18 MAR 2001

The BJP — hoist with its own petard

FOR SEVERAL years, the Bharatiya Janata Party has been practising a kind of ruthless opportunistic politics — its Ram, Ram politics went hand-in-hand with the 'aya Ram gaya Ram' politics of deflections and corruption made infamous by Haryana.

"We practise what we preach" was its proud slogan, but with complete cynicism the party went about doing exactly the opposite of what it preached even as it worked overtime to build its image as a disciplined, upright and, above all, a nationalist political force with an exclusive monopoly on patriotism and 'dharma'.

The Tehelka scandal was in fact waiting to happen. Except that in the general atmosphere in which Cabinet berths were being auctioned, MLAs were being bought, MPs were being induced and bureaucrats softened, the entire polity had become insensitive to the goings-on.

The BJP could continue to claim the high moral ground in public life, and, to help it along, the Bofors

For years the BJP has practised a ruthless kind of opportunistic politics... If no one is now listening to its disclaimers on the Tehelka tapes, the party has only itself to blame.

NEENA VYAS reports.

scam, the urea scam, the JMM MPs' bribery scandal and a host of other skeletons in the Congress() cupboard could always be dusted and put on display. The BJP hoped to shine by comparison, and it did.

When the Harshad Mehta scandal relating to the stock exchange burst into the open, the BJP was very much in action behind the scenes. Party leaders seemed to know what

affidavit Mr. Mehta had filed and what he would be doing next even before that was made public. No one

cared to question the BJP's links with big bull, for the focus was entirely on the accusation that Mr. Mehta had carried a suitcase full of currency notes to the then Prime Minister's residence. The Congress() "suitcase" became a prominent election campaign friend of the BJP.

At the time of the JMM bribery scandal, it was Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee, as Leader of the Opposition, who held a joint press conference with Mr. Shalendra Mahto, who admitted in his presence that he had taken money from the Congress(). The focus was again on the then Prime Minister, Mr. P.V. Narasimha Rao. No one cared to ask what Mr. Vajpayee, the fine parliamentarian, was doing by making a hero out of a man who had publicly confessed to having sold his vote in Parliament for some money. Not a word of condemnation for Mr. Mahto, who soon joined the BJP and was later rewarded with a ticket for his wife.

The Ayodhya story has another side to it — corruption. Mr. D.B. Rai, who was the Senior Superintendent of Police at Faizabad, played the role assigned to him by the then Kalyan Singh Government. The CRP was not deployed. Mr. Rai allowed the 'kar sevaks' to enter the Babri Masjid complex, and the job of razing the Masjid to the ground was completed. He resigned his job soon afterwards, and, sure enough, was "accommodated" by the BJP, given a ticket, and became a party MP.

Money may not have changed hands, but was it not corruption to induce a police officer with a passport to Parliament? Yet another Ayodhya 'hero', Mr. K.M. Pandey, who delivered the famous open-the-Babri-Masjid-locks judgment, became a BJP MP.

In 1996, during the 13-day Vajpayee rule, when the BJP was desperately looking for allies and support, senior party leaders were openly inviting MPs from other parties to come and join and take Cabinet berths of their choice. "MPs will queue outside, we are in a position to offer ministries," boasted party leaders, now Ministers. But no one took up the offer, or perhaps not enough inducement was given, and the Government ended its innings in 13 days.

It was around 1998-1999 that Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. L.K. Advani jointly issued an open appeal to Congress() MPs to break away from their party and come and join the BJP. Was that morality? But yet, the party continued to stand on a high moral pedestal. In fact, even after Tehelka the party continued to claim that Mr. Bangaru Laxman had resigned as party president "in the highest traditions of morality" and in Bihar a party leader pompously claimed "we continue to stand on a high moral pedestal".

By 1998, in its desperate search for power, the party was ready to dump its Hindutva "ideology" into the dustbin. It was not the allies who bargained away their agenda, but the BJP which agreed to put its own programme on the back-burner. It had become clear that clinging to power was the first and only

'principle' that the party stood for. It had attacked liberalisation as the Opposition, it embraced globalisation as the ruling party. The bills it blocked in Parliament as the Opposition, it adopted as its own when in Government. And yet it stood firm on a high moral pedestal.

Even while it had the AIADMK as its ally, in a most cynical fashion the BJP had begun cultivating the DMK. In Haryana, it dropped Mr. Bansil Lal to befriend Mr. Om Prakash Chautala of Meham mayhem fame. In Himachal Pradesh, it had no qualms making peace and common cause with Mr. Sukh Ram against whom the party had agitated and held up Parliament for days if not weeks. And yet, the party continued to occupy the high moral ground.

In Uttar Pradesh, the party successfully patched together a Government with bits of broken pieces from other parties, but in Bihar, more recently, it failed. But in both cases it claimed it was acting in defence of democracy and morality. Words had lost their meaning. Morality and opportunism became synonymous, at least in the BJP's dictionary.

In fact, the entire system had got so thoroughly corrupted that, when Tehelka happened, one wondered why it had not happened earlier.

There is hardly anyone in the country who has not had a personal brush with corruption — money has to be given to get a municipal sweeper's job or a "lucrative" police posting. Government transfers have become a regular business. Want a ration card, a passport or a driving licence? Money is the key. Even to get an income tax refund a "commission" has to be paid. In the villages, registering land, getting loans from banks, receiving money orders, getting caste certificates, everything costs money.

Who can believe that big defence contracts, or for that matter any big Government contract, can be had without greasing the palms of politicians and bureaucrats?

Ironically, the party which wanted people to trust Mr. Harshad Mehta and Mr. Mahto, would today like the people to distrust the Tehelka journalists. "It is a political conspiracy, we want to know who is behind it, who is financing it," party leaders have been shouting; senior Ministers are reading out the list of Congress() scammers. If no one is listening, the BJP has only itself to blame.



George Fernandes with Atal Behari Vajpayee... untenable position.

Blowing the whistle

WERE THE thehka.com revelations the finest moment of Indian journalism or were they an essay in a journalistic enterprise of doubtful ethics? No single piece of journalism ever in the past did so much and so effectively to remind one and all that there was a social expectation called probity. But entrapment? May be; but only those who are totally indifferent to the demands of ethics and morality in public life can seek to rubbish the revelations by questioning the methodology Tehelka adopted.

It is rather hilarious that the questions are being raised by a political crowd that has all these years benefited from intrepid journalism. After all it was Mr. Arun Shourie who, in the early 1980s, thought nothing of reporting the babbings of an unsuspecting Gundu Rao over a friendly, off-the-record lunch conversation. That was the age when moral indignation was a much-valued tool in the armour of the journalist; today the same breed of journalists finds itself having to explain away questionable deals. Later on it was Mr. Pritish Nandy who trapped a Hansraj Bhardwaj into paying unflattering compliments to senior Congress() leaders.

And, though the Congress() leaders themselves are quite happy to take political advantage of a journalist's labour, these leaders have in their own time practised every trick in the trade to hamper journalists. The very Congress() leaders who are today strutting before the television cameras are not averse to using their leverage to harass and intimidate professional newsper-

ture would be more scrupulously put together.

It is possible that after the Tehelka tapes, politicians, bureaucrats and the so-called well-informed (read middle men) would be wary of talking to journalists; but then, as every journalist worth his professional grain knows, what an interlocutor values is the scribe's known track record of integrity and competence.

Was the Tehelka investigation a politically-motivated venture? This is not a new question, and has been raised in the past to spike any tendency on the

part of this or that news organisation to look too closely into the shenanigans of those in power. Admittedly, to the extent every good journalistic exercise, whatever the medium, has a political consequence, the Tehelka tapes were definitely politically explosive material. But to its credit, the Tehelka crowd so far has not behaved as if it was a partisan against the NDA Government; rather it has made all the correct noises about documenting a phenomenon which everyone knew existed but was unable or uninspired enough to undertake so far.

From where did the finances come? This is an unfair and motivated question; the question is not asked whenever any established news organisation comes up with a scoop, and there is no reason why Tehelka should be asked to explain its financial credentials. If anything, the Tehelka investigators are to be judged by the results of their labours, and the country is grateful that they have taken the collective *mukhota* of the face of the self-appointed *desh-bakhtis*.

Only those totally indifferent to the demands of ethics and morality in public life can seek to rubbish the revelations by questioning the methods Tehelka used, writes HARISH KHARE.



Tehelka.com's Tarun Tejpal and Mathew Samuel... making waves.

The Government, whose "holier-than-thou" tone is set by former journalists and former crusaders, reportedly ordered an inquisitorial inquiry into the thehka.com organisation. May be the enterprise is financed by people who have a shady past; but, by the same yardsticks most of our so-called "professionally run" corporate firms would be open to close scrutiny.

Still, the Government is entitled to exercise every quiver in its coercive and intimidatory armour. May be the next dot.com investigative journalistic ven-



Professors demand the NDA Government's resignation.

BJP talks of international conspiracy

SUDESH K VERMA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 16. — While the RSS today dumped the former BJP president, Mr Bangaru Laxman, as a failed swayamsevak after the Tehelka expose, the BJP made plans to re-charge its cadre after the expose that showed Mr Laxman taking money to allegedly forward a defence deal.

The BJP plans to tell its cadre that there was an international conspiracy to dislodge this government and to install the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, as the Prime Minister. This would be hammered out during the week-long campaign the party plans from 19 to 25 March.

Some important BJP leaders admitted that Mr Laxman's conduct was questionable but they also said that the party had no alternative but to defend the former president as the party's redemption would not come without his redemption. The party's strategy now is to focus on the need for transparent funding.

Even after the RSS spokesperson, Mr MG Vaidya, said that Mr Laxman had failed as a swayamsevak, not a single BJP leader was ready to comment. Some leaders even said that he



Mr Bangaru Laxman

was a hard working person who got trapped. Mr Vaidya's comment came when some journalists sought his comments on Mr Laxman's conduct.

The BJP has formed three committees to counter the after-effects of the Tehelka revelations and to guide the party's aggressive week-long campaign. The committee under the party general secretary, Mr Narendra Modi, is to bring out a white paper on the omissions and commissions of the previous governments and their reactions after corruption charges were levelled against them.

It would contrast these with the achievements of the NDA coalition and its attempt to keep up the government's mo-

ral fabric. The party vice-president, Mr Kailaspati Mishra, and the general secretary, Mr Sahib Singh Verma, are members of the committee.

The second committee under the party vice-president, Mr Pyarelal Khandelwal, is to mobilise party workers and to give them arguments to counter the Tehelka exposures, which the BJP has termed as a misinformation campaign. The party secretary, Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, is a member of the committee.

The third committee is to take care of the media. Understanding media psyche and individual journalists is the job of this committee. The party under Mr Jana Krishnamurthy has once again relied on the trusted hands of the senior leader, Mr JP Mathur. The general secretary, Mr Sunil Shastri, is a member of the media committee.

Now the task of the BJP has become difficult as the RSS has rejected the conspiracy theory and has said that "prima facie what tehelka.Com has exposed is true and the government will have to take care of its administration".

"After Bofors it was decided that there will be no middlemen in defence deals but that has not been followed. It is unfortunate," Mr Vaidya said.

9-6-10

BANGARU:

5-6-10

(Continued from page 1)
nothing wrong in the party president taking money. "He receives so many persons. If he received money, one cannot connect it to a deal", the party spokesperson said. "The party issues the receipt later", he said

Earlier, Parliament was in uproar today, its normal business severely disrupted, as word spread about the alleged revelations by tehelka.com, an Internet news and features portal, of money changing hands in defence deals.

The press conference called by tehelka showed footage which the dotcom said implicates politicians, bureaucrats and defence officers in taking money or talking about it while interacting with a dotcom staffer who posed as a defence dealer offering a fictitious contract.

Politicians literally framed in the tehelka footage included the BJP president, Mr Bangaru Laxman, and Samata Party's Ms Jaya Jaitley. The latter was not available for comment.

Defence ministry sources said some inquiries may start tomorrow about the alleged involvement of defence personnel. In Parliament, the Congress demanded a statement from the government. Outside Parliament, the party demanded the Vajpayee government's resignation.

When no statement was forthcoming from the government before the Opposition-set deadline of 6 p.m. in the Lok Sabha, Congress members stormed into the well of the House raising slogans and asked the chair to direct the government to make a statement in the House. The House was adjourned for the day. In the Rajya Sabha, Mr Manmohan Singh and Mr Pranab Mukherjee raised the issue.

The cause of all this furore was a well-attended press conference called by Tehelka this afternoon in the Capital. At the conference, the portal's representatives elaborated a "sting operation" codenamed Operation West End.

This is Tehelka's second sting operation. It had come out with a similar "expose" on match-fixing last year.

Pretending to be part of arms manufacturer selling a high-quality binoculars, a Tehelka representative wearing a hidden camera recorded "incriminating conversations" and, in some cases, handing over of money. Those caught in the camera included top politicians, bureaucrats and army officers.

Tehelka screened the tapes of the officials receiving money. Among those who were photographed receiving money were Mr Laxman, Mr

Narendra Singh, additional financial advisor, ministry of defence, Mr H C Pant, deputy secretary, ministry of defence (MoD officials said he is no longer in the ministry) and Brigadier Iqbal Singh, prospective procurement officer. The recording also showed money changing hands in Ms Jaitley's office.

According to the Tehelka transcript, Rs 1 lakh was paid to Mr Laxman at his residence on 5 January, 2001. The transcript says Ms Jaitley took Rs 2 lakh at the defence minister, Mr George Fernandes' residence last year. A senior army officer, Major-general PSK Choudhary, additional director-general, weapons and equipment, received Rs 1 lakh at his residence on Christmas eve last year. He was presented with a gold chain on 16 December at the residence of a retired Major-general SP Murgai.

The list of recipients include Brigadier Iqbal Singh, prospective procurement officer. He received Rs 50,000 at the Park Hotel on 11 November. According to tehelka, the other serving officer who received money was Brigadier Anil Sehgal of the Directorate-general of Ordnance and Supply at Arjun Vihar on 5 September and 21 September last year.

He received Rs 20,000 on both occasions. Mr Pant of the defence ministry, according to Tehelka's transcript, got Rs 20,000 in November last year, and Rs 10,000 in December. Another politician shown as being paid was the national treasurer of the Samata Party, Mr R K Jain, who received Rs 50,000.

Mr Jain is quoted as saying in the transcripts that he is "basically the front of Jaya Jaitley and George Fernandes... So there are two defence ministers. One is Mr George Fernandes, another is Ms Jaya Jaitley." During Tehelka's conversation with Ms Jaitley, the Samata Party leader is non-committal but at the end she says: "You can come any time. Give me the details."

The Tehelka transcript mentions other senior army officers. Major-general Manjit Singh Ahluwalia of the Ordnance and Supply directorate, says the transcript, agreed to be paid a token bribe of Rs 50,000 but it was "never delivered to him."

He is quoted as saying: "...If you are talking about a deal which is Rs 20 crore here, Rs 60 crore there, make a profit of Rs 5 crore, saala, if you come to my house to meet me on Diwali, you can't talk without bringing Blue Label (a premier brand of Scotch whisky). If you are talking of bloody making a couple of crores of rupees, you can't give me bloody Black Label (another brand of Scotch, generally considered inferior to Blue Label). Let's be very clear about it." He said he wasn't keen on a meal at the Defence Officers Institute but at a five-star hotel.

Another very senior Army officer, Lieutenant-General Shankar Prasad, director-general, infantry and mistakenly referred to as Major-General in the transcript, is also mentioned. The transcript said: General Prasad, he called West End a couple of times basically to say that 'his' work would start only after the evaluation trials."

The transcript also has liberal references to Mr Ranjan Bhattacharya, the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's son-in-law. An arms trader, Mr RK Gupta, says how his deals "finished both Mr Ranjan Bhattacharya and Mr Brajesh Mishra, principal secretary to the PM in one deal."

THE STATESMAN

9 MAR 2001

RSS denies links with RK Gupta

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 13

THE RSS today denied any links with R K Gupta. Gupta figures prominently in the tehelka.com expose on defence deals.

Tehelka had described him a "super trustee" in the Sangh. Being an RSS functionary, Gupta claimed to be close to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and BJP chief Bangaru Laxman.

RSS spokesman M G Vaidya tonight denied that Gupta was a trustee or an office-bearer of the organisation, either at the central or the state level. "The RSS does not have a trust. So there is no question of Gupta being a trustee," he said.

Vaidya said Gupta was one of the contractors who built the RSS headquarters building at Jhandewalan in the late '60s. In the Tehelka tape, Gupta claimed that in 1967, he built for free the RSS building which cost him over Rs 50 lakh.

"During the Emergency, I gave them Rs 1 crore and 10 lakh when nobody was prepared to listen to telephone calls. And 50,000 dollars in London and USA," Gupta claimed. He also bragged that he was one up on Vajpayee's foster son-in-law Ranjan Bhattacharya in fixing deals as the latter knew "his strength in the party".

It's a political conspiracy: Bangaru

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 13

CENTRAL BJP leaders, including Prime Minister A B Vajpayee and party chief Bangaru Laxman, were stunned by allegations of corruption levelled against them and other political leaders by tehelka.com today.

A couple of hours after the allegations were made Laxman met reporters to deny that he had any hand in defence deals. But he admitted accepting funds from individuals for the party.

When reminded about his party's decision not to accept cash after the hawala scam, he said it was not practical and the party began to accept cash.

The first reaction of some senior BJP leaders was that the allegations were not substantiated.

They felt there was nothing scandalous about the party chief accepting contributions.

A majority of BJP leaders saw a "political conspiracy" as the timing of the allegations aimed at helping the Congress to make another attempt to destabilise the NDA Government before the next round of Assembly polls.

Other BJP leaders, however, said the party would have to rally behind the Prime Minister and the party chief to counter the allegations even if a section of

FUND RAISING BY BJP IN SHARP FOCUS

ALLEGATIONS OF corruption and BJP chief Bangaru Laxman's admission that he saw no wrong in accepting contributions in cash for the party have brought into focus the way it collects funds.

Although senior BJP leaders do not see anything unethical in Laxman receiving cash from private individuals, others say it shows the BJP is not strictly depending on its scheme, "Aajiwani Sahyog Nidhi".

Launched at the BJP's Jaipur conclave in 1997, the scheme is supposed to reaffirm the party's commitment towards cementing probity in public life with transparency and accountability.

Under this scheme, which many BJP leaders say is "path-breaking" towards clean politics, anyone can contribute Rs 1,000, Rs 5,000 or Rs 10,000 annually to the Aajiwani Sahyog Nidhi for party work.

This contribution can be sent to the central office or respective State offices. The BJP is supposed to register the name, address and contribution of every contributor on its central computer at the party headquarters here.

During his tenure, Laxman's predecessor Kushabhau Thakre campaigned among the BJP leaders and cadres to make contributions under the scheme so that the party could claim that it had taken the first step towards clean politics.

Some BJP leaders say even though the scheme is in operation, many individuals want to make contributions without becoming members of the BJP. "People do come to the BJP chief and other leaders and offer their contributions, which are promptly accounted and receipts issued to them," says a BJP leader. "There are instances where the contributors insist that they do not need any receipt," says a party functionary.

The rising cost of running the party apparatus not only in the Capital but also in the States has forced the BJP leaders to accept contributions.

the party was not happy with the functioning of the PMO of Vajpayee's aides.

Laxman, who spoke to Vajpayee and Advani, said, "My conscience is clear. I have no knowl-

edge of any defence deal. I have been made a target in a political conspiracy because as a Dalit leader I have enabled my party to make inroads into the support base of others."

Laxman said, "There is no scam but only a political conspiracy. Many people come to me to make donations for the party. I do not stop anyone. Some people bring cheques and some bring cash, which I pass on to the party treasurer."

The BJP chief, who was chosen by the Prime Minister to succeed Kushabhau Thakre, asked, "Is it possible that somebody will offer a lakh of rupees for a defence deal? Besides, do people come with hidden cameras for striking deals? Is not a clear case of a political frame-up? Why should Congress leaders be present at the place where the allegations are made?"

He said that he did not invite the Tehelka team to his office. They had claimed to be traders who wanted to meet him. He said they offered money for the party and he took it. Bangaru alleged that the video was a "cut and paste job".

Was a receipt issued for the money he received? "I will have to check with the treasurer. I sent the contributions that come to me to him. This is not unusual."

BJP spokesperson V K Malhotra said, "We do not know about the allegations. Any discussion in Parliament will have to be a structured debate. The Government and the party will reply to the Opposition's charges."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 3 MAR 2001

BJP welcomes court verdict in Babri demolition case

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 12 FEBRUARY

THE BJP, on Monday, predictably welcomed the high court verdict setting aside a notification for trial of three Union ministers and five others accused in the Babri case, saying that "their acquittal shows that the government of the day had deliberately sought to get them convicted."

"We welcome the verdict of the court and their acquittal shows that the names of the eight persons were added as an afterthought," BJP leader J.P. Mathur told reporters while reacting to the verdict.

Among the eight accused who got a reprieve on Monday from the charges framed against them by the special CBI court, sports minister Uma Bharati said "the judgement had made it clear that the demolition of the Babri structure on December 6,

1992, was not part of any conspiracy but only an outburst of public sentiments."

The fiery BJP leader added for good measure: "I do not fear any punishment. I am ready to lay down my life for the Ram mandir."

While Union home minister L.K. Advani was not available for comment due to his engagements in Ahmedabad, HRD minister Murli Manohar Joshi refused to comment on his acquittal.

Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader Giriraj Kishore, however, in his reaction said, "the verdict will silence all those who had been demanding the resignations of Mr L.K. Advani, Mr M.M. Joshi and Ms Uma Bharati (in the light of the trials pending against them in the Babri demolition case)."

In complete agreement with him was a buoyed up BJP. According to Mr Mathur, "with this ruling by the court the

Opposition demand for the resignation of Mr Advani, Mr Joshi and Ms Bharati would come to nought."

"I think it was prejudicial on the part of the then government to add the names of these persons later," he said.

The VHP seized the opportunity to claim that today's verdict was only "a vindication of Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's stand that the construction of Ram temple at Ayodhya was an expression of national sentiments."

"The court has respected the sentiments of crores of people," Mr Giriraj Kishore was quoted by the agencies as saying.

"The CBI should not have filed the chargesheet in the first place," the VHP leader noted and hoped that "popular sentiments would be taken into account" while deciding the cases against the 40 other accused, whose trial was upheld by the high court bench on Monday, as well.

The Economic Times

13 FEB 2001

BJP for close look at J&K ceasefire

51-8
18/1

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jan. 17. — The BJP today asked the Centre to make a serious assessment of the situation in Jammu and Kashmir while undertaking a review of the unilateral ceasefire that ends on 26 January. It hinted opposition to any further extension of the ceasefire, if violence did not stop in the Kashmir Valley.

"It may not be worthwhile to have a further unilateral ceasefire if this type of violence continues in the Kashmir Valley," the party spokesperson, Mr Jana Krishnamurthy, said. He was giving the party's reaction to the militants' attack at Srinagar airport.

The BJP's tough talking is for the consumption of its hardline cadre and an attempt to prepare itself if the situation deteriorates further, forcing the government to call off the ceasefire. The government's assessment has been that the ceasefire move has paid off in terms of the people's response and international recognition of India's sincerity towards peace.

Mr Krishnamurthy said the airport attack and the remark of Pakistan's chief executive, General Pervez Musharraf, showed that it was

either not interested in peace or was unable to control the activities of the terrorist outfits.

Gen Musharraf had reportedly said that peace could be attained in the Kashmir Valley only if India talked to the militants. "Pakistan should make it clear if it is serious about talks with India on Kashmir," the BJP leader said.

The suicide attack by the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba, in which six were killed, demonstrated that Pakistan was not serious about the ceasefire and that violence would not stop unless something was done at the source. India could not afford such violence, he said.

Mr Krishnamurthy clarified that the government was ready to talk to all sections in J&K and even to have bilateral talks with Pakistan on all pending issues including Kashmir. However, Pakistan must reciprocate India's efforts, he added.

He claimed the ground situation in the Valley had improved and this showed that people wanted peace. The BJP leader denied the suggestion that the "ceasefire" decision was a failure. He pooh-poohed Miss J Jayalalitha's statement that the government had mishandled the Kashmir issue.

THE STATESMAN

18 JAN 2011

Jain shows Mishra sitcom minus proof

FROM CHANDAN NANDY

New Delhi, Jan. 5: It was billed an exposé against Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's principal secretary, National Security Adviser Brajesh Mishra.

At the end, the 41-minute "show" turned out to be an exposé of the Joint American Indian Network Television's (Jain TV) lack of acumen in investigative journalism.

The first episode of Jain TV's "pardafash" (exposé) against Mishra, previewed for journalists at the Press Club this evening, nearly three months after network chairman J.K. Jain was branded an ISI agent in a Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) report, began with a chanting of a shloka (*namo arihanta namo, namo siddhanta namo*). The next pictures carried footages of a temple and a giant idol of Shiva. There was also the curious appearance of BJP leader Vijaya Raje Scindia performing puja.

It was hard to comprehend whether Jain's exposé was on Indian mythology or corruption and nepotism at high places.

The streaming video had a danseuse performing by an idol of Ganesh. Suddenly, a computer-generated artillery shell exploded, proclaiming Jain TV's much-awaited exposé. But the story

didn't follow.

Hopes soared when a clipping of Raisina Hills was shown, but this was followed by a song: *Kahani hai diye ki aur toofan ki*. Of course, Jain was the lamp that would not be extinguished by the storm and stink allegedly raised by Mishra.

The following video-audio sequences shook the small and dingy Press Club hall: blinding light, thunder, lightning, storm and tidal waves and more songs: *nanha sa diya, usne hamla kiya, yeh kahani hai diye aur toofan ki*.

Finally, Jain is on the screen, making a point on how unbridled power can get to the head. "What will follow is a *bhandaphor* of the system and not against any individual," he says, and leads the audience to a few old clippings of Vajpayee's public speeches as an idealistic Opposition leader. Jain was trying to suggest that Vajpayee, after tasting power, was now



J.K. Jain at a news conference in Delhi. Picture by J. S. Yadav

doing exactly the opposite of what he had vowed to do.

The so-called exposé focused on two allegations against Mishra: misuse of the country's intelligence agencies for personal gain as well as carrying out political vendetta and nepotism.

Jain highlighted the case of Aftab Hussein Saikia, who was to be selected as a judge of Gauhati High Court in 1999 by a panel of Supreme Court justice Brajesh

Kumar, then Gauhati High Court chief justice N.C. Jain and present Chhattisgarh chief justice W.A. Sishak.

Apparently, a RAW report alleged Saikia was an ISI agent. But Jain could produce no documentary proof that such a report actually existed or, for that matter, how Brajesh Mishra had "authorised" RAW to write such a report.

This was followed by a "commercial break", which again showed old video

clippings of Vajpayee's speeches on how Rajiv Gandhi should be hauled up before a court of law for poor handling of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and Punjab.

For his allegations of nepotism (*bhai bhaijabad*) against Mishra, Jain highlighted two cases in which the principal secretary allegedly favoured his niece and nephew. While Mishra bent rules to procure advertisement worth Rs 10 crore for his niece, he pro-

duced lucrative contracts for his nephew. Charges without a shred of documentary evidence.

What was played up was how Mishra managed to get another nephew, a brigadier, shifted from the Kargil battlefield before the May 1999 launch of Operation Vijay in northern Kashmir.

The anchor alleged that the brigadier was a coward and did not have the courage to fight the Pakistani intruders. So his "uncle" got him the job at Maruti Udyog.

The appointment allegedly took place on June 1, 1999. To substantiate this, a Maruti employee, identified as Mathew Abraham, was quoted as having said the appointment took place because strings were pulled at high places.

Jain has promised to telecast the second episode on January 7.

The focus of the next II will be on the "mystery" of how Mishra and an individual industrial house which was not named

Asked whether the allegations made in his exposé would be sustainable in a court of law, Jain said: "If I am not convinced, I would not have telecast it."

But he would not say whether the legal notice served by him on Vajpayee, Brajesh Mishra, the RAW, the Intelligence Bureau and home secretary Kamal Pande would be followed by a criminal defamation plaint.

THE TELEGRAPH

6 JAN 2001

Vajpayee asks party to spread WTO gospel nationwide

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 5

ON THURSDAY, it was the BJP, which rolled out a set of 13 recommendations for the Government to work on to deal with the problems facing agriculture and farmers. Today, it was Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's turn to solicit party's cooperation on this front.

Wrapping up the two-day national executive meeting, Mr Vajpayee exhorted party workers to fan out to inform and explain to the people of the commitments made to the WTO during the reign of the Congress and the UF governments, the issues raised because of it, and various schemes launched by the NDA Government for the benefit of the poor and the agricultural labour.

"It cannot be done by the Government alone. The party must also take it up and carry the message to the people," he said, confining his brief valedictory address to the farmers' plight, according to BJP vice President Jana Krishnamurthy.

He also warned that even as the Government was working out measures to contend with the paradox of overflowing godowns and hun-

Ayodhya musings

FIRST HE spoke on the Ayodhya issue outside Parliament. Then it was in Parliament, and finally in the newspapers through his Kerala musings. Today, Prime Minister Vajpayee referred to it in the BJP National Executive, asserting that his comments on the issue were made "after due consideration". Vajpayee, who did not specify which of his statements he had in mind, however, asserted that he had not said anything new and that the law would take its course if anyone violated the status quo.

HTC, New Delhi

gry people, the Opposition would try to exploit the situation by playing on the theme that a hungry farmer was an angry farmer.

The Prime Minister also provided enough indications of his concern that the existing problem of surplus stocks could undermine output later. He urged the need to maintain a stock of foodgrains to make up the shortfall if the next crop was not a good one.

With agriculture weighing heavy on the NE, party president

Bangaru Laxman today constituted a seven-member committee headed by Bhairon Singh Shekhawat to study the recently announced Agriculture Policy and submit its report within a month.

On the Kashmir front, the BJP came out against holding talks with Pakistan until it accepts the sanctity of the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration, gives up on cross-border terrorism, reins in the ISI and puts a stop to its anti-India propaganda.

While endorsing the Government's "bold initiative" of a ceasefire in Kashmir and its view that talks can be held with parties and organisations in the State, the executive stressed that these talks must be delinked from any dialogue with Pakistan. "The question of trilateral talks does not arise," the party stated in a resolution it adopted today on the "Peace Initiative in Jammu and Kashmir."

The resolution observed that although there was a decline in violence in the northern States, Pak-based organisations like Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, Jaish-e-Mohammad and Harkat-ul-Mujahiddin have also stepped up their activities, with the attack on the Red Fort and threat to attack the PMO.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

6 JAN 2007

Legal notice on Vajpayee, Brajesh Mishra for ISI agent slur

BJP hits back after Jain jolt

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Jan. 4: The two-day BJP national executive began here today under the shadow of a legal notice served on Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and his principal secretary Brajesh Mishra by the party's former Rajya Sabha MP, J.K. Jain.

The BJP struck back by dropping Jain from its national executive. In a curt letter to the owner of Jain TV, party president Bangaru Laxman directed him not to attend the meeting.

Party leaders decided yesterday to drop him after Jain served a legal notice on Vajpayee and Mishra under Section 80 of the CrPC, seeking an apology for branding him an ISI agent. The notice also sought the dismissal of Mishra and the RAW director for "tarnishing his reputation".

The other provocation for taking pre-emptive action against Jain was a possibility that a handful of national executive members — allegedly put up by former BJP president Kushabhau Thakre — might raise the issue of why Jain was being "hounded" by RAW and, by implication, Mishra and the Prime Minister's Office. These members hailing from Madhya Pradesh are not just Thakre loyalists, but also



Jain

owe their political careers to party veteran Vijaya Raje Scindia, Jain's now-estranged mentor. The two fell out over a dispute over prime property in central Delhi which houses Jain's TV studio.

"Once the leadership got wind of this plan, they decided to scuttle it by removing Jain. They also feared he might have talked to the media, so they wanted to avert an embarrassment," BJP sources said.

Asked if Jain would be expelled from primary membership, party spokesman Jana Krishnamurthy said: "It has come to the ears of the leadership that something was told through Jain TV. At an appropriate time, appropriate action will be taken."

Jain has threatened to expose the "black deeds" of Mishra through a "landmark in investigative journalism". Asked if this constituted anti-party activity, Krishnamurthy said: "The party will watch how he proceeds. If the situation reaches a stage for action to be taken, the leadership will take it." Jain has called a news conference tomorrow.

BJP sources, however, said Jain's expulsion was inevitable ever since he trained his guns on Vajpayee.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 ►

THE TELEGRAPH

5 JAN 2001

BJP backs Atal on Ayodhya, truce

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 4

THE BJP today endorsed the Government's Ayodhya policy and the Prime Minister's cease-fire in Kashmir, with BJP President Bangaru Laxman coming out in full support of the "era of change" ushered in by Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

In his opening remarks to the meeting, Laxman maintained that the PM's ceasefire initiative has achieved initial success, inaugurated a new era in the effort to bring peace to Kashmir and exposed and isolated the Pak-sponsored militant outfits and their 'hate India' ideology. But the party urged vigilance in exposing their designs to disrupt harmony.

He also rapped the Opposition for raking the Ayodhya issue in a bid to stall the Government's

efforts to implement the National Agenda of Governance. "I am confident that our partners in the NDA will carry on the good work conforming to the coalition dharma to which we are committed," he said.

Laxman also sought to inspire the 200-plus members, particularly for the forthcoming assembly polls, by claiming that the party has been able to considerably bridge the gap that existed with the minorities, dalits, adivasis and OBCs.

"We have been able to remove the longstanding misconceptions in their minds," the author of the Nagpur Message said, as he called for redoubling of efforts to consolidate the gains and blamed political opponents for their "false

and vicious propaganda" on this score. For the forthcoming assembly elections, Mr Laxman's buzz was: Expand your base, forge alliances and talk development.

According to him, the BJP had "immense opportunities" to increase its strength substantially in the states that were going to polls and in some cases could

Party Resolution

even bid for power" either on its own or along with allies and friendly parties. Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry, Kerala, West Bengal and Assam are poised for assembly elections.

Meanwhile, the proposal in the draft economic resolution, giving primacy to reduction in diesel prices, was dropped.

But to deal with the stress on the agricultural sector stemming from

surplus production (and not because of shortages as earlier), the Resolution called for a 13-point action programme.

Even while seeking to extend economic reform measures to the agricultural sector, in a major step it demanded increase in import duties to the bound level on agro-products to protect the domestic farm sector.

It called for free movement of foodgrains, limiting the FCI's role to maintaining buffer stocks, decentralising PDS and involving the private sector in handling procurement, storage and distribution.

The party asked the government to give priority to food work programme, linkage of crop insurance with loans and timely payment for the farmers' produce, among other things.

Related reports on Page 11

BJP backs Govt.'s fight against terror

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 29. After the initial brouhaha over its tough posture on tackling cross-border terrorism, the BJP today rallied behind the Government's efforts in the fight against terrorism and added that it was not in favour of a war with Pakistan, but a befitting reply would be given if "Pakistan chooses to impose a war on us."

In the political resolution adopted at the end of the day-long emergency meeting of the national executive here, the BJP sought to lay down a new, single point national agenda in the post-December 13 situation. "The new situation has practically made the nation's agenda a one point agenda. The country has now but one aim — to defeat and root out terrorism from our soil."

Observing that the terrorist attack on the Parliament House has resulted in a nation-wide demand for an effective response, the resolution said that while some people had called for retaliatory attacks on the training camps in Pak.-occupied Kashmir others had spoken of the need for an all-out war against Pakistan.

"The Government has shown immense restraint in the face of grave provocation. However, as the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, said in his speech in Parliament, our restraint must not be taken as a sign of weakness. Our fight is not against the people of Pakistan but against the phenomenon of terrorism and against those who support and encourage terrorism as a matter of state policy born out of hatred for India," it said.

Calling upon the Pakistan Government to take immediate and stern action against all the terrorists who have launched a campaign of terror and destruction



The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, with the BJP president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthy, and the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, at the party's national executive in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

across the border, the resolution said the people of India "wish to live in peace and harmony with all their neighbours, but if Pakistan seeks the path of confrontation the consequences will be disastrous for it."

Welcoming the steps taken by the Government to put Pakistan on notice, the party said these were some of the initial measures to warn Pakistan that the people of India were reaching the end of their tether.

Commending the "well-conceived and concerted diplomatic offensive" launched by the Government to impress upon the international community Pakistan's culpability in the terrorist attack on the Parliament House, the resolution said the Prime Minister had already emphasised that there could not be double standards in judging acts of terrorism.

"The party notes that support for India among the governments

and peoples in the West and elsewhere has been growing. At the same time, we believe that the U.S. and other Western nations can and must do much more to put effective pressure on Pakistan to stop its sponsorship of terrorism against India," it said.

The party suggested that Pakistanis illegally staying in India after the expiry of their visas should be asked to leave the country.

Earlier, the party president, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthy, set the tone for the meeting by entrusting to the Government "such actions as are necessary" to tackle terrorism while assuring it of the party's full support.

"It must be left to the Government to take such actions that are necessary to fulfil its commitment that they shall not allow terrorism to operate against India. I can assure the Government that not only the party but also the entire nation is totally behind its efforts

towards this end," Mr. Krishnamurthy said in his introductory remarks.

With an eye on the coming Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab and Uttaranchal, the party suggested to the Government to remove taxes and levies on agricultural inputs and implements.

Mr. Krishnamurthy urged the Government to consider if it would be beyond its means to remove taxes and other levies on agricultural inputs and implements "so that agriculture as a whole will benefit with its cost of production going down."

Later, the party general secretary and spokesman, Mr. Sunil Shastri, told presspersons that the state units of Punjab, U.P. and Uttaranchal also gave their assessment of the coming Assembly polls. He said the list of candidates would be finalised by the central election committee.

THE HINDU

30 DEC 2001

BJP seeks war on terror, not Pakistan

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 26: After the "Attack Pakistan" slogans which marked its responses since December 13, the BJP today toned down its demand for "hot pursuit" and stated that "our fight is against terrorism and not against Pakistan and, least of all, against the people of Pakistan".

A press statement from BJP general secretary Sunil Shastri today spelt out the BJP's new approach which seemed to be in tune with the Centre's efforts "to

bring Pakistan down on its knees" through a diplomatic offensive.

"We would like to urge the government of India to launch a diplomatic campaign against Pakistan's involvement and its support to terrorist activities against India," the BJP said. While Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf continued making belligerent statements, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee and home minister L.K. Advani had made it clear that India did not want war, the statement added.

"The Prime Minister said

yesterday, "We do not want war, but it is being thrust on us. We will have to face it." Also yesterday, the home minister said, "neither the government nor the people want a war..."

The BJP's new line stems from the perception that the Centre may not be able to go in for a full-scale confrontation with Pakistan immediately, at least not until it has exhausted the diplomatic options.

More importantly, sources acknowledged that the Line of Control could not be transgressed as long as US forces had an air and naval presence

in Pakistan. Therefore, BJP sources said it was "counterproductive" to indulge in too much sabre-rattling and build up public opinion to such a pitch that it was "war or nothing".

"We cannot afford to arouse public expectations too much, especially in the states going to polls," sources conceded.

They said the chief ministers of two states going to polls — Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, who reportedly clamoured for instant strikes across the border — were told to restrain themselves and "appreciate ground realities".

A resolution that will be adopted by the BJP in its national executive, to be held in the capital on December 29, would spell out its stand in clear terms. But sources said that it would be in keeping with the government's stand and no deviations, major or small, would be made.

The message the resolution is expected to give is two-fold: the BJP is fully behind the government and the government is determined to root out terrorism.

The presence of three former Prime Ministers — V.P. Singh, I.K. Gujral and P.V. Narasimha

Rao — in a gathering of poets on Atal Bihari Vajpayee's birthday yesterday will be played up by the party of "proof" of the "solid" national backing the government had at this juncture.

"People will be told that in this hour of crisis the country will have to support Atalji because he alone has the vision and strength to fight such a crucial battle," sources claimed.

The slogan in Uttar Pradesh and the other states would be something like this: a vote for the BJP would be a vote for Vajpayee and a vote for Vajpayee would be one against terrorism.

Babri demolition a setback for BJP: Advani

New Delhi, December 26

LK ADVANI today told Liberhan Commission that the demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya was a "big setback" for the BJP's cause as the party was committed to the rule of law and did not want to build the Ram temple by force.

"I could visualise that the demolition would be a big setback for the cause the BJP was seeking to promote because the party was not only committed to supporting the VHP's movement for building a Ram temple at the place where Ram is believed to have been born, but it was also committed to the Rule of Law," the Home Minister said.

Deposing as a witness before the commission probing into the demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya, Advani said: "The movement and slogans (by kar sevaks) have to be seen

in the background of the whole controversy which emphasises that the de facto temple needs to be converted into a de jure temple by process of law, which can be achieved either by mutual agreement, court order or by legislation but nothing has to be done by force or any illegal manner."

He said he had clarified in an article a fortnight after the demolition that "the demolition would affect our credibility, which is very crucial for a political party".

Advani said the movement was successful till the events of December 6, 1992, but due to the acts of "a few hundred people", who did not "heed" the appeals of the leaders present there to come down from the domes, "we lost control over it".

Considering the size and dimension of the movement, "we succeeded in our effort right up to December 6 in

'Attack on journalists prompted by guilt'

L K ADVANI on Wednesday told the Liberhan Commission that some kar sevaks had attacked journalists and cameramen during the demolition of the disputed structure at Ayodhya because they had a sense of guilt which they wanted to hide.

"Suppose a person is indulging in an act of vandalism and he sees a pressman or a cameraman reporting his unlawful act and he attacks him on that account, he is only compounding his initial illegal act," Advani said. He said he had condemned the attack on journalists when he learnt about it through press reports the next day and that he had not been aware of the attack on that day as the place where the incident took place was not visible from the dais where he was present with other leaders.

PTI, New Delhi

giving it a kind of direction that we wanted it to have but because of a few hundred people, suddenly we lost the control over the movement", he said.

Advani said when kar sevaks were hammering away at the dome, Rajmata was manhandled by the crowd.

Vijayraje Scindia appealed to them to stop. Uma Bharti and Pramod Mahajan too tried to stop the kar sevaks, but failed. VHP leader Ashok Singhal, who tried to pacify the agitated kar sevaks, was manhandled by the crowd.

Leaders of the BJP, RSS and VHP were "shocked" and taken "aback" when they heard the "thud" of the first dome falling. "...I could see that while among the leaders, most seemed shocked and taken aback that something unforeseen and unplanned was happening, among the crowd down below the dais, the mood was different... it seemed that a mood of relief and in a section there was even of elation," Advani said. He denied having called for kar seva with "shovels and bricks" in the speeches during his yatra from Varanasi to Ayodhya before December 6, 1992.

As the commission's counsel suggested that Advani had ended his speeches with the slogan "*kasam Ram ki khate hain, mandir wahin banainge* (we take a pledge in the name of Lord Ram that the temple will be built at the same place), Advani said: "It is possi-

ble, I don't remember...it was a popular slogan at that time but it is not correct that I invariably ended my speeches with this popular slogan."

He said the message behind the slogan was that the temple has to be built at the "very spot" believed to be the birth place of Ram as a temple already existed there, which was "destroyed by Babar and a masjid was built there".

Advani refused to comment on the efficacy of the controversial Provincial Armed Constabulary (PAC) in dealing with the communal situation in Uttar Pradesh. He skirted the issue on the plea that the query was posed to him in his capacity as Home Minister.

Advani was responding to the panel's counsel Anupam Gupta's question as to how "effective and efficient" has the PAC — often criticised for being been partisan — in communal situations.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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BJP hints at 'tougher' measures



University lecturer Abdul Rehman Gilani (left) stands beside Shaukat (centre) and Mohammed Afzal (right) in a court in New Delhi. Afsana alias Navjyot Sandhu (extreme right) is escorted at a court in New Delhi. (Reuters)



Border tension damper on Atal trip

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 22: War clouds looming large on the Indo-Pak horizon have robbed Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee of his hard-earned annual vacation.

The Prime Minister who was planning a quiet retreat into his picturesque Manali resort after the winter session of Parliament has decided to stay put in the capital as New Delhi has launched a diplomatic offensive against Pakistan, fuelling speculation of an imminent flare-up on the border.

Vajpayee's only trip outside will be to Kathmandu to attend the Saarc summit between January 4 and 6, where he will take care not to meet Pervez Musharraf.

Last year, Vajpayee spent his annual holiday at the scenic Kumarakom resort in the backwaters of Kerala. His vacation attracted national media attention as he penned his famous *Kumarakom Musings* in a bid to allay doubts about his secular intentions.

Vajpayee spent his 2001 New Year at his favourite Manali resort along with his family that was out of bounds for the media due to unprecedented security.

The Manali resort in Himachal Pradesh, perched aside a rivulet and a temple, so enchanted Vajpayee that he bought a piece of land there to build a cottage where he could spend some time every year.

Instead of taking a vacation, the Prime Minister will spend his days in Delhi in tune with the sombre national mood in wake of the terrorist attack on Parliament. Vajpayee's birthday on December 25 is also expected to be a low-key affair.

A *kavi sammelan* will be organised at the Fici auditorium on Vajpayee's birthday. Seven well-known poets including Surendra Sharma, Manick-

the sentiments of hardliners. "I don't want to specify or quantify what steps are in store. But the government is serious. The entire country is agitated over cross-border terrorism, cutting across party and community lines," he said.

According to him, Delhi wanted to send a "strong signal" by recalling the high commissioner. "There's much more in store. People of the country want some hard decision to root out terrorism," he asserted.

Naidu said India was trying to convince the international community that Pakistan was not serious about fighting terrorism and had joined the international coalition for only "strategic, political and monetary reasons".

said in a signed statement that Pakistan should be declared a terrorist state if the global coalition forged after the September 11 strikes on New York and Washington was serious about combating terrorism.

Krishnamurthi said Delhi was sure of its position in handling the fight against terrorism but was circumspect when asked if its logical conclusion was war with Pakistan. The situation, he said, was such that the government should not be "hustled" into action as various factors had to be taken into consideration. He made it clear that what India wanted was not a war with Pakistan but against terrorism.

Naidu, who sounded more hawkish, seemed to be playing to

the party and the government were still sizing up the public mood to find out if people were satisfied with the move to recall the envoy or wanted something "stronger and more direct".

Krishnamurthi said in Mysore the decision to recall Vijay Nambiar was the "first-of-many moves the government will be making soon to root out terrorism from the country". But Naidu went a step further, telling reporters in Bangalore that the government could consider snapping diplomatic ties with Islamabad if Pakistan "continues in the same way of aiding and abetting terrorism and interfering in India's internal affairs".

In the capital, BJP national secretary Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 22: The BJP today indicated it was happy with the Centre's decision to recall the Indian high commissioner from Islamabad, but said it expected a series of "tougher" measures against Pakistan in return for the attack on Parliament.

There were, however, subtle differences in the tone and tenor of articulation, depending on who was saying it. While party chief K. Jana Krishnamurthi was cautious to the point of sounding dove-like, others like Central minister M. Venkalah Naidu were more aggressive.

BJP sources said the slight differences in tone was because

BJP'S WOES IN CHHATTISGARH NOW

THE SPLIT IN the Chhattisgarh unit of the BJP may not surprise anyone. After having witnessed the ease with which Mr. Shankarsinh Waghela managed to break the BJP Legislature Party (a few years ago) in Gujarat, even the party faithful could not have had any illusion that the BJP is different from the others. The party's leaders too have resorted to such opportunistic means elsewhere — the Uttar Pradesh unit having shown the way in this sense — to cling on to office and proved beyond doubt that ideology and political conviction are not necessary qualities for anyone wanting to get into the party's inner circle. This in turn meant that, with its Legislature Party in some States as porous as some other parties, the BJP today is no longer immune to the canker of en masse defection by MLAs. The BJP leaders have themselves to blame for this. For they went about letting into the party all those who enjoyed some clout without bothering to insist that the entrants subscribe to the party's ideological positions. The party ceased to be a platform.

This indeed was the case with Mr. Tarun Chatterjee, Mayor of Raipur (and MLA since 1990 from a constituency adjacent to the city). After having entered public life as a V. C. Shukla protege, Mr. Chatterjee was elected to the Assembly in 1990 (Raipur was part of Madhya Pradesh at the time) on behalf of the Janata Dal. Mr. Shukla was an influential member of the Janata Dal's Madhya Pradesh unit at that time and Mr. Chatterjee sailed with him. While Mr. Shukla returned to the Congress(I) after the fall of the National Front and was right there to contest and win the 1991 Lok Sabha elections, his aide decided to join the BJP. As an MLA, Mr. Chatterjee carved a niche for himself in and around Raipur and his popularity was the consideration for the BJP in the 1993 Assembly elections. The

BJP found its base expanding around Mr. Chatterjee in and around Raipur; he could ensure a crushing defeat of Mr. Shukla himself in the Raipur Lok Sabha constituency in 1999 and his nominees in the Corporation elections. This is the context in which the split in the BJP's Chhattisgarh unit needs to be seen. The BJP split was caused by the party's own short-sighted strategy of enlisting in its inner circles persons who were innocent of ideology and those who entered public life with just the lure of wielding power in mind. Mr. Chatterjee, indeed, is among those.

Mr. Chatterjee's return to the Congress(I) along with the dozen other MLAs who left the BJP with him is only one more step in this direction. The Chief Minister, Mr. Ajit Jogi, may even help Mr. Chatterjee and some others in the dozen-strong contingent to accomplish their objective; they could become Ministers or manage positions in the corporations under the Chhattisgarh Government. They may also turn out to be ardent camp followers of Mr. Jogi as and when he is challenged by dissenters in the Assembly. There is indeed truth, in this sense, in the BJP's lament that its MLAs were lured by the Congress(I) with promises. But then, the BJP will have to introspect as to how its MLAs could allow themselves to be lured. And as for the Congress(I), it is indeed baffling that the party has had no compunctions about admitting into its fold those who had committed themselves (at least overtly) to the BJP's communal agenda until even a few months ago. That the party high command allowed this to happen even after the experience in Uttar Pradesh (where 12 of its MLAs walked out to support the BJP Government there) is a clear message that the Congress (I) too refuses to learn from its own experience. This indeed is a sad commentary of the state of parties and democracy.

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