

Spy spooks Parliament security

Statesman News Service

6 NEW DELHI, Dec. 24 — The arrest of a Parliament clerk, Mr Ajay Kumar, on charge of selling confidential documents to Mohammed Sharif Khan, a Pakistani intelligence agent, has set off alarm bells in the Parliament House. As much the police statement today that Mr Khan had earlier asked Mr Kumar to arrange a Parliament entry pass for him which the latter eventually was unable to do.

Sources in the House said the immediate fallout of the incident will be a further restriction on the flow of information from Parliament. And as much a stringent limitation on issuance of passes.

At times foreign diplomats seek information from Parliament House; but now such information will be routed only through the Speaker's office, the sources confirmed. Even routine information like party positions will be provided only after the concerned embassy or high commission approaches the Speaker's office.

As part of the security measures being introduced in the Parliament, there will be restrictions on the leverage permitted to the media from the next year. Passes to the press gallery will be at premium. "Often journalists from obscure publications want passes for the gallery for themselves and others." Moreover the number of temporary press passes will be reduced from the next budget

session.

Officials ruled out the likelihood of Mr Kumar having actually passed highly "sensitive" documents tabled in Parliament in the form of written replies by ministers to the members' questions. "All documents are public, once laid on the floor of the Parliament and any citizen can get a copy from the reception desk at Parliament House," assured an official.

Officials though said today there is concern as "often" government's replies on national security — especially information on defence and home issues — are not classified. Merely because Mr Kumar was employed in the Questions Cell does not guarantee he only passed on papers he accessed from that department.

SPI 25/12

25/12/20

JPC on Parliament security appointed

9/12/12
Parliamentary
SF-10

23/12

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Dec. 22. — The Speaker, Mr GMC Balyogi, today appointed a ten-member Joint Parliamentary Committee to interact with the security team which has submitted its final recommendations to change the present set up.

The decision came in the wake of differences between the home ministry and the office of the Lok Sabha Speaker over adopting new security plan for Parliament.

Among other things, the security committee report speaks of allowing armed commandos inside the Parliament House which the home ministry opposed.

Mr LK Advani, himself is

against the idea that Parliament proceedings should take place under the shadow of armed guards. During the debate in the Lok Sabha on 19 December, Mr Advani has said democracy has to be transparent and some openness has to be there. He cited how Parliament had rejected the proposal of shielding the visitors galleries in the past.

Another area of difference is the security review committee asking the government to seal thoroughfare that run along the Red Cross Road and Talkatora Road passing through the traffic roundabout where Parliament Street hits gate number 2 of the Parliament House.

However, the earlier official version that the terrorists entered from iron gate number 2 from the Vijay Chowk side hasn't been contradicted nor there has been any denial of the reports that there was more than five terrorists who were killed by the security guards. The home minister was on record last week saying that the matter was under investigation.

It is significant that out of 10 MPs all the three members in the committee from the Rajya Sabha are specialists in their own field.

Mr TN Chaturvedi is a former home secretary, Gen. (retd.) Shankar Roy Choudhary is former chief of staff of the Indian Army and Mr Rangnath Mishra is

former Chief Justice of India.

The JPC is headed by Mr PM Syed, the deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha with Mr Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M), Prof. VK Malhotra (BJP), Mr Shivraj Patil (Congress), Mr Anandi Charan Sahu (BJP), Mr Ramjilal Suman (SP) and Mr K Yerran Naidu (TDP) as members of the committee.

The JPC would hold its first meeting on 28 December with the steering committee on security that has finalised the report.

The Joint Parliamentary Committee is expected to submit its report to the Speaker by January and in case three weeks before the Parliament's next budget session in late February.

THE STATESMAN

23 DEC 2001

DAY IN PARLIAMENT

Govt gives in to Passport Act changes

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, December 11

THE OPPOSITION in the Rajya Sabha, led by Congress member Kapil Sibal, has forced the Government to defer the passage of a Bill aimed at amending the Indian Passport Act and agree to certain changes in its format.

The Government had to concur after members from various parties expressed fear that the legislation could be misused to target individuals and people of different political faith by preventing them from travelling

abroad. Sibal and Fali S Nariman cautioned that the provisions of the Passport (Amendment) Bill, 2001, in its present form — particularly those related to the impounding of passport and travel documents of suspect persons — could be misused to curtail citizens' rights.

Sibal told Jaswant Singh that though he had clarified that the period of proceedings relating to impounding or revocation of the passport would not exceed eight weeks, this was not mentioned in the statement of objects and reasons of the Bill. Unless this is

clearly put down in the Bill, the authorities may not implement it, he warned.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan suggested that a select group of members, including Law Minister Arun Jaitley, Sibal and Nariman, could discuss the provisions of the Bill and suggest specific changes to the Bill. This was promptly accepted by members from all parties with Leader of the Opposition Manmohan Singh rising to express his support for the move.

Congress member Suresh Pachouri and VV Raghavan of

CPI criticised the Government for promulgating ordinances even when Parliament session was around the corner. An ordinance was issued in October introducing the proposed amendments in the Passport Act to enable the Government to act urgently.

A meeting was held in Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairperson Najma Heptulla's chamber and attended by Justice (retd) Ranganath Mishra and Nilotpal Basu among others. After the meeting, Sibal said Jaitley had accepted most of the changes sought by the Opposition.

So, where's the conduct code now?

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, December 11

THE RULE of automatic suspension may not be invoked against the MPs who stormed the well of the House on Tuesday, staged a dharna and raised slogans on the George Fernandes and Poto issues.

Although these disruptions come barely a week after the Rules of the House were amended to provide for automatic suspension, Speaker G M C Balayogi is unlikely to use the code

since it would mean suspending a major section of the Opposition. The events that unfolded in the House today brought home the contradiction between the letter and spirit of the code, it was felt that a House sans the Opposition would rob parliamentary democracy of its spirit.

The new code calls for suspending a member for five days for disrupting proceedings or rushing to the well of the House. It also states that such termination can be suspended through a motion adopted by the House.

With nearly 50 members, including some senior leaders, storming the well and others on their feet over the George Fernandes and Poto issues, today's disruption is being viewed as an "extraordinary situation". Since the code was hammered out to ensure the smooth functioning of the House, its implementation against a large chunk of the Opposition members would go against the spirit of the rules since the House in a parliamentary democracy cannot function without an Opposition.

Proposal for House functioning: Efforts were made this afternoon to arrive at a broad understanding to help ensure that the House functions smoothly tomorrow. The proposal mooted was that Question Hour could be suspended and Opposition members allowed to speak on the CAG report on defence purchases, including coffins. The procurement price issue could be taken up subsequently followed by Poto thereafter. But the main Opposition party, the Congress, is yet to give its nod to it.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 DEC 2001

'IT IS OUR NEIGHBOUR WHO NEEDS COUNSELLING'

All options are open: PM

19-1

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 19. Describing last week's terror strike at the Parliament House as an attack on the "very existence and honour" of the nation, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, declared today that India was keeping all its options open in the fight against Pakistan-sponsored terrorism.

Intervening in the special debate in both Houses of Parliament on the incident, Mr. Vajpayee said India had exercised much restraint and that diplomatic initiatives were being explored. "Other options are also open," he said.

At the same time, Mr. Vajpayee was keen on not sounding unduly aggressive: "Whatever course of action we decide upon, it will be well-considered and thought-out. It will not be the decision of the ruling party alone, it will reflect national consensus. It will be the national decision."

Scoffing at Islamabad's demand for "clinching evidence" on the involvement of Pakistan-supported terrorist groups or individuals in the December 13 at-

tack, Mr. Vajpayee said the bodies of the five terrorists who were Pakistani nationals and the tell-tale bullet marks on the Parliament House were ample proof. He rejected Pakistan's demand for a joint probe into the attack, saying there was no question of agreeing to it.

Accusing Islamabad of playing a "dangerous game," Mr. Vajpayee said: "We expect that you should take action. We expect there will be action... we are not relying only on diplomacy. We are confident that international opinion is on our side."

'We will fight on our own'

Reiterating that India would fight the battle on its own, he said amid all-round applause "it is a challenge to our sovereignty, we will face it. We do not say that somebody should fight our battle. I repeat, we will fight terrorism with all our might on our own strength."

Without naming the United States, Mr. Vajpayee said those who were counselling India on exercising restraint should be talking to Pakistan. "We are being

counselled to exercise restraint. Our neighbour should be asked how long this ugly game of cross-border terrorism will go on. They need our neighbour right now but the same advice should be given to it also."

Referring to the telephone call from the U.S. President, Mr. George Bush — in which he had expressed solidarity with India and seen Pakistan's condemnation of the attack as a "good sign" — Mr. Vajpayee said he had told Mr. Bush that the terrorists who attacked Parliament were trained, controlled and operating on behalf of Pakistan.

There could be no two yardsticks in the campaign against terrorism. "There can be no two definitions of terrorism. Terrorism cannot be divided in bits and pieces. On this occasion, we are also testing other nations, we find there is a difference between their words and actions."

A confident Prime Minister said India knew how to tackle terrorism. The menace had been wiped out from Punjab where peace and goodwill prevailed now.

His Government could not be

unmindful of public opinion, Mr. Vajpayee said. "We have exercised restraint so far but it is being taken as a sign of weakness. I am a leader of a vibrant democracy, I have to respect the sentiments of the people."

There were elements in Pakistan who had still not reconciled

Straight from the heart

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 19. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee's generous praise for the Congress president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, was something straight from the heart of a sensitive poet. Intervening in a special debate in the Rajya Sabha today on the December 13 terrorist attack on the Parliament House, Mr. Vajpayee recalled that it was Ms. Gandhi who was the first to telephone him on that eventful morning.

"She inquired about my well-being. She appeared concerned about me and she asked me where I was," Mr. Vajpayee said in a tone that clearly showed his appreciation of her gesture.

"If this is the concern which the Leader of the Opposition shows for the Prime Minister, I am sure no harm can come to our country. The future of democracy is safe," Mr. Vajpayee said amid all-round appreciation.

themselves to Partition. "When Gen. Pervez Musharraf had come here in July, I told him for us the chapter of Partition was closed. Though we were opposed to it, we have accepted this reality."

He had visited Minar-e-Pakistan in February 1999 to demonstrate that India had accepted the reality of Partition.

Sonia pledges full support

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 19. The Congress president and Leader of the Opposition, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, today struck a conciliatory note in the Lok Sabha, extending full support to the Government in its fight against terrorism. Intervening in the debate on the December 13 terrorist attack on Parliament, Ms. Gandhi said her party "will back the Government in its efforts to track down and bring to justice terrorists who threaten the nation's integrity."

Ms. Gandhi's support was in keeping with her party's stand of rallying behind the Government in this hour of crisis. After initially criticising the Vajpayee Government for the "monumental security and intelligence failure," the Congress has now pledged its support in whatever course of action the Government takes.

Conscious of the "need for the nation to stand together in solidarity," she told the House that the

need of the hour was for both the Government and the political parties to rise above partisan considerations. Putting the onus on the Government for creating the much-needed consensus, Ms. Gandhi emphasised the point that people should desist from raising contentious issues that divide "our plural society".

Calling on the Government to interact with and consult the Opposition on key issues, she felt that it was important for the Government "to think through all the pros and cons on key strategic issues". It should embark on a concerted diplomatic offensive to garner support for India's cause.

Ms. Gandhi expressed the hope that the Government would share with the Opposition how the terrorists could enter Parliament and "literally knock at our doors, despite prior information". She was also mildly critical of the Union Home Minister, Mr. I.K. Advani's statement, saying that it was conspicuous for its omissions rather than for what it revealed.

We're watching Pak. build-up: Army Chief

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 19. There is a build-up of Pakistani troops along the border, the Chief of Army Staff, Gen. S. Padmanabhan, said today. Part of the mobilisation was due to additional deployment.

Besides, some Pakistani troops that had 'routinely' moved to the forward areas for two months of

winter exercises were yet to return to their original positions. "To that extent, we are watching it and beyond that there is little to say," the General said in an interaction with newsmen.

However, the Army was under no pressure and was prepared to meet any eventuality, he said. It was monitoring "everything" across the border and the security establishment would take appro-

priate action after drawing conclusions on the strength of the information being collated from different sources.

"We are watching everything across the border and we round off our knowledge base accordingly," he said, adding, "we are not a flappy Army. We are a confident Army. We know our strengths and objectives and are

fully capable of meeting them."

Asked whether the Army's winter exercises in the forward areas of Rajasthan could be advanced in view of the Pakistan build-up, Gen. Padmanabhan said there were precise, laid-out procedures and the Army had a very clear idea of what was to be done. Declining to comment further, he said "I am not saying yes and I am not saying no."

Pak. denies build-up

THE HINDU

110-13 PARLIAMENT / ADJOURNMENT TO AVOID OTHER ISSUES? 20/12

Session ends with a spirit of unity

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 19. Parliament was adjourned sine die two days ahead of schedule this afternoon with a resolve to fight terrorism and the promise of enhanced security when it reassembles for the Budget session in February.

The adjournment decision was taken at the party leaders meeting this morning where it was considered best that the current session end in the "spirit of unanimity and national consensus" that emerged during the two-day discussion in both the Houses on the terrorist attack on Parliament on December 13.

In the Lok Sabha, the Speaker, Mr. G. M. C. Balayogi, and in the Rajya Sabha, the Chairman, Mr. Krishan Kant, made the announcement to this effect soon after the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani's reply at the end of the discussion.

In his valedictory reference, the Speaker said the terrorist strike was an attack on "our political system, our ethos and values, and on our very way of life".

Mr. Balayogi also informed the House about the measures that had been initiated prior to the attack in view of the terrorist strike on the Jammu & Kashmir Assembly on October 1. Stating that an Expert Group of security professionals — set up by him on October 10 — had submitted its report, the Speaker said he would soon be constituting a Steering Committee of officials and an Advisory Group of MPs to guide the former for speedy implementation of the report.

Later briefing mediapersons,

Mr. Balayogi said the session had begun on a very orderly note and concluded on "a remarkable spirit of unity". "The unity that was demonstrated in the House following the terrorist attack reflects eloquently on the resilience of our democracy and our ability to stand united when faced with such serious challenges."

When asked whether the decision to adjourn the House sine die was taken to ensure that the "fragile" unanimity mustered over the issue of terrorism was not lost over the contentious issues such as the Prevention of

Terrorism Ordinance 2001 and the coffin scam, Mr. Balayogi refused to comment, saying that the political leadership wanted to conclude the House on a positive note.

This apart, another highpoint of this session, was the fact that members had entered the well of the House only once in the Winter session as a result of the new provision in the Rule of Procedure and Conduct of the Business of the House.

Preempting the question as to why the provision for automatic suspension had not been invoked

on that lone instance, Mr. Balayogi said "it was an extraordinary situation and a view was taken that the rule may not be resorted to" as it would have resulted in suspending a large number of members.

Giving details about the business conducted during this session, Mr. Balayogi said a little over 30 hours of the total time of 80 hours had been lost on account of disruptions.

But, he was quick to add, that the House made up nine hours of the time lost by sitting late.

Verse cuts across party lines

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 19. More than political will, it was verse that brought Parliamentarians together today as the winter session of Parliament drew to a close with a show of unanimity two days ahead of schedule.

This was particularly the case in the Rajya Sabha where two members waxed eloquent even as the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, yielded space in the realm of verse on the ground that he had gone to Lahore with a poem for peace — 'Hum jung na hone denge' (we won't allow war to take place) — and was paid back with the Kargil conflict.

While this observation in the Lok Sabha earlier in the day was received with silence, the Congress (I) member in the Rajya Sabha, Mr. Balkavi Bairagi, remarked that the Prime Minister ought to write another poem and put an end to the issue of terrorism once and for all. Refusing to pick the bait, Mr. Vajpayee, in turn, lobbed it back into Mr. Bairagi's court.

Accepting the Prime Minister's suggestion, Mr. Bairagi had a poem ready by the time the House was set to adjourn for the day. Immediately after

the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, made his reply, Mr. Bairagi sought permission to recite his verse saying it was an assignment given by the Prime Minister. And, the Congress(I) leader grabbed the attention of the House with his verse: "Jab loktantra ke mandir par aatankvaad ke badal ho; badal bhi aise-waise kya. boond oboond se pagal ho... jab tak manzil nahin mile, koi tyohar manana mat; jab dusham ko pehchaan liya, to phir dost banana mat."

Voicing similar sentiments on the need to protect national honour at all costs and not allow the supreme sacrifice of the security personnel go waste, Mr. Obaidullah Khan Azmi of the JD(S) recited to an appreciative House: "Desh ki saakh bachane wale, tumko salaam..." Bordering more on political satire, Mr. Ramdas Athavale of the RPI had the Lok Sabha in splits with his effort at rhyme. After managing to elbow some time for himself from a reluctant Speaker when the House reassembled in the afternoon for Mr. Advani's reply, Mr. Athavale roared: "Atalji aap kab karoge aar-paar ki ladaee,... agar aap jald hi Pak par nahin karoge chaddhaee, hum sab aap se kareng ladaee..."

THE HINDU

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12, 4, 8), Ashoka (11.30, 3.30, 7.30),
 Milancha (2, 6), National (12.30, 4.30,
 8.30), Ragini (2, 6), Sonali (Dunlop), Rakhi
 (Sakia), Liliyat Cinema, Bangabasi
 (Howrah), Pushpasree (Kadamtilia), Ailin-
 dra (Berackpore), Kamal (Mellabruz),
 Saisaree (Mellabruz), Pratulika (Khardah),
 Sarama (Barasat), Sreekrishna (Madhyam-
 gram), Mirinalini, Anari (Baguihati), Bata
 Cinema, Swapna (Chandernagore), Auro
 (Chinsurah), Milon (Baruipur), Srilaxmi
 (Kanchrapara), Star (Burdwan)

KAHO NAA...PYAR HAI: Hind (12, 3, 6, 9)

LAGAAN: Navina (12, 4)

BENGALI

CANCER: Minar, Bijoli, Chhabighar (3,
 5, 45, 6), Mahua (Garia)

DADA THAKUR: Mitra (3, 6, 8, 45), Jagat-
 misree (Ladpur), Bheari (3, 6, 8, 45), Pad-
 endra (Dum Dum), Barjipur Show House,
 Ruppakata (Habra), Lal (Barasat), New Bijoli
 (Diamond Harbour), Surendra (Ranaghat),
 Bedjan (Basirhat), Suhama (Sheoraphuli),
 Wellington (Anand), Sujata (Bagnan), Maha-
 ran (Chandania), Shyamaree (Radham-
 on), Ruparee (Coma), Manihar (Chandip-
 ur), National (Rajshahi, Burdwan, Bardwan)

her's eyes, Pakistan plot unravels on prime time

personnel hovering in the spe-
 cial squad cell. The contents of
 the interviews were similar.

Afzal said the suicide squad
 was in constant contact with the
 Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Moham-
 mad as it scouted Delhi for poten-
 tial targets. "I am the person who
 brought them here. I provided all
 kinds of facilities to them," he
 said, adding that they also spoke
 to their families on the eve of the
 attack. "They did not tell them
 where they are... but that they

had to do some big work and if
 they were successful, then they
 would return home," he said.

"One's mother was crying on
 the phone and he was telling her,
 'don't cry, don't cry,'" Afzal said the attackers had
 instructions to mow down "who-
 ever comes their way" in Parlia-
 ment. Citing gang leader Mo-
 hammad as his source, the link
 between Jaish's India command-
 er Ghazi Baba and the attackers
 said when he had brought the

five to Delhi one-and-a-half mon-
 ths ago, they had no specific tar-
 get. They did a recon of the Delhi
 Assembly and the diplomatic en-
 clave. "But their ultimate target
 was Parliament. When I re-
 turned to Srinagar, Ghazi Baba
 told me to convey to Mohammad
 that he should focus on his tar-
 get. I asked Mohammad what the
 target was and he told me it was
 the Indian Parliament."

Afzal said the five were Pak-
 istani nationals (as claimed by

the police) and were speaking
 Punjabi, "which I could follow
 broadly". Mohammad and two
 others — Raja and Rana — used
 to call or chat on the Net with
 people in Pakistan and the UAE.
 Just before the attack, Raja and
 Rana exchanged 1d greetings
 with their parents.

Afzal said Mohammad told
 him he was one of the hijackers
 of the Indian Airlines flight IC
 814. Mohammad had called him
 minutes before leading the at-



Afzal on TV (AFP)

tack to find out from television
 about the presence of VIPs and
 ministers in the House.

"But I told him that there was
 a power failure and I could be of
 no help to them," Afzal recalled.

"Tere se itna chhota sa kaam
 bhi nahin ho sakta hai (You can't
 even do such a small thing). Now
 we are going ahead," he quoted
 Mohammad as saying.

What was in it for him? Some
 "motivation" and some "mo-
 ney", Afzal replied.

Plot revealed, not Pak direct role

Jaish and ISI added to list of suspects

FROM MONOBINA GUPTA

New Delhi, Dec. 16: Delhi police today said they have cracked the Parliament attack conspiracy, claiming a "clear connection" between the assault team and Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence.

However, the police conceded that none of the arrested has directly implicated Pakistan.

Showcasing a blow-by-blow account of how the attack was planned and executed, the police reeled off a list of accused that included a college teacher and an Indian Airlines plane hijacker who killed Rupin Katyal, a passenger who was on his honeymoon, in 1999.

The police pinned the blame on two Pakistani terror groups, clubbing Jaish-e-Mohammad and Lashkar-e-Toiba, which was the prime accused till yesterday.

Delhi police commissioner A.R. Sharma said the Jaish and the Lashkar had struck on directives from the ISI. "The ISI connection is very clear. Though none arrested in the case has said Pakistan directed the operation, evidence suggests Pakistan's hand," Sharma said.

Home minister L.K. Advani, despite saying "all options are open" on India's response, too, underscored that Delhi so far has "conclusive proof" against the two militant outfits, not Pakistan.

"When I say conclusive, I mean the two organisations

and I am not referring to whether the Pakistan government has been involved in it or not. That is another phase altogether," Advani told a television channel.

The police said all five youths killed during the attempt were Pakistanis and active members of the Jaish. They were supposed to have targeted the airport, but for "reasons best known to them" zeroed in on Parliament.

The youths have been identified as Mohammad (group leader and the hijacker), Hamza,

Haider, Rana and Raja (pictures above). A delay in communication between the suicide strikers and an accomplice outside bungled the plot, Sharma said. He added that the attackers had planned to kill "as many VIPs as possible".

Delhi police have reconstructed the events and the run-up to the attack, based on clues provided by those arrested, who include Jaish coordinator Mohammad Afzal and his cousin Shaukat Hussain. Two of them are Afzal and

Shaukat, both from Baramullah in Jammu and Kashmir. It was at Shaukat's house, also in Mukherjee Nagar, that the final plan crystallised. His wife, Afsan Guru has admitted that she was aware of the plan. Based on her statement, the police arrested Afzal and Shaukat in Srinagar.

Afzal told the police that he was trained by the ISI for a month in a PoK camp after he joined the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front in 1990. Later, Tariq, a conduit for

the plot, hatched over the last five to six months, spanned Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, Jammu and Kashmir and Delhi. Investigations by the police revealed that Abdul Rehman Gilani, an Arabic lecturer in Zakir Hussain College, was the pointsman of the strike team.

Gilani was picked up yesterday after the police kept tabs on his home in Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar. He unravelled the crux of the plot, giving out the names of the terrorists' accomplices. Two of them are Afzal and

Jaish commander in India Ghazi Baba, roped Afzal in. Tariq told Afzal that "under ISI pressure, Masood Azhar and Zaki-ur-Rehman of the Lashkar had combined to launch an attack in Delhi. Lashkar would give all the necessary support".

It was left to Afzal to induct Shaukat and Gilani. The strike team landed in Delhi in the first week of December with a cache of arms. Two days before the attack, they bought the white Ambassador that fooled the guards.

■ See Pages 6 and 8

THE DELHI POLICE CASE DIARY



The Vice-President's wife consoles the daughter of Parliament security guard Matbar Singh Negi, who succumbed to his injuries in hospital on Sunday. Negi was shot in the stomach during the attack

PTI pictures



MOHAMMAD



RANA



HAMZA



RAJA



HAIDER ALIAS TUFIAL



A.R. GILANI: Arabic lecturer. Police claim he was the pointsman of the strike team. Now in custody



MOHAMMAD AFZAL: Main coordinator of Jaish. Helped set up base for the strike team in Delhi. Now in custody



SHAUKAT HUSSAIN: The plot took flimsy alibi at his residence in Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar. His wife overheard the conspiracy. Both in custody

- Mohammad: Leader of the team that carried out the attack. Killed Rupin Katyal, the honeymooner in the hijacked Indian Airlines plane in 1999
- Rana: Member of the team
- Hamza: Member of the team
- Raja: Member of the team
- Haider: Member of the team
- Police claim all five were Pakistani nationals

Powell, Delhi on middle path

FROM SEEMA GUHA AND AGENCIES

New Delhi, Dec. 16: On a day the US accepted India's right to self-defence but advised caution, highly-placed sources in the Centre said an American-style strike on terrorist hideouts across the border was the last option being considered by the Vajpayee administration.

US secretary of state Colin Powell said the Indian government has a legitimate right to self-defence "but I think we have to be very careful on this because, if in the exercise of that right of self-defence, states are going to be at each other, it might create a much more difficult situation which could spiral out of control". He said the tense situation "has the potential of becoming very dangerous".

Powell told NBC Television that Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf is "taking action against two organisations that have been tentatively identified as the ones which might have been responsible for this".

Powell did not spell out the "action" but other reports suggested that Pakistan had asked Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-Mohammad to "lower their profile". The US had asked Pakistan to arrest the Lashkar leaders, a demand voiced by India after the Parliament attack.

Powell said Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee has made it clear that he is allowing some time in order to get a reaction from the Pakistani government. "The Pakistani government," said Powell, "is taking more steps now."

While not ruling out an attack, Vajpayee's close aides said

no decision would be taken in haste. "We will go into attack-mode only when we find all other avenues shut. For now, we are also considering taking the issue to the UN Security Council," a senior aide explained.

If Pakistan refuses to crack down on the Jaish-e-Mohammad and the Lashkar-e-Toiba, India can take the matter to the Security Council. A resolution passed after the September 11 attacks makes a member's refusal to act against terrorists punishable by sanctions. Pakistan, like India and the rest of the UN members, is a signatory to this resolution.

However, India's investigators will need a water-tight case proving Pakistan's links with the terrorists before Delhi can seek action.

Though India has identified all five terrorists involved in Thursday's attack as Pakistani citizens and talked of the role of Islamabad's Inter-Services Intelligence, the government has hinted that the proof gathered so far is mainly circumstantial.

The Delhi police chief said the suspects have provided substantial evidence against the ISI. But he conceded that they have not said that the Pakistan government had directed them to carry out the attack.

However, it is not known if the police chief has put all the evidence on the table for public consumption. The government could hold back sensitive information for later use.

But taking the issue to the UN could also backfire. Pakistan could use the opportunity to hammer home its demand that a third party is needed to solve the Kashmir problem.

Rupin kin want to forget hijack nightmare

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, December 16

THE WOUNDS seem raw even today, two years after the Kandahar hijack. The family of Rupin Katyal, who was killed by the hijackers, would rather not talk about the incident.

Reports that Mohammed, who was killed during the attack on Parliament, was one of the hijackers and that he was possibly the one who slit Rupin's throat had brought back memories of the nightmare for the family.

Were any of the terrorists involved in the attack on Parliament part of the squad that hijacked IC 814? "Jaswant Singh should know better since he was there when they got away with it. You should ask him," retorted Rupin's father bitterly. He said he knew nothing and neither did Rupin's wife, Rachna, have anything to say.

After hijacking the plane from Kathmandu, the hijackers forced it to land in Raja Sansi airport, where in a bid to pressure, they killed Rupin. With a bleeding Rupin on board, the crew asked to be allowed to land in Lahore so that he could be given medical aid. But the hijackers refused and Rupin died from excessive bleeding. Rupin and Rachna were returning from their honeymoon in Kathmandu when the plane was hijacked.

Hunt for Geelani's Jordanian student

Rajnish Sharma
New Delhi, December 16

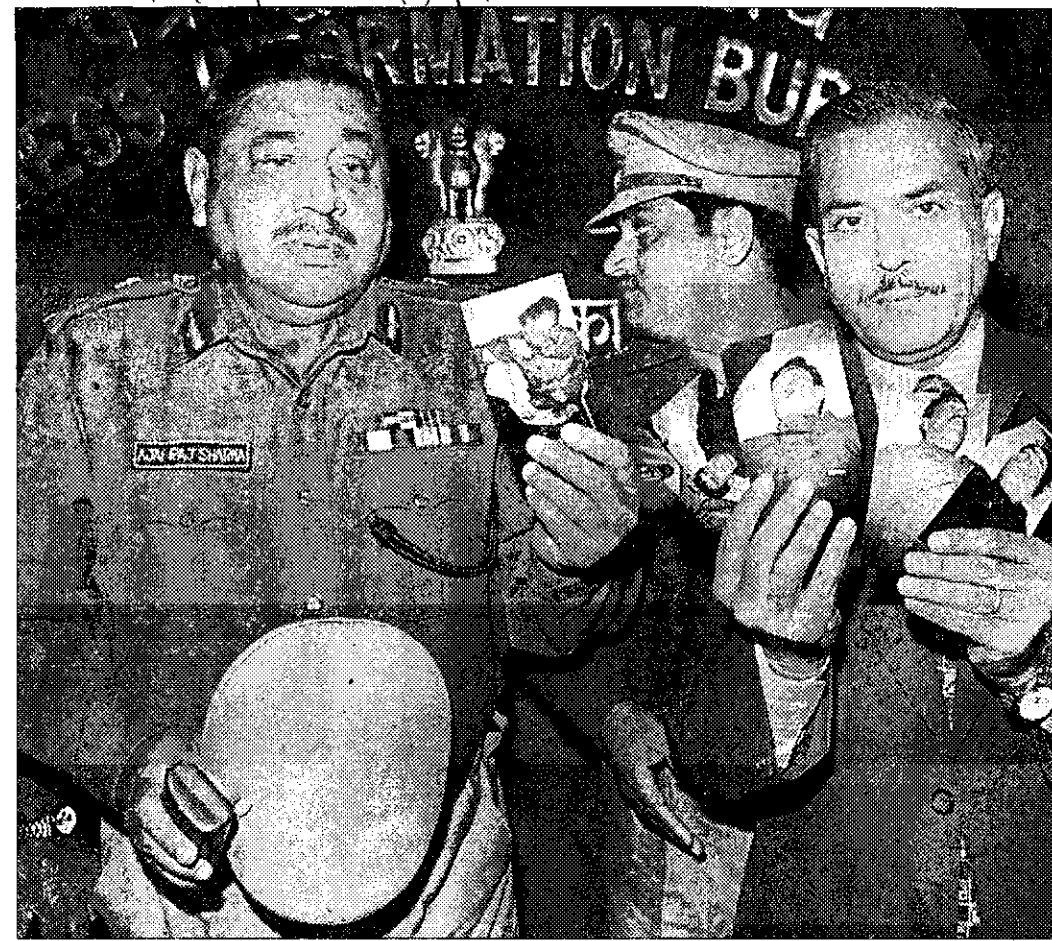
INVESTIGATIONS INTO the international connections of Delhi University lecturer SAR Geelani have led the intelligence agencies to the university's Jubilee Hall Hostel in North Delhi.

A team of intelligence and police officials today visited the Jubilee Hall and some STD booths around the hostel. Intelligence sources said Geelani was "extremely friendly" with a Jordanian student who stayed at the hostel. The investigating agencies are now trying to trace the student, who after completing his M.Sc in Physics from Aligarh University had enrolled for PhD at the Delhi University a few years ago.

"Geelani used to visit the Jordanian student's room, number 164, regularly. The two held long discussions, lasting several hours. Investigations at the hostel have revealed that some students often got suspicious whether Geelani and the Jordanian student were hatching some conspiracy," an investigating official said.

The duo also made long international calls, often lasting 45 minutes to an hour, from the STD booths near the hostel. "In fact, other students often got irritated as they had to wait long for making a call," a police officer said. Intelligence agencies are trying to trace the international numbers, often in West Asia, at which Geelani and the student called.

Geelani also helped the stu-



Commissioner of Delhi Police Ajai Raj Sharma (left) and Special Commissioner R S Gupta show photos of militants killed by security forces in Thursday's attack on Parliament.

dent when he got into a fight with some inmates at the hostel. A case was registered at the Mukherjee Nagar police station and the Jordanian was asked to

leave the hostel. Geelani then helped him get accommodation at the university's transit hostel in Mukherjee Nagar.

"Since the Jordanian student

was barred from entering the hostel, Geelani took his belongings from Jubilee Hall to Mukherjee Nagar," an official added.

Teaching Arabic by evening, and militancy by day

Sutirtho Patranobis
New Delhi, December 16

THE PRINCIPAL of Zakir Husain College (evening), Professor M Riaz Umar, was taking a round of the college last week when he came across his Arabic Studies professor, Syed Abdul Rehman Geelani.

Geelani was on his way to a class, walking in his usual slow but sure manner. Prof Umar stopped, exchanged pleasantries and asked Geelani how his research project was going. "It is almost in the last stage. Only the final chapter remains," Geelani told Umar.

Interestingly, Umar, who knew Geelani well enough, did not know what the topic of his project topic was. "He always said it was on some topic in Arabic literature," Geelani was arrested from his Mukherjee Nagar house on Sunday for his part in the conspiracy behind the Parliament House attack. He had picked up for interrogation earlier.

Geelani, a "handsome and sober youth" in Umar's words, had been selected from among seven applicants for teaching Arabic in the college in 1997. "We had given an advertisement in the newspaper and Geelani was among those who responded. A

DU PROFESSOR INNOCENT, SAYS BROTHER

ABDUL REHMAN Geelani's brother has alleged that the professor of Arabic at Delhi University has been falsely implicated in the Parliament attack case. Rehman was arrested on Friday.

Mufti Abdur Rahim Geelani said Rehman's appointment as a Delhi University professor was based on pure merit. "But some people did not like it and those very people conspired against him," he said. Rahim said he was not aware where Rehman's family is at present. "My brother was staying at Mukherjee Nagar with his wife, five-year-old son and eight-year-old daughter. But ever since his arrest, we know nothing about his family."

Their third brother, Syed Bismillah Geelani, and two other relatives, Peer Inayatullah and Waseem Ahmad, too used to stay with Rehman. But they too are "missing". On the telephone Rehman had reportedly made to Pakistan soon after the attack on Parliament, Rahim said Rehman might have their brother who had migrated to Pakistan, Syed Abdullah. "He married there and is permanently settled in Rawalpindi. Rehman might have telephoned him." Rahim said he could not believe that his brother was involved in any unlawful activity.

Four others — Ashiq Hussain Khan, a computer engineer, Ashiq Hussain, a cable operator, Abdul Rashid Rather, Zonal Education (Planning) Office and Nazir Ahmad Rather, executive engineer — have been arrested from Sopore and Baramulla.

The car used by the militants for was bought in the name of Ashiq Khan. The photograph, however, doesn't match. The telephone number given to the car dealer is that of Nazir Ahmad Rather. Rather now stays in Srinagar but his phone is used by brother, Abdul Rashid, at Baramulla.

HTC, Baramulla / Sopore

seven-member team had selected him after going through his academic records and interviewing him. He was a research scholar whose knowledge on Arabic studies and Arabic literature was found to be adequate," the principal said.

Before joining the college, Geelani, who hailed from Baramulla in Kashmir, had completed his MA and M.Phil in Arabic Studies from Delhi University. He had earlier completed his graduation from Lucknow.

The young professor was regular in taking classes and seldom took long leaves, though his parents and sister stayed in Kash-

mir. "He mingled around in the college just as any other professor and spent time in the staff room as well. Students liked him and I have also not heard any colleague complain about his behaviour. But he became reserved after a point. There was nothing extraordinary in his character," Umar said.

Investigations have revealed that by evening, he was at the college, teaching Arabic literature. In his free time, behind closed doors, either at his house or at Shaikat Hussain's, another accused, he took and gave lessons on terrorism and shared views on militancy.

Parliament opens on sombre note

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 14. — A day after the attack, Parliament opened on a sombre note with members turning out in full strength in both Houses as a mark of solidarity, and to resolve to fight terrorism. The gravity of the situation was writ large on the faces of MPs and ministers, including the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, the home minister, Mr L K Advani, and the defence minister, Mr George Fernandes, as they stepped inside Parliament. But there was no sign of any fear in them.

Their conduct belied any impression that the MPs who had escaped the attack would be apprehensive to return to the premises today. And to demonstrate solidarity, the members agreed to go ahead and complete the remaining days of the winter session by rejecting a proposal to adjourn Parliament sine die, ahead of schedule, as a precautionary measure till the security is upgraded.

After paying tribute to those who laid down their lives yesterday, both Houses adjourned to meet again on 18 December.

For a visitor it was difficult to believe that a major shootout had taken place only a day before. The only difference was in the general atmosphere. The air was thick, indeed. The watch and ward staff were as courteous as ever while demanding identity cards. They displayed no nervousness, though two of their colleagues were shot dead by the terrorists yesterday.

Contrary to expectations, security checks continued as usual. The only difference being the presence of security men in larger numbers. The Army was withdrawn. Parliament House was abuzz with rumours on how it happened; how the terrorists operated and how they were killed. Various theories were doing the rounds.

"Will India now cross the LoC to attack terrorist hideouts and camps," was the moot question. The ruling party MPs were repeatedly asked this. There were no clear responses. The Poto ball was in the Opposition's court, they contended. The opposition to Poto will continue, was the response.

ISI hand in attack emerges

Abhigyan Hans and Bhavatosh Singh in New Delhi

Dec. 14. — As the investigation into yesterday's attack in Parliament proceeded further, the "direct involvement" of Pakistan's ISI has become "absolutely clear", say senior intelligence officials.

"The Pakistan-based Kashmiri militant outfits might be possessing the arms and men required for this kind of operation (undertaken in Parliament yesterday), but they are definitely lacking on the logistic front," pointed out a senior official.

The meticulous planning of every minute detail to proceed into Parliament as well as

complete information about Parliament's infrastructure could only be with the ISI, which over the years is believed to have gathered detailed inputs on all important installations in India, the official added.

The five mobile phones recovered from the killed militants are also stated to have provided "definite clues" about ISI's involvement even as it was officially confirmed that the suspects were from the Lashkar-e-Toiba.

Pakistan's military ruler, General Pervez Musharraf, terming the militants merely as "armed intruders" in his message to the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, yesterday as well as his decision today to keep his

army on high alert, according to intelligence officials, "substantiates" their suspicion about the "direct involvement," of what they term "Pakistan's dirty trick department".

Meanwhile, intelligence officials say that besides the militants who undertook the actual operation yesterday, there were at least half-a-dozen more militants of the same module involved in the operation. "That apart, 250-odd ISI sympathisers are stated to be in Delhi alone and it is not clear how many of them were asked to undertake some task or the other while preparing the ground work for yesterday's operation," the official said. Called "sleeping agents," these ISI sympathisers are

approached by an ISI operative only for a specific though relatively "minor task," usually not directly related to the execution of an operation, the official explained.

Meanwhile, the two men picked up the Delhi police officers from the immigration counter of the Indira Gandhi International Airport here late last night were released this evening "as no substantial clue was found to link them with yesterday's attack," said a senior police officer. The police had earlier claimed that two, identified as Mohammed Shafiq and Feroz Doorani — who were computer professionals had stayed in a posh south Delhi hotel — were Pakistani nationals. While one was going to Toronto, Canada, the other was heading to Atlanta,

United States of America, the police said. "Mohammed Shafiq and Feroz Doorani had rang up an official in the Delhi government's educational department but since he was not available, they left their hotel's contact number. But by the time the official returned the call, the two had already checked out.

This made the hotel staff suspicious, who informed the police." Joint teams reportedly conducted as many as 17 raids in and around the city and "detained" over a dozen people for questioning.

The police also interrogated the car dealer and owner of Lucky Motors, of Joshi Road in Karol Bagh, who had reportedly sold the white Ambassador.

House security to be discussed

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 14. — Which gate did the terrorist enter Parliament from? Yesterday it was said they drove the white Ambassador car from Vijay Chowk. Security officials after viewing video tapes of close circuit television cameras today said they entered from Parliament Street side.

Home minister LK Advani today said he would soon discuss the security system of Parliament with Lok Sabha Speaker GMC Balayogi. The home secretary and Intelligence Bureau chief had discussed the matter with him in October and also submitted a detailed report about the action that was required to be taken.

The American envoy Mr Robert Blackwill today offered home minister Mr LK Advani all possible assistance including a blueprint of the security system for the US Congress which might help in strengthening security of the Indian Parliament.

Mr Balayogi, meanwhile, held a high level meeting where Parliament security was reviewed. It reviewed the plan to have an integrated Parliament complex by including a portion of Talkatora Road in front of Parliament House, annexe and parliament library.

The proposal was given the go-ahead at the meeting. It proposes diversion of traffic on the Talkatora Road between Parliament House and Parliament House Annexe, sources said today.

In the light of yesterday's attack, the proposal is likely to be expeditiously implemented, the sources said.

Urban development minister Ananth Kumar strongly supported the proposal at the meeting which was attended among others by the Delhi police commissioner, the Lok Sabha House Committee Chairman and the Secretaries General of both Houses.

Delhi Police and NDMC had, however, expressed reservations in view of the heavy traffic on the section used by nearly 30,000-35,000 vehicles during peak hours. They said other connecting roads had to be widened.

Mr Kumar said at the meeting that the thoroughfare on the section of the Talkatora Road between two high security and sterilised zones was at variance with the norms of security.

PM on media role

NEW DELHI, Dec. 14. — The Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, today questioned the role of the Opposition and the media in the hour of crisis when the nation was facing the twin danger of external aggression and internal subversion. "If there were security lapses it could be taken up later. But this is not the time to raise such issues," he said.

The home minister, Mr LK Advani, who shared the dais with the Prime Minister at a function here, said, "I shudder to think what would have happened had the terrorists, even one of them, been able to enter Parliament House where MPs sit. The tragedy could have been far worse than the attack on WTC in New York on 11 September". — SNS

expressed reservations in view of the heavy traffic on the section used by nearly 30,000-35,000 vehicles during peak hours. They said other connecting roads had to be widened.

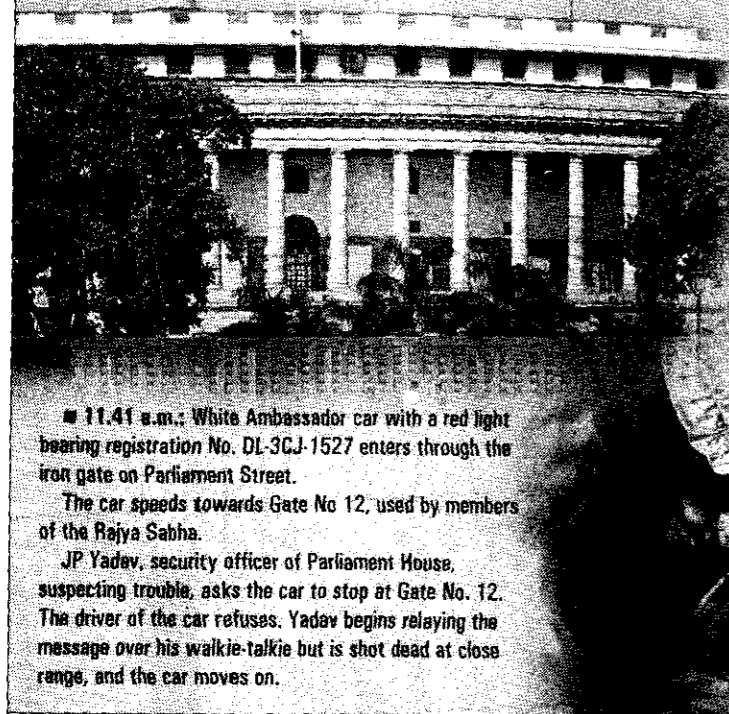
Mr Kumar said at the meeting that the thoroughfare on the section of the Talkatora Road between two high security and sterilised zones was at variance with the norms of security.

Govt mulls IB reshuffle

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 14. — A major reshuffle in the Intelligence Bureau is not being ruled out after yesterday's attack on Parliament, sources said. The government is considering such changes after what it believes to be the IB's inability "to provide timely information". "Several senior officials may be shifted," sources said. Intelligence officials said "they are being made scapegoats." They said information on possible attacks, including strike on Parliament, came not only from the IB but also from Mumbai Police. But "home ministry bureaucrats did not react in time," officials said. Based on the interrogation of Afroz Razak, Mumbai Police commissioner informed the government at least a month ago about possible attacks on Parliament.

Parliament attacked: The official version



■ 11.41 a.m.: White Ambassador car with a red light bearing registration No. DL-3CJ-1527 enters through the iron gate on Parliament Street.

The car speeds towards Gate No 12, used by members of the Rajya Sabha.

JP Yadav, security officer of Parliament House, suspecting trouble, asks the car to stop at Gate No. 12.

The driver of the car refuses. Yadav begins relaying the message over his walkie-talkie but is shot dead at close range, and the car moves on.

■ 11.42 am: Joint secretary, security, Mahepathi orders closure of all the gates to Parliament House building.

Unable to move any further because stationery cars from the Vice-President's convoy were blocking the way, the terrorists take a U-turn at the same speed, hit one of the cars of the convoy and stop at Gate No. 11, used by the Vice-President.

Terrorists come out of the car. One of the terrorists rushes towards Main Gate No. 1 and starts lobbing grenades. Security personnel at Gate No. 1 challenge the terrorist, who blows himself up. The other terrorists keep running towards Gate Nos. 10, 9 and 8. They find the gates closed. The terrorists jump over the wall beyond Gate No 11. Exchange of fire takes place between Gate No. 11 and Gate No. 8. Four Delhi Police personnel and a gardener are shot dead.

Security personnel also open fire from the gate on the Vijay Chowk side. Militants return fire, killing a CRPF lady constable near the iron gate, Vijay Chowk end.

Three terrorists shot dead by CRPF personnel at Gate No. 8. One terrorist runs towards Gate No 5, used by the Prime Minister, lobbing grenades on the way. CRPF personnel stationed at Gate No. 5 challenge the terrorist. The terrorist starts shouting 'Pakistan zindabad'.

■ Around 12: The terrorist at Gate No. 5 is shot dead by CRPF personnel. Explosives found in car.

Source: Speaker's office

GRAPHIC: BARIYANU

White Ambassador breached 6 security cordons

Sudesh K Verma in New Delhi

Dec. 14. — The white Ambassador that the terrorists drove breached at least six security cordons. The official explanation is the vehicle was speeding and before the security system could be alerted, the terrorists had reached the gates of Parliament.

"You too, if you want to risk your life, can force entry. You may cross the initial points but you will be finally overpowered the way it happened with the terrorists," a security

officer told this correspondent.

However, the fact remains that despite a security threat and anticipation of such an attack, the security system was not fully alert. There is also a possibility that the contingency plan did not work yesterday.

The parliamentary security had asked for electronic devices to put up quick barriers as the existing ones were non-functional. The drop gates about 20 feet from the main entrance from both sides (Vijay Chowk and Parliament Street) were supposed to function at the press of a button. But the electronic

system did not work as the gates were too heavy and needed to be operated manually.

Two white Gypsies with ITBP commandos — one each at the drop gates — were supposed to be stationed immediately after the drop gates to stop any vehicle forcing an entry. The fact that the vehicle was speeding was enough reason for them to act. Whether the Gypsies were there on Thursday is not certain. Sources said they were not present.

It is surprising how so many preventive mechanisms failed to work. Even before the entry to the gates there is a police barrier man-

ned by Delhi police to stop speeding vehicles. Personnel from Parliament security, Delhi police and ITBP stand at the iron gates to identify vehicles and watch out for suspicious movements. Delhi police personnel keep hidden revolvers for a contingency, a source said.

Just after the main iron gate entry is an iron sliding gate attached to the main gate. It is also supposed to function electronically but was being operated manually from the beginning. After this is the under vehicle detector also called inverted mirror that checks all incoming vehicles.

Seven in suicide attack, not five

H Bula Devi in New Delhi

Dec. 14. — Seven militants, not five, carried out yesterday's attack on Parliament. Five militants were killed and two are believed to be in custody. Three of the militants were Afghans, two were Pakistanis and two Kashmiris.

Sleuths are also getting leads on the attack and its Pakistan connection from the investigation into the 1 October attack on the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly.

It was reported yesterday that five terrorists had stormed Parliament House and that all of them had been killed. Even

ministers confirmed the report. But from what sources in the team investigating the attack told The Statesman, it appears that seven terrorists had attacked Parliament.

The government, however, has not officially changed the figure of attackers.

Interestingly, the communications and parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, told the electronic media yesterday that six militants had stormed Parliament. But even while the final count was being confirmed as five, there was speculation about the figure being higher.

Sources close to the investigation said papers, diaries and

RDX in ultras' car defused

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, Dec. 14. — The bomb disposal squad of the National Security Guards has defused about 30 kg of RDX stored in the car used by the ultras to enter Parliament yesterday, police said today.

Security forces and bomb disposal squad of NSG struggled for hours to remove and defuse the explosives. Other explosives carried by the five terrorists in bags were also defused. At least two grenades were defused by controlled detonation.

cellphones found on the ultras have been seized. The two ultras in custody are reportedly being interrogated.

Sleuths are focussing on the

confessions of a Lashkar-e-Taiyaba member, Firdoz Ahmed Shah, for insights into yesterday's attack. Shah was arrested in connection with the terrorist attack on the

J&K Assembly.

His confessions reveal strong Pakistani links to terror attacks. The conspirators of the 1 October attack had apparently said it would not be the last of such actions.

Interrogation of ultras has revealed that attention-grabbing attacks induce "sponsors" to part with funds, though there's no indication that yesterday's attack was prompted by a cash-crunch.

Investigators are trying to now establish — given the similarities between the modus operandi of the Kashmir and New Delhi attacks — whether same people were involved in the two incidents.

The news of Shah's arrest, his

identity and what he had disclosed were kept under wraps, reportedly for the sake of the investigation.

Shah, who was a resident of Abba Qadal in Srinagar, told investigators that two persons had contacted him on 27 September, four days before the attack on the Assembly. The two were reportedly Safdar Ali alias Kasim Bhai, a resident of Lahore, and another Pakistani, Wazahat Hussain alias Saifullah. They met at Fateh Qadal, near Abba Qadal.

Apparently, RDX was transported in milk cans for the Assembly attack. They had also said the attack would not be the last in India.

Pressure for action but PM stays his hand

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Dec. 14 — The government today called the Pakistani high commissioner, Mr Ashraf Jahangir Qazi, and gave him a "demarche", the diplomatic equivalent of reading him the riot act, that India had "credible technical evidence" to prove that the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba was behind the attack on Parliament House.

(Pakistan has, however, alleged that the attack on Parliament was "stage managed" by New Delhi to tarnish the image of the "Kashmir struggle", PTI adds from Islamabad. The defence spokesman, Maj-Gen Rashid Qureshi, tonight said India did this to "come out of international isolation" The Lashkar echoed him.

(Earlier, the foreign office spokesman, Mr Aziz Khan, said Islamabad would examine the evidence of the Lashkar's alleged involvement in the attack.)

At this point, however, despite strong language and domestic pressure to the contrary, indications are that India's actions against its neighbour will be diplomatic. Having considered the options, the government's decision to not attack the terrorist camps

across the LoC is based on its own interest.

The factor the government must be considering is Pakistan's response to such strikes. Islamabad is unlikely to sit tight — it's possible that Pakistani military, includ-

Delhi demands

■ Pakistan must stop activities of the Lashkar-e-Taiyaba and Jaish-e-Mohammed on its soil

■ Leaders of the two outfits, known to the Pakistani authorities, should be taken into custody

■ The outfits' financial assets must be frozen and access to the assets blocked

■ Islamabad's action against terrorism should match its words

ing the air force, will be deployed for retaliation.

On the other hand, there is strong domestic pressure on the government, especially from the Sangh Parivar, to be pro-active.

But the most cited example of West Asia, with Israel reserving the option to strike at sources of

terror, has not resolved the issue. The solution will have to be political, even if India wants to ensure such events don't recur.

A successful military strike may not resolve the core issue, leaving dangerous remnants of terrorism.

The western powers, primarily the USA and Britain, often urge India not to strike targets across the border as it would only escalate the tensions. The USA has repeatedly said it will strike at other terrorist groups after the Afghan problem is solved.

In meetings with Mr LK Advani and Mr Jaswant Singh today, the US ambassador, Mr Robert Blackwill, echoed President George W Bush's offer of FBI help in gathering information and evidence on yesterday's attack.

The government told Mr Qazi that it had "technical evidence" gleaned from sources, including satellite intercepts, that the attack on Parliament was carried out by two Pakistan-based terrorist groups — Lashkar-e-Taiyaba and Jaish-e-Mohammad.

Union home ministry sources said the conspiracy was hatched by the Lashkar, while the Jaish provided them logistical support and manpower.



Surrounded by securitymen, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee waves while entering Parliament House on Friday. — AP/PTI

PM in Kolkata

THE STATESMAN

15 DEC 2001

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Parliament
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Centre keeping Opposition in the dark: CPI(M)

13/12

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 14. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) today criticised the Government for keeping the Opposition "in the dark" and not offering any explanation as to how the suicide attack on Parliament House, took place on Thursday.

Condemning the Government attitude, the CPI(M) parliamentary party leader, Mr. Somnath Chatterjee, said that even 24 hours after the incident, "there is no Government version, the Opposition is totally ignored, the Prime Minister talks of parliamentary democracy but the Opposition is kept in the dark".

Mr. Chatterjee also criticised the Government for not taking adequate steps despite clear in-

formation that Parliament House could be a target of militant attack.

He said while the BJP-led Government excitedly compared the response of the Opposition in the United States and the United Kingdom, it did not realise that the Governments there consulted the Opposition on such sensitive issues.

The CPI(M) also disagreed with the attempts by some BJP Ministers to link the Opposition to the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) and the attack. "This is another disinformation and tendentious propaganda. POTO is in existence for the last 50 days".

Taking objection to statements by the Rural Development Minister, Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu, the

CPI(M) leader said the Minister was spreading propaganda. The CPI(M) was aware of terrorism and the need to tackle it but warned against mixing it with the current situation. He reiterated the party's opposition to POTO.

The Revolutionary Socialist Party leader, Mr. Abani Roy, echoed similar views. Mere laws would not check terrorism and that it needed the toning up of intelligence, equipping police with modern weapons instead of arming them with outdated guns and prepare police to fight it.

He too criticised the attempt link POTO with the current situation stating that despite the law being in place, the incident could not be prevented, thereby questioning its efficacy.

THE HINDU

15 DEC 2001

New House security may see commandos

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Dec. 15. — Crack commandos are likely to be deployed inside the two Houses of Parliament with the Talkatora road closed off to let Parliament have an exclusive complex.

All these only if the decision of the review committee on Parliament security is accepted by all parliamentarians.

The review meeting held yesterday in the shadow of the 13 December terrorist attack on Parliament was attended by all those who matter for implementing the new proposals.

If the decision is accepted, the new guidelines will come into effect from the budget session, sources said.

An impression has gained ground that although the terrorists were liquidated before they could enter the Parliament, there were also chances they could have actually done so without much hindrance. This has intensified the need for fool-proof security.

The Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr GMC Balayogi, has reportedly accepted the decision of the review committee to deploy armed forces inside the two houses but differences of opinion persist as to whether this would be desirable.

The moot point is whether the highest seat of democracy should have armed guards looming over it, a senior Lok Sabha member said. The Speaker is likely to convene a special all-party meeting to

discuss the decision of the review committee that has apparently decided to implement the 1999 S Subramanian committee report on Parliament security. A similar attempt was made in October 2001, but the proposals were not taken up seriously, sources said.

The meeting also decided that all vehicles would now enter the Parliament premises through the Vijay Chowk gate and exit through the Parliamentary street gate. A Delhi Police picket would be deployed outside the gates for checking vehicles.

For the visitors, the sole entry would be from the reception whereas card holders without vehicles would be also allowed through the Parliamentary street.

Latest equipment like electronically controlled sliding and drop gates — both of which are now manually controlled — would be deployed at the gates to stop forced entry.

The meeting has also decided to restrict the number of car passes that would be issued to parliamentarians. In some cases such passes are now reported to be as high as five per member.

The movement of vehicles other than of ministers is likely to be restricted to reserved areas along with proper identification of persons using beacon lights in their car. The home ministry has already decided to crack down on fake use of beacons.

Errors the ultras made

ABHIGYAN HANS
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Dec. 15. — These are the 'mistakes' no one's complaining about. Besides tying the loose ends in the probe into the attack on Parliament, Intelligence agencies are making an 'informal assessment' on where all the militants went wrong on Thursday.

Senior Intelligence officials feel, despite meticulous planing of the entire operation, a 'major strategic error' the militants made was turning their vehicle left after entering the Parliament premises.

"Soon after turning left, the vehicle reached a dead end just ahead of Gate No. 11 as there's a cemented road block there. Had they turned right, they could have taken almost the entire round of the Parliament and thus could have many options (read gates) for entering Parliament," said an official.

"The guy driving the vehicle hitting a parked vehicle near Gate No. 11 also did the trick... while it made the militants panicky (which made them open fire), it also made all personnel alert".

Another 'major blunder' was not putting a Parliament entry pass on the vehicle.

"Had they prepared a fake Parliament entry pass, it would've been very difficult to detect on a moving vehicle," an official said.

Apparently, the stars also went against the ultras, as both Houses were adjourned well before they struck.

George's assurance: The deployment of US forces in Pakistan will not harm India's interests, the defence minister said today, SNS adds from Patna. Mr George Fernandes said the country was not going to be affected in anyway by Pakistan's offer for a limited presence of US forces on its soil. "We have a very good bilateral relationship with the USA," he told reporters here.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PARLIAMENT ATTACK INVESTIGATIONS

It's been action all along since noon on 13 December. Over 100 people have already been questioned by the Delhi Police and Intelligence agencies. Most of them were released but some are still being questioned.

■ Two men — Shaukat and Ashfaq — were arrested on Friday from Sopore, in Jammu and Kashmir's Baramulla district. They had last bought the white Ambassador — used in Thursday's attack — from a Karol Bagh car dealer.

■ Delhi University lecturer of Arabic and chief of the Jammu and Kashmir Human Rights Council, Professor Abdul Rehman Geelani, was taken into custody last night. His phone number was in the terrorists' mobile phone records, said senior police officers. Prof. Geelani is the nephew of London-based separatist leader Syed Nazir Geelani.

■ A north Delhi couple had an "accidental brush" with the terrorists. The terrorists, speeding in the white Ambassador car hit the couple's Maruti Zen on Ring Road. The couple chased them and forced the Ambassador to stop. The terrorists — obviously in a hurry to get to Parliament — paid them "compensation". The couple thought the terrorists, carrying sophisticated weapons, were policeman and realised whom they had encountered only after seeing

television.

■ The Delhi Police is also questioning two women from south Delhi who were present in the visitors' gallery in Parliament on 13 December. Officers hinted that Ms Sunita Sharma, a resident of Green Park, and Ms Janaki Asrani, a resident of Pamposh Enclave, may have provided information on the lay-out and functioning of Parliament House to the attackers.

■ Several police teams have been despatched to various places across the country, chiefly western Uttar Pradesh and J&K. The diary and the SIM card which the militants had carried, contained several phone numbers from these areas.

■ The post-mortem on the bodies of the militants killed by security personnel is likely to be conducted only on Monday. The Union health minister, Dr CP Thakur, said today that law required the authorities to wait 72 hours before conducting an autopsy on unclaimed bodies.

■ "Spotters" — persons specialising in militant activities — and reformed militants from Jammu and Kashmir have been flown in to New Delhi to help identify suspects and any other militants holed up in the capital. Police officers said spotters had proved the most useful in earlier cases.

— SNS

BJP lambasts Cong, Left on hot pursuit

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

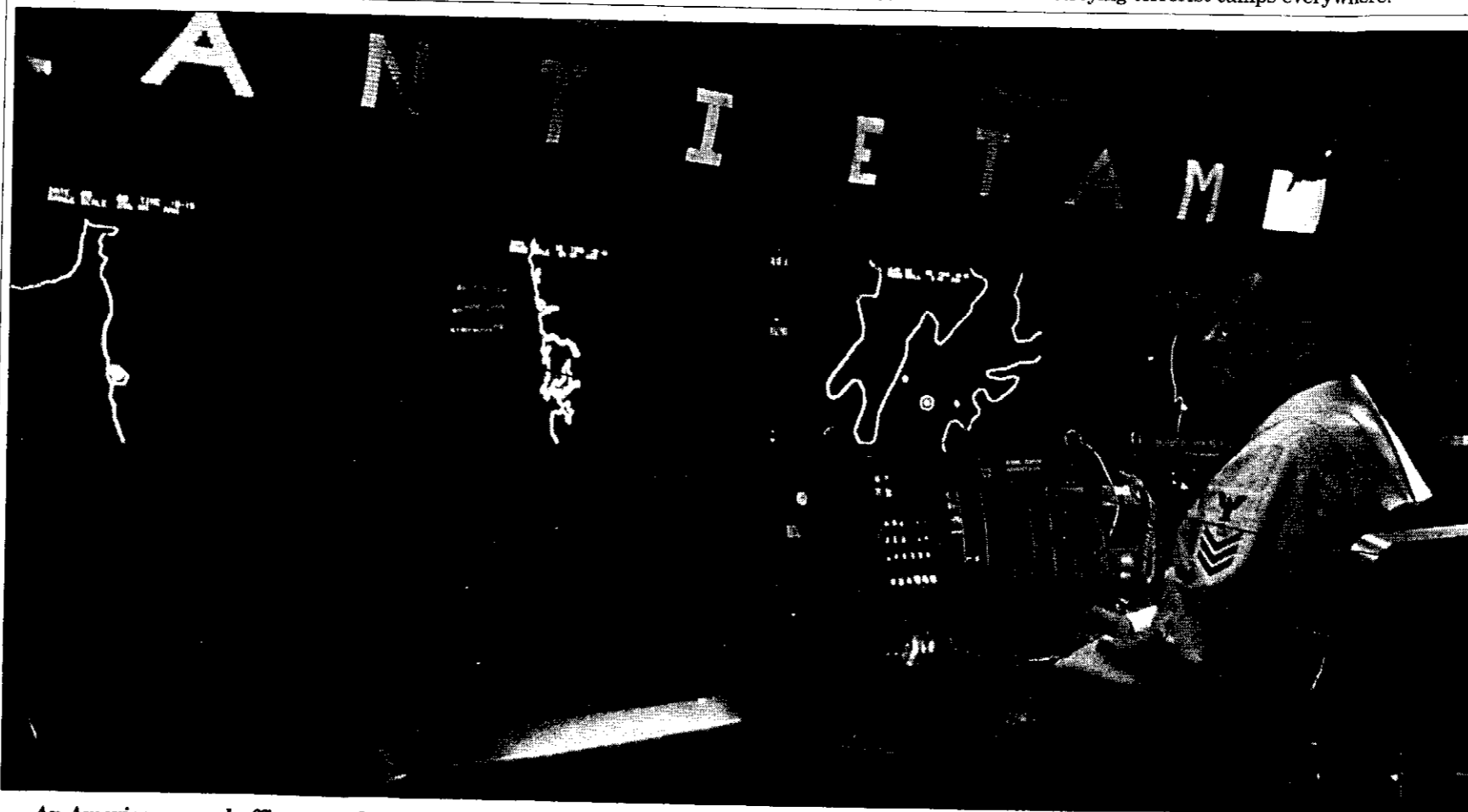
NEW DELHI, Dec. 15. — The BJP today chided the Opposition for not taking a unified stand on whether or not to storm the terrorists' training camps in Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) and asserted that no country would oppose such an attack on moral grounds, if India chose to actually do so.

The BJP spokesperson, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, described Pakistan's reaction to the terrorists' attack as absurd and said the party hoped that the country would do everything to stop the activities of the militant outfits named in the attack. Pakistan should remember that the terrorists were heard shouting pro-Pakistan slogans before being liquidated, he said. The conspiracy would be unearthed in two-three days, he stressed.

About the Opposition stand, he pointed out that while the Samajwadi Party chief, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, and the former Prime Minister, Mr VP Singh, were talking of storming the terrorists' camps, the Left and the Congress were saying that the BJP was trying to build an euphoria by talking about such an attack. The Left had taken over the leadership of the entire opposition and the Congress had become a satellite of the Left.

The Opposition was confused and trying to pander to electoral considerations completely forgetting the country's interests, charged Mr Malhotra.

He added, US officials had always maintained that they were interested in destroying terrorist camps everywhere.



An American naval officer watches radar movements in the control room of the USS Antietam, which arrived in Mumbai on Saturday. USS Antietam, part of the USS aircraft carrier Carl Vinson's battle group, docked in Mumbai after participating in the Afghan campaign. — AP/PTI

Vajpayee shoots down Pak's joint probe call

Response to Dec 13 attack
will be equally harsh: PM

ISI planned to wipe out top
political leadership: Advani

Times News Network

Times News Network and Agencies

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Tuesday turned down Pakistan's call for a joint investigation by Indian and Pakistani agencies into the December 13 terrorist attack. Addressing the BJP parliamentary party on Tuesday morning, he said Pakistan was not even willing to take action against the terrorist groups based on its soil.

He told the BJP MPs that certain documents had been sent across to Pakistan. He did not elaborate on what these documents were. He said the investigation into the attack would be done by India itself and that the response to the attack would be "equally harsh".

Mr Vajpayee told the BJP MPs that Pakistan's involvement in the terrorist act had been established and that Pakistan was talking about the Indian government having engineered the attack in an effort to hide its sins. The Prime Minister said there would be a public trial of those who had conspired to attack parliament.

Briefing mediapersons, BJP spokesman V.K. Malhotra said the documents had been sent to Pakistan by way of evidence to demand action against the terrorists concerned. Mr Malhotra hit out at the statement by U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell advising India to exercise restraint and said, "It didn't behove Mr Powell to make such a statement."

Accusing the U.S. of adopting double standards while dealing with India, he said the U.S. did not give any evidence to the Taliban before attacking Afghanistan.

► See Edit: Not a Mirror Image, Page 8

NEW DELHI: Asserting that the December 13 attack on parliament was aimed at wiping out the country's top political leadership, Union home minister L.K. Advani on Tuesday charged Pakistan-based terrorist outfits Lashkar-e-Toiba and Jaish-e-

Mohammad with carrying out the assault at the behest of the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

"This time, the terrorists and their mentors across the border had the temerity to try to wipe out the entire political leadership of India as represented in our multi-party parliament," Mr Advani told both Houses of parliament.

"This incident once again establishes that terrorism in India is the handiwork of Pakistan-based terrorist outfits known to derive their support and sustenance from the ISI," Mr Advani said. The hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane to Kandahar, the intrusion at Red Fort as well as the attack on the J&K assembly were masterminded and executed at the behest of the Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad, he said.

Recalling the Prime Minister's address to the nation on December 13, Mr Advani said the fight against terrorism had reached a "decisive phase".

Although he spoke of a united front, Mr Advani stopped short of spelling out the government's strategy, triggering the opposition charge that it was not being taken

into confidence on the steps the government planned to take. Despite the criticism, however, the opposition extended its support to the government on the issue.



A.B. Vajpayee



L.K. Advani

Pak rejects Advani's charge

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday rejected as "lacking in credibility" Union home minister L.K. Advani's charge of its involvement in the attack on parliament by two terrorist outfits based on its soil and asked New Delhi to approach the UN Security Council for an impartial determination of evidence.

"The accusation lacked any credibility whatsoever," Pakistan foreign minister Abdul Sattar told the state-run PTV in an interview hours after Mr Advani's statement. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

19 DEC 2001

War should be the last option: Opposition

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 18. While the Opposition vowed in Parliament to stand by the Vajpayee Government in order to effectively combat Pakistan-supported terrorism, it sounded a note of caution to "hasten slowly" in chalking out a retaliation move against the December 13 attack on Parliament House.

During a discussion on the subject in both Houses setting aside question hour today, the Opposition suggested that the Government launch diplomatic initiatives in order to build world opinion against the menace. Their refrain, in the words of Dr. Manmohan Singh, was that the Government should desist from "loose talk."

At the same time, Opposition members made it known that they viewed the incident as a "security lapse" and sought an answer from the Government for not acting despite having prior information over the impending terrorist strike. The members also took care to assert that they were as concerned with national security as anyone else and were not out to score political points.

However, the members lamented that till date the Government had made little effort to consult the Opposition or take their leaders into confidence over the gravity of the situation and the broad course of action being charted.

The statement of the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, came under attack in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, with members charging that what was narrated did not indicate whether the Government had a plan to combat the menace. The reference to Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance was inevitable with members stating that despite being in operation, it did not prevent the occurrence of the attack.

Initiating the discussion in the Lok Sabha, the Samajwadi Party chief, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, said nationalism was not an exclusive preserve of any one political party, a point echoed by the CPI(M) leader, Mr. Somnath Chatterjee. The SP leader urged the Government not to target any community while acting against terrorists.

Mr. Shivraj Patil, Congress Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha, urged the Government to exhaust all options, including diplomatic measures, before setting out on a "hot pursuit" of the terrorists. "It is a big step and should not be taken in haste. War should be the last option; an option that should be exercised after all others have failed."

Mr. Chatterjee criticised BJP members bid to portray themselves as only patriots in the country. On POTO, he challenged the effectiveness and clamour within the Government for such a law when the FIR on the attack on Parliament House was not registered under

provisions of the Ordinance. Mr. Rashid Alvi, BSP, warned against the danger of treating all Muslims as suspects, a point raised by Mr. C.M. Ibrahim, JD(S), in the Rajya Sabha.

The Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Dr. Manmohan Singh, warned against "loose talk" and suggested the formulation of a cool-headed response. The international community should be apprised of the cross-border terrorism faced by India.

The CPI(M) leader, Mr. S. Ramachandran Pillai, said that action on terrorist training camps across the Line of Control could escalate into a full-scale war with Pakistan and divide international opinion.

Mr. Pranab Mukherjee said Mr. Advani's statement belied hopes that it would bring forward an action plan to counter the menace. Instead of indulging in "mere rhetorics like hot-pursuit and pro-active measures," the country would have to work out its own strategy. The Government, he said, should take the lead in this regard. Both Congress members sought to know whether the Government shared the U.S. view that Pakistan had taken action against terrorists based in that country.

Mr. Arjun Singh, criticised the "rhetorics" being engaged by the Government and objected in particular to the use of the phrase that the battle against terrorism this time would be "aar par ki ladai (decisive battle).

THE HINDU

19 DEC 2001

PM takes a dig at US advice on restraint

Vajpayee asks US to 'give us a solution'

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 18: Even though Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee seems to have rejected any retaliatory measures against terrorist training camps across the Line of Control in Pakistan, he however, took a dig at the United States for asking India to exercise restraint.

"Those who are asking us to exercise restraint, should also tell us the solution, the Prime Minister told Bharatiya Janata Party MPs at a parliamentary party meeting on Tuesday.

Prime Minister Vajpayee however, did not name the United States, while making his observation.

The Bharatiya Janata Party spokesperson, Mr V.K. Malhotra, however launched a direct attack on the United States saying that the US secretary of state, Colin Powell "has no business" to tell India what action it has to take.

Accusing the US of maintaining "double standards," in its approach to combating terrorism, Mr Malhotra pointed out that when the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon were attacked, the US used a different yardstick to describe terrorism for its own benefit.

Meanwhile, it was learnt that BJP MPs told the Prime Minister that if they were ever taken hostage, the government must not dither from its duty to take stern measure against the terrorists.

Member of Parliament from the Rajya Sabha, B.P. Singhal, had earlier written a letter to the Prime Minister stating that the Union government should not bow down to any pressure from terrorists, if members of Parliament were ever taken hostage.



LONG VIGIL: Armed Central Reserve Police Force jawans are posted at every gate of Parliament as part of increased security measures after Thursday's attack on the complex. (Saab Press)

'Centre should be cautious in action after terror attack'

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 18: Opposition members in the Lok Sabha said on Tuesday that the Centre had "failed" to prevent the terrorist attack on Parliament. They however said that they would stand united behind the government if it took any well-considered step to meet the challenge posed by Pakistan-backed terrorists.

Cautioning the Centre against taking any "hasty" action in retaliation to the terrorist strike on Parliament, the Congress assured the Centre that all parties would unite in the Centre's attempt to wipe out Pakistan-supported terrorism.

Participating in a discussion on the statement of Union home minister L.K. Advani on the December 13 attack, the Congress also asked the Centre to drop its plans to bring

in an anti-terrorism bill replacing the controversial Poto and project a united India "in this hour of crisis." The Opposition expressed their unhappiness that the Centre has not yet taken them into confidence over the Centre's possible moves after the attack.

They also pointed out that India had failed to get support from international communities in the aftermath of the attack and appealed to the government to rise to the occasion.

Initiating the discussion, Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav said that the Centre should own up to its "mistakes" as the Prime Minister had only a day before the attacks, referred to a possible attack on Parliament.

"We consider the attack as a grave challenge to the nation. We also consider it as a shameful example of the Centre's failure,"

he said. Mr Yadav added that since the security of the nation was a big issue, the entire Opposition would be with the government it took any well-considered action.

Mr Yadav demanded that a meeting of the national integration council be convened to deliberate on the situation, adding that if the Centre was serious in tackling the issue, it would have taken the Opposition into confidence by now. Mr Yadav also made a scathing attack on the BJP-led government's foreign policy alleging that not a single country was speaking in support of India in its "hour of crisis."

Mr Yadav criticised the US for its advice to exercise restraint, saying that these same countries were asserting sometime back that Israel had the right to retaliate against Palestine in the wake of terrorist attacks.

US sends message plus sop

BY OUR AMERICAS CORRESPONDENT

Washington, Dec. 18: US President George W. Bush has urged India and Pakistan to show restraint following the December 13 terrorist attack on Parliament in New Delhi. White House press secretary Ari Fleischer said on Monday, Mr Bush, while recognising India's legitimate right to self-defence, was concerned that the situation not spiral out of control. "India has a legitimate right to self-defence," Mr Fleischer added. But in the same breath, he said Mr Bush "urges that both sides share information, work with each other, and take no action that would in any way hinder the war against terrorism, to which both India and Pakistan have committed themselves."

He reiterated the US' readiness to assist Indian authorities in their criminal investigation of the attack. Mr Bush had spoken with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on the day of the attack, which India has blamed on two Pakistan-based terrorist groups.

"The Indians, as we understand it, have arrested two individuals that are suspected in the attack, and the investigation is ongoing, being conducted by the Indian government to bring to justice all those who were responsible for this," Mr Fleischer said, adding that the US has offered its assistance to India.

Meanwhile, the US state department asked Pakistan to "address terrorist activities within their borders, especially the activities of militant groups."

"Pakistan needs to be concerned about the activities of militant groups within its border and needs to take appropriate action on its part," spokesperson Richard Boucher said, adding that Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Tayyaba and Jaish-e-Mohammed were of particular concern to the US.

US secretary of state Colin Powell had cautioned India about taking military action against terrorist organisations across its border.

Opposition: Why was Parliament security so slack?

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 18: The Opposition members in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday held the government responsible for the serious security lapse that led to the terrorist attack on Parliament House.

Taking part in a discussion on the December 13 attack, the Opposition members said they were firmly with the government in this challenging hour, but asked the Centre "to also stand up against the threat to secularism so that the entire country can stand together in the fight against terrorism."

The Opposition wanted to know why no effective security measures

were taken despite the fact that Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and Union home minister L.K. Advani mentioned a possible terrorist attack on Parliament.

Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha Manmohan Singh said though the Opposition was firmly with the government in this challenging hour, the Centre could have been more alert in preventing such attacks.

Saying that most of the information given by the government in its statement in the House on Tuesday had already appeared in the press, Dr Singh said the Congress joined the "countrymen in condemning the dastardly terrorist attack on Parliament."

Earlier, Chairman Krishan Kant suspended the Question Hour and took up the attack on Parliament for discussion.

Condemning the attack "on the heart and nerve-centre of our democracy," Dr Singh said, "we shall not make any compromise with these terrorist gangs."

Dr Singh said the home minister, while speaking at a gathering organised by Fiecci on December 5, had mentioned such an attack was expected. Similarly, the Prime Minister, just a day before the incident, had spoken of the likelihood of an attack on Parliament House. The Maharashtra government had also informed the Centre about the possibility of an attack after the

interrogation of a suspected Al Qaeda activist.

Dr Singh said the dastardly attack took place despite these warnings. Saying that the entire issue should be thoroughly investigated, he said there should be no "loose talk" and "we have to be cool-headed in formulating a response."

He said the international community should be fully apprised of cross-border terrorism of "the most vicious type" being faced by India.

Demanding that terrorist hideouts be smashed not only within the country but wherever they existed, BJP member S.S. Ahluwalia asked, "How long can we go on tolerating the proxy war from across the border? Enough is

enough." He said a number of peace initiatives were taken in the past, "but what is the outcome?"

CPI(M) member S.R. Pillai said the December 13 incident was not a sudden affair and the government should have been fully prepared to meet such an eventuality.

Mr Pillai criticised some of the NDA constituents for making irresponsible statements, particularly when the need of the hour was to face the challenge unitedly and resolutely. He said his party was against the BJP's view that the terrorist camps across the border in PoK should be smashed. "Any such action would unleash a war, besides dividing the international opinion on terrorism."

Don't typecast Muslims or Kashmiris: Omar

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 18: BJP members sitting in the treasury benches of the Lok Sabha were dumb struck on Tuesday when Union minister of state for external affairs Omar Abdullah, pleaded that every Muslim in India should not be branded a Pakistani or every Kashmiri a terrorist. Mr Abdullah represents the National Conference in the ruling NDA coalition at the Centre.

Mr Abdullah's plea came after a 20-minute speech which fully expressed the NC's support to the Centre on Poto while attacking its critics for their insensitivity to the need of the country to combat terrorism. All through this course, the treasury benches and especially the BJP members applauded Mr Abdullah by thumping their desks.

However, the sole NC representative in the

Centre reserved his most telling comment for the end, causing an uproar with Opposition members from the Samajwadi Party, Rashtriya Janata Dal, the Left parties and the Congress who asked Mr Abdullah to address his fellow members on the other side of the House much to the embarrassment of the BJP members. Mr Abdullah qualified his statement by referring to the recent Delhi police campaign which seems to have painted as terrorists, all Kashmiri apple and dry fruit traders coming to the city.

Mr Abdullah reminded the members of the House that the Jammu and Kashmir policemen, many of them Muslims, were also combating terrorism and dying at the hands of terrorists. He added that their sacrifice or commitment to the cause of secularism and India's integrity and sovereignty was no less than of any others. While Mr Omar Abdul-

lah was mostly supportive of the Centre on the issue of the attack on Parliament, Samajwadi Party member Prabhunath Singh, was more direct in his criticism. He expressed surprise on the ability of terrorists to reach the outer periphery of Parliament even though the Centre had prior knowledge of a possible strike.

Mr Singh also asked why nothing was done to nab Zakir Husain college lecturer Abdul Rehman Geelani, who was later caught by the police if the Centre was keeping a tab on his activities all along.

Mr Singh also asked why the terrorists were not nabbed earlier even though intelligence agencies were aware of their movements to and fro in fruit-laden trucks.

Mr Prabhunath Singh then asked the Centre to go to war with Pakistan recalling how in the Mahabharata Kunti, the mother of the

Pandvas had ordained her sons to fight the war with the Kauravas. Mr Singh told the Prime Minister, it is time now to go to war to defend India's honour and dignity. He said, "I want to tell the Prime Minister and the home minister that you have to achieve your objective. Even if you have to cross the border, cross it for there is no other alternative, otherwise this will seriously damage your prestige." On somewhat similar lines, Trinamul Congress leader Mamata Banerjee exhorted the Centre not to back out of taking on Pakistan saying, "if they have a nuclear bomb so do we, don't fear anything."

Ms Banerjee alleged that the ISI was after her but she was not scared. She asked the Opposition to gloss over the failures of the Centre, recalling how America stood solidly behind US President George W. Bush after September 11.

Pak troop movement comes under scanner

Advani's statement in parliament today

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: India is keeping a close watch on the movement of Pakistani troops along the Line of Control (LoC) in Jammu and Kashmir, especially after Thursday's *fidayeen* attack on the parliament complex.

"We are fully alert to the security situation (along the border) and the Prime Minister has been briefed about it," said external affairs minister Jaswant Singh after an 'informal' 90-minute meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on Monday. Reports from Islamabad indicate that Pakistan has put its troops along the LoC on high alert, with Gen Pervez Musharraf even holding a "sensitive strategic conference" with his top army commanders and the leave of military personnel being cancelled.

Defence sources said Indian troops deployed along the border as also forward airbases in the IAF's western and south-western commands were in a state of preparedness to "meet any challenge whatsoever". Following Thursday's strike, the government had vowed to "liquidate the terrorists and their sponsors wherever they are, wherever they are".

However, no government functionary is willing to say as yet if the Centre is contemplating military strikes against terrorist bases and training camps across the border.

After Monday's meeting, the external affairs minister only said that home minister

L.K. Advani would make a detailed statement about the terrorist attack in Parliament on Tuesday. "Whatever is to be stated will be stated by him. I cannot answer anything now," he said.

In the meeting, which was also attended by national security adviser Brajesh Mishra and the top brass of the armed forces, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee was briefed

about the progress of the police investigations into Thursday's attack and the measures taken thereafter.

Meanwhile, despite the holiday for Id, most senior home ministry officials were busy at work on Monday, "collecting facts" on the progress made in the investigations into the attack. "We are collecting facts from across the country and are also in touch with the ministry of external

affairs," said an MHA official.

The progress card was scheduled to be handed over to Mr Advani, who is personally monitoring the case, at a meeting later in the evening. An IB official said, "Mr Advani has convened the meeting of intelligence and police officials to review the post-strike situation, take a detailed briefing and also to ensure that there is better coordination among all the agencies working on this case."

"The meeting is important since some basic questions in the case have still not been sorted out, like which gate the terrorists used to enter the complex," sources said.

► See Edit: Trail of Terror, Page 10



Troops keep watch on Pak soldiers near the Indo-Pak border in the Pallaswalla sector of Jammu on Monday.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

18 DEC 2001

Advani counsels patience

NEW DELHI, DEC. 17. The Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, today said the Government would consider an "appropriate response" to the December 13 terror strike on Parliament for which the nation should be prepared. *9- Patience*

Without elaborating on the response and its timing, he said it would be considered jointly by the political and military establishments.

"The whole nation should be prepared and understand," he said addressing a gathering after inaugurating an Ayurvedic hospital here.

"Adheerta se kaam nahin chalege (Impatience will not do)," Mr. Advani said, adding even the U.S. did not respond immediately after the September 11 terrorist strikes in New York and Washington.

He described the December 13 incident as an attack on the democratic system and the nation.

Stating that September 11 and

December 13 would be remembered as a challenge to democratic civilisation, he said that however, a "terrible catastrophe" was averted by the securitymen who foiled the attempt of the five heavily-armed terrorists to enter the Parliament House. *18-12*

He lauded the personnel of the CRPF, Delhi police, ITBP and Parliament's watch-and-ward staff for foiling the designs of the terrorists who intended to enter Parliament where the Prime Minister, many of his Cabinet colleagues and around 750 MPs, including leaders of all political parties, were present.

"Had the terrorists managed to enter the Parliament House, the magnitude of the devastation would have eclipsed the September 11 incidents," Mr. Advani said. He also

ridiculed those raising questions about security failure, saying nothing of that sort was witnessed in the U.S. after the September 11 terror strikes.

"Questions could have been raised over how four planes were hijacked in a single day in the US and how the Pentagon, the seat of American Defence, could be attacked," Mr. Advani said, adding "but no such noises were heard. Instead, all the MPs stood by the Speaker and expressed support to the Government's moves. It demonstrated the resolve of the people of the U.S."

He regretted that things on the contrary were witnessed here. Referring to the 1999 hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane to Kandahar which resulted in the release of three dreaded terrorists, Mr. Advani said demonstrations were organised outside the Prime Minister's house repeatedly to pressurise the Government to meet the hijackers' demands.

As a democratic Government, the sentiments of the people had to be considered but such demonstrations did not give strength to the Government. — PTT

Omar rejects Pak. offer

NEW DELHI, DEC. 17. The Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. Omar Abdullah, today debunked Pakistan's offer of a joint probe into Thursday's attack on Parliament House saying Islamabad had already shown its lack of "seriousness" by blaming Indian Intelligence agencies for the attack.

"One really feels surprised. First, the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, is quick enough to condemn the audacious attack and the very next day Pakistan blames us for the same," Mr. Abdullah said here.

Gen. Musharraf had the habit of eating his own words like militant outfits operating from Pakistani soil. "The Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) was quick enough to own the responsibility for the October 3 attack on the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly which

was later withdrawn following pressure from the ISI," he said and wondered "whether Gen. Musharraf is also governed by the ISI." "Now, after the clinching evidence in the ghastly attack on Parliament proving Pakistani involvement, the incident was enough of an 'eye opener' for the world about Islamabad's nefarious designs to keep the South Asian region 'unstable'."

"I do not know why they are jealous of our age-old democracy. First an attack was carried out at Jammu and Kashmir Assembly and now Parliament," he said. The fool proof evidence gathered by police and Central Intelligence agencies against Pakistan attracted the United Nations resolution 1373 on terrorism and "now the world body needs to react." — PTT

Jailed Harkat leader vows to fight India

DOABA (PANJSHER VALLEY), DEC. 17. Militants belonging to the Pakistan-backed Harkat-ul-Mujahideen, jailed by the Northern Alliance in this remote prison along with over 300 Taliban fighters, are hoping to get out on a general amnesty, vowing to fight against India in Kashmir and the new regime in Afghanistan.

"We hope to get out of the prison as soon as we have heard that the new President, Hamid Karzai, would give general amnesty to all prisoners. We cannot make any compromise on our goal — to wrest Kashmir from India and reinstate Taliban," the HUM commander, Ubeidullah Assad, told PTT.

RDX seized in Gujarat

GANDHINAGAR, DEC. 17. Police today seized a consignment of RDX and other weapons, believed to have been pushed in from across the border, buried in a farm land near Varahi village in Patan district in north Gujarat. According to the State Home Secretary, Mr. K. Nityanandam, the weapons and explosives were wrapped in newspapers published from Hyderabad (Sindh) and Rawalpindi. Besides, the firearms recovered in the joint operation by the State anti-terrorist squad and the CBI included 10 hand grenades, two rifle grenades, three stick grenades, one rocket, two anti-personnel mines, two pistols, live cartridges, detonators, timers and fuse wires.

Jaish denies hand in Parliament attack

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 17. The Pakistan-based militant outfit, Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), has denied involvement in Thursday's attack on the Parliament House. Refuting the charge of the Delhi Police Commissioner, Mr. Ajai Raj Sharma, the JeM chief, Maulana Masood Azhar, said the attack was not carried out by Islamic militants as they had nothing to gain by attacking Parliament.

It is for the first time that Maulana Azhar has reacted to charges against the organisation he founded in early 2000. He was one of the three militants released by the Government in exchange for the freedom of the passengers aboard the Indian Airlines plane, hijacked to Kandahar in 1999.

Maulana Azhar told the Pakistani media that according to reports, the car used in the December 13 attack belonged to the Indian Foreign Ministry. Mounds of explosives were used in the attack and it was impossible for the militants to transport such huge quantity of bombs, he said. Referring to New Delhi's demand for a ban on the Jaish and another Pakistan-based outfit, Lashkar-e-Taiba, he said "we are not promoting terrorism against any country." Islamabad had arrested even those who took part in peaceful religious demonstrations supporting the Taliban. How, then, would it allow attacks against another country, he asked.

'Baseless and concocted,' says Pak.

In a related development, Pa-

kistan dismissed the results of the investigation by the Delhi Police as "baseless and concocted." Its Defence spokesman, Maj. Gen. Rashid Qureshi, said "all these allegations are unfounded and fabricated."

India should have accepted the offer of the Federal Bureau of Investigation to help in the investigations into the attack on Parliament, he said, and wondered why New Delhi was reluctant to accept the suggestion for an impartial probe. (His demand for a joint probe, however, has not figured in Pakistan's reply to the demarche asking Islamabad to arrest the leaders of the outfits and seize their assets). He said the Indian leaders had started issuing threats of aggression, uncalled for and unacceptable to Pakistan.

'Unacceptable'

On the demarche and related charges, the Federal Secretary for Information, Syed Anwar Mehmood, told presspersons last night that "the Government of Pakistan will never accept any baseless and unfounded accusations being levelled by New Delhi without any solid proof."

Accusing India of raising a "hue and cry" against Pakistan whenever such incidents occurred, he said "India should first set its own house in order, investigate thoroughly into the incident, establish the (identity of the) perpetrators and then come to a final decision as to what should be the next step. It would not be in the fitness of things to hurl accusations on others without any solid proof."

THE HINDU

18 DEC 2001

WE WILL NEVER ACCEPT IT: OPPOSITION

POTO introduction stalled in LS

By Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI, DEC. 11. A united Opposition today stalled the introduction of the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Bill, 2001 in the Lok Sabha. Enraged Opposition members whipped up such a surcharged atmosphere in the House over the 'Kargil coffin issue' that the anti-terrorism bill to replace the Ordinance got entangled in a procedural wrangle.

Even as the House was witness-

ing an uproar on resuming its sitting after an hour-long adjournment in the morning, the Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi, proceeded with the schedule of business for the day, which included tabling of various reports and papers.

Amidst much noise, the Speaker called out the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, to introduce the Bill. As Mr. Advani rose to seek leave of the House to introduce

the diluted version of the Bill, the Opposition stepped up its protest.

The Samajwadi Party member, Mr. Akhilesh Singh, was seen tearing papers and throwing them into the well of the House. Several others moved towards the well. Such was the atmosphere that the Opposition members seemed unmindful of the recently-enacted automatic suspension rule for intruding into the well; some even staged a sit-in, stalling introduc-

tion of the Bill. Almost simultaneously, the Speaker adjourned the House for lunch.

After an hour-long all-party meeting, convened by the Speaker in his chamber during the lunch break, it became known that no action was being contemplated against the Opposition members who had stormed into the well. It was pointed out by sources in the Lok Sabha that the members had done so only after the House was adjourned by the Speaker.

Opposition leaders, mainly belonging to the Congress, the Samajwadi Party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Left parties, said they had "apprehended" that the controversial anti-terrorism legislation had been introduced by Mr. Advani.

They told the Speaker that their members had entered the well over an erroneous impression that the Bill had been introduced. They said the Speaker informed them that the motion of introduction of the legislation was only half-way through and the Bill could not be deemed to have been introduced in such a manner.

The CPI(M) leader, Mr. Somnath Chatterjee, later said that the Opposition had showed unanimity over POTO. "The Opposition will never accept POTO." The Government, he said, was threatening to call a joint session of Parliament to enact the draconian law.

At a press conference later, the BJP spokesman, Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra, reiterated the Government's commitment to introduce the bill. "It is blatantly undemocratic to block such a law in the House."

The BJP spokesman, however, diluted his tough posture and added that the Government would decide only after December 18 if there was a need to call a joint session of Parliament. It was decided at today's meeting of the BJP Parliamentary Party, presided over by Mr. Advani, to ask all party MPs to remain in New Delhi till December 24.

Now, 'Kargil coffin' haunts Govt.

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 11. A determined Opposition today hauled the BJP-led coalition Government over the coals, charging it with financial impropriety in the 'Kargil coffin scam' and forcing adjournment of both Houses of Parliament.

Both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha were plunged in turmoil as slogan-shouting Opposition members waved copies of an English daily that carried a CAG report on financial impropriety in purchase of coffins for the jawans who laid down their lives in mid-1999 during the Kargil conflict with Pakistan. Both Houses witnessed two adjournments before lunch and for the day after recess.

As the Lok Sabha assembled in the morning, Opposition members were on their feet, shouting "shame, shame". The uproar continued as almost all Opposition members were either speaking or shouting simultaneously. Perched precariously on the edge of the well of the House, they were in no mood to listen to the pleadings of the Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi.

"You can raise the issue in zero hour. Why are you disturbing the question hour? This is not correct. What are you doing," the Speaker was heard pleading. As it failed to bring any order, he adjourned the House till noon.

When the House reassembled, the furore showed no signs of abating. However, the schedule of tabling papers and reports was carried out for a few minutes. As the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, sought to introduce the anti-terrorism Bill, Opposition members trooped into the well. The Speaker adjourned the House till 2 p.m. even as members of the Samajwadi Party, the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Left parties continued to sit in the well as a mark of protest.

As the House reassembled after the lunch break, the members again stormed the well showing scant regard to the code of conduct so painstakingly put together recently. Even the rule of automatic suspension appeared to hold little ground in the surcharged atmosphere. "Coffin chor, gaddi choro",

"Gali, gali mein shor hai, BJP sarkar chor hai" and "Coffin choron ki kahani, CAG ki zabani" were some slogans raised by the Opposition members. The Deputy Speaker, Mr. P.M. Sayeed, made attempts to restore order but was forced to adjourn the House for the day.

In the Rajya Sabha, a determined Opposition blocked any other issue from being raised. The House did not even take up the question hour even

Fernandes must quit: Sonia

NEW DELHI, DEC. 11. The Congress president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, today demanded the resignation of the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, in the wake of the CAG report on murky dealings in Army procurement, including caskets for Kargil martyrs.

"I feel astounded by the scam... that they can do this to martyrs. First it was Tehelka and now another scam has surfaced. This is totally unacceptable to us," she said at an Iftar hosted by her at the party headquarters.— PTI

though Telugu Desam members said they wanted to bring up the issue of tobacco exports, listed as the first question for the day.

The 'Kargil coffin' report cropped up after the senior Congress leader, Mr. Arjun Singh, was permitted by the Chairman, Mr. Krishan Kant, to speak as soon as the House assembled. Mr. Arjun Singh, who was interrupted repeatedly by members of the ruling coalition, said the report was serious and he was raising it not to score any political point but because it had a bearing on the country. When some ruling party members insisted that Mr. Singh be brief, he retorted that it would be more "unpalatable" for them if he did so.

The Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Manmohan Singh, who too was interrupted, demanded the resignation of the Defence Minister.

11/12/01

11/12/01

Both Houses adjourned, Defence Minister's resignation sought

Chaos over coffin scam

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, December 11

THE "COFFIN Scam" today rocked Parliament and hijacked time reserved for Poto, forcing adjournment of both Houses. The Government had intended to move the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (Poto) in the Lok Sabha in defiance of Opposition criticism. But the outcry forced it back on the defensive. Home Minister LK Advani tried to introduce the Poto Bill in the Lok Sabha, but in vain.

Trouble began as soon as the Lok Sabha met in the morning, with Congress, Samajwadi, RJD and the Left MPs promptly up on their feet, waving editions of a newspaper, which carried the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on the murky purchases of coffins during the Kargil conflict in graphic detail.

Lok Sabha Speaker GMC Balayogi adjourned the House within minutes, but Rajya Sabha Chairman Kishan Kant allowed Jaswant Singh, Leader of the House, to make a statement. Singh took about 20 minutes, through repeated interruptions, to say that Members would do well to wait till the afternoon session when the subject of defence procurement was scheduled for discussion.

When Manmohan Singh, Rajya Sabha Opposition Leader, got to speak, he exhorted the Government to take responsibility and ask Defence Minister George Fernandes to resign.

Kant tried to resume Question



Defence Minister George Fernandes addressing a news conference in New Delhi on Tuesday.

Hour after Singh's address, but the House had sunk into chaos, leaving him no option but to adjourn proceedings for an hour.

By midday, when both the Houses met again, the Opposition had fine-tuned its assault plan. In the Lok Sabha, Samajwadi Party leaders shouted "Coffin chor-gaddi choro", "Sena khon bahati hai-sarkar commission khati hai". The Rajya Sabha witnessed similar disorder, fol-

lowed by a further two-hour adjournment.

In the Lok Sabha, Home Minister LK Advani rose to introduce Poto amid the din. A loud "No" rang out in the House when the Speaker invited him to make his introductory remark. In the ensuing bedlam, some MPs, notably Raghuvansh Prasad Yadav of the RJD, stormed into the Well of the House. He was lucky not to be suspended under

the new Code of Conduct, because the Speaker had just declared the House adjourned.

Later, the BJP advised its MPs to stand by for a possible joint session of the two Houses for the Poto Bill's passage. The MPs were told to stay put in the Capital till December 24—three days after the scheduled close of the Winter Session of Parliament.

More reports on Page 9

Breach of contract, says George

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, December 11

FOR ONCE, Defence Minister George Fernandes was as a loss for words. But he still refused to accept or fix responsibility for irregularities in the purchase of aluminium coffins for soldiers killed in the Kargil war.

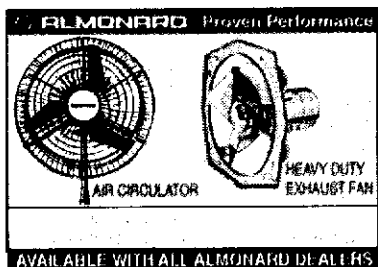
Fernandes used a BJP media briefing at Parliament House on Tuesday to defend himself. He described the issue as a "breach of contract" by the supplier.

The contract, he said, was cancelled after the vendor, Buitron and Baize of the US, violated terms by supplying 54-kg welded caskets instead of 18-kg dye-pressed ones. "Of the money paid, Rs 78 lakh has been recovered, while Rs 102 lakh is still outstanding," he said.

Fernandes dismissed as "hearsay" the observation of the Comptroller and Auditor General that caskets similar to the ones bought for \$2,500 apiece in 1999 had been supplied to Indian troops who were part of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Somalia in 1994 at \$172 apiece. "This information is not on paper. An officer of the 66 Infantry Brigade of the Indian Army, which was part of the peacekeeping force in Somalia, conveyed this information to his superior. There was no record of the price charged then," Fernandes said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

12 DEC 2001



Suicide squad st

5 militants killed ^{9 Parliament} Army deplo

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, DEC. 13. The terrorists brought their decade-old battle against the nation right to the heart of official India and managed to stage a shocking attack in the most guarded five-acre patch in the country — the Parliament House complex.

A terrorist suicide squad sneaked into the Parliament House, but before all five of them could be gunned down by the security officials, they did succeed in killing six security personnel and one civilian; as many as 12 security personnel and six civilians were hurt. The violent drama lasted just about 30 minutes but its reverberations will be felt for a long time to come.

Police and other Intelligence agencies were not able or willing to identify the terrorists, though the official word is that the "agencies have some clues and are working on it." However, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, told newsmen that as far as he could make out, the slain terrorists did not look like "Indian faces." The unstated inference was that the terrorists were perhaps of Afghan origin.

Perhaps, it was a fortuitous delay in the Vice-President, Mr. Krishan Kant's departure from Parliament that tripped up the

terrorists' plan to gain entry into the main building. They unexpectedly found themselves

A sixth terrorist?

NEW DELHI, DEC. 13. Was there a sixth terrorist, besides the five who were killed as they tried to storm the Parliament House today? None of the police officials, including the Delhi Police chief, Mr. Ajai Raj Sharma, has been able to clarify this.

Some police officials maintained there was a possibility of the presence of a sixth militant in the operation. The security personnel present in the House claim one of the terrorists managed to escape after a heavy retaliation from the security personnel. But there was no official confirmation of the report. — PTI

against the Vice-President's motorcade and, in a panic, sought to retrace their way; but, in the process, they brushed against a security vehicle and invited the attention and challenge to themselves.

The next 25 minutes saw a pitched gunbattle between the four terrorists and the security personnel. The fifth terrorist

sought to make his way towards the main entry but when he got hit in the leg, blew himself up.

Immediately after the failed attack, the Parliament House complex was virtually converted into an armed camp. The entire complex had to be "sanitised," while simultaneously the trapped Ministers, parliamentarians, media-persons and others had to be whisked away to safety. As an added precaution, security units were deployed in and around the VVIP zone; with the Army guarding the residences of the Prime Minister, the Home Minister and the Leader of the Opposition.

The terrorists sought to attack the Parliament House at a time when it has the maximum attendance. Though the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, was not there, the Vice-President, other senior Ministers and a very large number of parliamentarians were present in the building.

As Mr. Advani spelt it out, the objective of the attack was not just to damage the building but to eliminate the political leadership.

The attack was a "major conspiracy," intended to disrupt the entire political system and destabilise the "whole set-up."

For the first hour, the Government found itself shaken to the core. In a bout of panic, the Home Minister and the Defence Minis-

ter, Mr. George Fernandes, decided to summon Army units and soon there were so many uni-

Bush, Putin call up PM

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 13. The President of the United States, Mr. George Bush, and the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, spoke to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, this evening in the backdrop of the terrorist attack on Parliament House today.

According to the spokesperson of the Ministry of External Affairs, both leaders expressed sympathy and "outright condemnation" of the attack. Both the conversations lasted about 10 minutes each.

PTI reports: Nepal's King Gyanendra strongly condemned the attack and said his country stood by India in the fight against terrorism. He said this in a message to the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan.

formed units that there was confusion as to who was in-charge. Fortunately, the confusion was soon sorted out, and a confident Prime Minister "addressed" the nation.

PTI reports: Mr. Advani said the terrorists

A decisive battle has to take place: PM

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, DEC. 13. Responding to the terrorist attack on the Parliament House, the Vajpayee Government has asserted that "we will liquidate the terrorists and their sponsors wherever they are, whoever they are". This assertion was made in a resolution passed by the Union Cabinet this evening.

However, briefing newsmen, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, did not elaborate whether this meant the Government was considering the "surgical strike" option against the militant bases (across the Line of Control). All that he said was that "the resolution was clear enough".

A similar sentiment was earlier echoed by the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, in a brief "message to the nation". He said

the attack "was not just on a building, but a warning to the entire nation, and we accept the challenge. We will defeat each one of their (terrorists') attack". Mr. Vajpayee saw today's attack as the continuation of the two-decade-old terrorist onslaught against India and

- Who called in the Army? Page 11
- President left in a hurry: Page 12
- Photo feature: Page 13

added that "our fight is now reaching the last stage, and a decisive battle would have to take place. The entire country is united in this hour of crisis".

The refrain is to claim today's

incident as an indication of the effectiveness of the security set-up. Notwithstanding the fact that the terrorists did sneak into the Parliament House complex, the official contention is that these people were gunned down without any massive loss of life to either the security personnel or the political leadership.

Mr. Advani was quick to dismiss the suggestion that there was any security lapse due to intelligence failure, as there could be no absolute fool-proof protection against those indoctrinated in the 'fi- dayeen mentality'.

He invited attention to the fact that Indira Gandhi was shot dead by those who were oblivious to the consequences: "no one can say Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was not adequately protected." Before

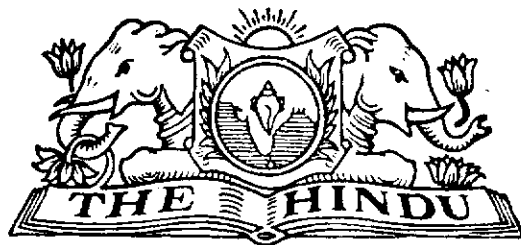
the full Cabinet met to pass the resolution, condemning the terrorist attacks, the Cabinet Committee on Security met.

The Prime Minister is believed to be dismayed that the terrorists could stage a spectacular attack on the Parliament House complex, but is also reported to be determined that no punches be pulled in the battle against the terrorists.

There is a general sense of satisfaction that the international community, including Pakistan, has been quick to condemn the attack. It is this international response that for now has slowed down those within the security establishment who otherwise would have been arguing for a strong response.

Parliament to adjourn sine die

The Union Cabinet is believed to have decided that when Parliament meets tomorrow to condemn the terrorist attack, after the Prime Minister, Mr. Vajpayee, and the Leader of the Opposition, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, will have spoken, the Lok Sabha should adjourn sine die, bringing the current session to a premature end.



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 14, 2001

UGLY TERROR STRIKES AGAIN

IN TERMS OF scale, or the number of casualties, it is far from being the worst terrorist attack India has suffered. But in terms of purpose, or the sheer audacity of the choice where the outrage was perpetrated, there are clearly no parallels. The bloody siege of Parliament represents an attack on the citadel or the very symbol of India's democracy. As the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, suggested, this was not a mere attack on a building but an assault on the very nation itself. Although it resulted in the tragic death of six persons, mainly security personnel, and in injuries sustained by many others, the assault was mercifully short-lived and contained without further damage. Conducted at a time when a sizeable number of the country's top political leadership was present in Parliament House, it is impossible, even while one deplores what actually happened, not to wonder about what might have been. The cataclysmic potential of an attack such as this is mind-boggling and it is only for this reason that the shock and the tragedy of the incident have been accompanied by an undercurrent of relief. At the same time, the act of brutality committed within the walls of the Parliament complex is an ugly reminder of the extreme vulnerability of India — even its most secure and fortified places — to the menace of terrorism, particularly to suicide attacks.

Security personnel have come in for justifiable praise for preventing the terrorists — armed with machine guns, grenades and explosives — from storming the building and causing even more mayhem. While the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, has stated "there was no security breach", the facts seem to suggest that the security cordon in Parliament is easily breachable.

The question is how a car with militants armed to the teeth was allowed to pass through the outer gates and enter the compound. Clearly, the checks conducted on vehicles need to be tightened much further; one of the things that this attack establishes is that such checks should be thorough and go far beyond a cursory examination of an entry pass. While the five militants who stormed the Parliament complex have been killed, they could not have perpetrated this outrage without the support of a well-knit organisation. It is vital that those responsible for investigating the attack determine the identity of the group and come down both quickly and heavily on it. A failure to do so will only heighten the vulnerability of a nation which has been rudely shaken by the attack.

Parallels have been drawn with the attack on the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly a few months ago and attention has been directed to the Al-Qaeda plot to attack Parliament House (which was unearthed following the recent arrest of one of its operatives in Mumbai). However, the plain truth is that little, or nothing, is known about who planned or organised the siege yet. In this context, it is important to observe a measure of restraint and not fall prey to the easy temptation of indulging in conjectures and, more importantly, resorting to a tired and superfluous jingoism. Thursday's startling attack demands only immediate responses. First, to radically upgrade the existing security arrangements inside Parliament, something the Government has promised to do in consultation with the Lok Sabha Speaker. Second, to determine the identity of the organisation behind the attack and bring the conspirators to book.

Cong., Left Govt. fo

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 13. The Congress and the Left parties today strongly condemned the terrorist attack on Parliament but also held the Government responsible for the security lapse.

The Congress Working Committee (CWC) in its resolution said "the incident brings out the monumental security and intelligence failure". The CPI(M) demanded a probe into the security lapse, while the CPI sought an explanation from the Home Minister.

The Congress highlighted the fact that though the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO) had been in force for the last seven weeks, the Government had done precious little to "take pre-emptive preventive action" despite prior information about a likely attack on Parliament. The party indicated that it was not about to change its position on POTO. "The people must not delude themselves into believing that this attack happened for want of POTO, it happened despite that," said the party spokesperson, Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy.

The Left parties said it was a relief that none of the MPs was injured and that the Parliament building was not damaged. The CPI(M) politburo said Parliament was carefully chosen for the attack as it symbolised the democratic system. The CPI(M) and the CPI wondered how the suicide squad managed to enter the compound.

The Home Minister had warned about the possibility of such an attack. The recent bomb



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Storms Parliament

Yelled Terrorists will pay: Advani



THE FACE OF TERROR: Three of the five armed terrorists who stormed the Parliament House complex on Thursday are seen in action across the wall. — Photo courtesy NDTV/Star News

who had attacked Parliament would pay dearly for their "mis-adventure."

Speaking from within the Parliament House shortly after the attack, he said it would be con-

demned by the entire country.

Mr. Vajpayee today spoke to the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, and apprised him of the shoot-out by suspected terrorists in Parliament House.

Mr. Vajpayee rang up Mr. Narayanan and told him about the measures being taken to face the situation, PMO sources said.

Mr. Vajpayee has cancelled today's 'Iftar' in view of the terrorist

strike. "As a mark of respect to the security persons who lost their lives in the terrorist strike in Parliament, the Prime Minister has cancelled his Iftar party," a PMO spokesperson said. — PTI

I am shocked, says Musharraf

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 13. Within hours of the attack on the Parliament House today, the Pakistan President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, sent a message to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, strongly condemning it and conveying his deep condolences to the bereaved families.

Gen. Musharraf said in his letter: "I was shocked to learn about the attack earlier today by armed intruders on the Indian Parliament building in New Delhi. I have been saddened by the loss of life and injuries suffered by the Indian security personnel."

Conveying his sympathies to the Government and the people of India and his deep condolences to the bereaved families, Gen. Musharraf said: "My Government strongly condemns the attack. Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration."

The Pakistan Foreign Office issued a separate statement saying "the Government of Pakistan has received with shock the news about the attack on the Indian Parliament building in New Delhi by armed intruders, which has re-

sulted in a number of casualties. The Government strongly and unequivocally condemns the attack." The Foreign Office spokesman, Mr. Aziz Khan, de-

clined to answer whether there was any attempt by India to implicate Pakistan in the attack. At the moment, there was nothing to suggest any such thing.

Indian agencies to blame: Salahuddin

By B. Muralidhar Reddy

ISLAMABAD, DEC. 13. The United Jehadi Council (UJC) chairman and chief of the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen, Syed Salahuddin, has alleged that the attack on the Indian Parliament was "engineered" by the Indian intelligence agencies.

In a press statement after an emergency meeting of the UJC at Muzaffarabad, capital of Pak-Occupied Kashmir, Mr. Salahuddin said the attack had two objectives. "It is meant to pressurise Members of Parliament into adopting the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance on which the ruling party is engaged in a tug of war with the main Opposition parties. Another aim of the attack is to influence the international coalition on terrorism to bracket the Kashmir freedom struggle with terrorism."

The statement alleged that the Indian Government had staged similar "dramas in the past to achieve its narrow objectives". Mr. Salahuddin said none of the militant outfits were involved in the attack on Parliament House.

On the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes' reported observation on a television channel that the suicide squad was speaking in Kashmiri, the Press Secretary to the Pakistan President, Maj. Gen. Rashid Quereshi, said "we do not know the veracity of what you are saying. If it were correct, a doubt would arise straightaway. If all the intruders were killed how could the Defence Minister get the information that they were speaking in Kashmiri?"

Outrageous, says U.S.

AP reports from New Delhi:

The U.S. Ambassador to India, Mr. Robert Blackwill, described the attack as an "outrageous act of terrorism." And the U.S. Embassy spokesman, Mr. Gordon Duguid, said in a statement, "we condemn this outrageous act of terrorism and express our deepest sympathy to the families of the victims of this attack."

Shift blame for lapse

attack on the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly was a pointer. "In this light it must be probed how this security lapse took place," the CPI (M) said.

The CPI said it was at a loss to understand how the suicide squad was able to enter the most secured precincts of Parliament. The attack came when there were repeated threats to target Parliament and some other important institutions. "The Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, owes an explanation to the nation."

It said the incident should not be used to sweep under the carpet the issues raised by the Opposition in Parliament, the party Central Secretariat said.

The CPI(M-L) said the incident pointed to "serious loopholes and lapses in the security system of the country". It said the Government should come out with the whole truth before the nation.

The Telugu Desam Parliamentary Party leader, Mr. K. Yerran Naidu, said it tantamounts to an attack on the people. Decrying all such acts of terrorism, it said the time was not to discuss lapses and failures but to remain united and speak with one voice.

It appealed to all parties and the nation to extend to the Government full support and unqualified cooperation at this juncture in putting down terrorism.

The Janata Dal (United) said the time had come to act against terrorists and give a reply to them in a "language they understand". The party spokesman, Mr. Mohan Prakash, appealed to the international community not to remain a silent spectator to such terrorist threats.

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Sobhagya

Coffin issue stalls Parliament again

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 12. Parliament was adjourned for the second consecutive day today amid scenes of slogan-shouting and uproar as an

unrelenting opposition continued to haul the BJP-led coalition Government over the CAG report on the "Kargil coffin scam."

Both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha were ultimately ad-

137/12
journed for the day after brief adjournments failed to bring any semblance of order. Agitated opposition members continued to raise slogans demanding the Government's accountability over the alleged financial irregularities in the purchase of metal caskets for carrying the bodies of the soldiers who laid down their lives in "Operation Vijay" in Kargil.

Members from the Congress, RJD, the Left Parties and the Samajwadi Party were on their feet as the Lok Sabha assembled this morning. They were seen waving copies of the CAG report on defence deals during "Operation Vijay" and shouting slogans.

While asking the members to resume their seats, the Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi, said: "Whatever you want to raise, please do that in zero hour." But his request went unheeded.

Within a few minutes, the House was adjourned for an hour. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, who returned last

9. Parliament
night after a five-day visit to Japan, was present in the Lok Sabha but did not make any effort to intervene.

When the House reassembled, the same script was repeated, forcing adjournment till 2.30 p.m.

In the Rajya Sabha, noisy scenes marred the proceedings in the morning, forcing the Chairman, Mr. Krishan Kant, to adjourn the House for an hour. The Chairman adjourned the House for the day as the opposition members were unrelenting.

Early end to session?: Page 11

PM blasts Opposition

By Mahesh Vijapurkar

MUMBAI, DEC. 12. The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee today blasted the Opposition for 'opposing POTO in toto' simply because it wanted to score political points even though there was no difference of opinion amongst the various parties on the need to fight terrorism.

Some of those who set their face against the new law, he lamented, seem 'not to have even read the provisions. They had just made up their minds to oppose, so why read it?'

Speaking at the event organised to felicitate the Nationalist Congress Party leader, Mr. Sharad Pawar, who completed 61 today after 40 years of public life, he saw a bleak future and 'rising bitterness' in the country if political leaders and political parties cease communicating with each other. "There are no enemies in a democracy which can see governments change sans violence, opposing points made without hatred." But, he apparently found the spirit of consensus missing in India.

'Pawar attitude positive': Page 12

THE HINDU launches today its tenth edition and its third in Andhra Pradesh, from Vijayawada. This edition is aimed at serving the region better with a more extensive coverage and an earlier delivery of copies.

13 DEC 2001

Britain, C'wealth condemn attack

By Hasan Suroor

LONDON, DEC. 13. Britain strongly condemned the terrorist attack on Parliament saying there could "no justification" for it. The British Foreign Secretary, Mr. Jack Straw, said in a statement that he was "appalled" by the attack on the "heart of Indian democracy" and he "unreservedly" condemned those responsible for it.

"There can be no justification for what has happened. Terrorism, wherever it occurs, is unacceptable," he said in remarks which Indian diplomatic sources saw as an acknowledgement by Britain of the magnitude of the terrorist threat India was fighting.

The Commonwealth Secretary-General, Mr. Don McKinnon, said in a statement that the attack on the "seat of governance in the world's largest democracy" was yet another reminder that no country was immune from terrorism. "It should strengthen our resolve to fight terrorism wherever it occurs and whatever shape or form it takes."

The Labour Friends of India — a group of Labour MPs — said in the

House of Commons that the attack was a matter of concern. Indian diplomats said that after September 11, there was growing recognition in Britain of Indian concerns on the issue.

This was reflected in the British Government's strong reaction to the terrorist attack on the Assembly in Srinagar on October 1, and in statements by the Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, during his visit to New Delhi. When the Foreign Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, came here recently he stressed that India's fight against terrorism did not begin on September 11 and the Brit-

ish side acknowledged that it understood India's concerns on cross-border terrorism.

Our New Delhi Special Correspondent reports:

The visiting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan, Mr. Abdullah Abdullah, today condemned the armed attack on Parliament House even as the incident drew widespread criticism across the globe.

During his 45-minute talks with the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, Mr. Abdullah said that the people of Afghanistan were themselves victims of terror-

ism and therefore fully understood the gravity of the attack. He expressed his gratitude for the supply of Indian humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

Among the SAARC countries, Bangladesh condemned the attack while the newly appointed Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr. Tyrone Fernando, described the incident as a "horrible act."

Nepal's Prime Minister, Mr. Sher Bahadur Deuba, has condemned the act. Among the permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, France denounced the "murderous terrorist attack" on Indian Parliament.

Vladimir Radyuhin reports from Moscow: Russia has condemned the terrorist attack on Indian Parliament as an "outrageous manifestation of terrorism."

The Russian Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Thursday voicing "grave concern over this fresh outrageous manifestation of terrorism."

Blair deplores attack

LONDON, DEC. 13. The British Prime Minister, Mr. Tony Blair, today strongly condemned the terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament.

"This attack on the heart of Indian democracy is to be totally deplored. My sympathies go to the victims and their families and to the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, as he leads his country at this difficult time.

"Terrorism achieves nothing. It only causes pain and heartache for everyone involved. Indian democracy has shown strength and resilience over the years and I am confident it will do so again despite this appalling attack," he said in a statement. — PTI

'My God! Parliament has been attacked'

By Sujay Mehdudia

NEW DELHI, DEC. 13. I was driving down Talkatora Road like any other day to reach my office. There was the usual hustle and bustle on this busy road as Parliament is in session. There was also the routine security cordon along the approach road leading to the country's seat of power. The sun was shining brightly and nothing was amiss.

As I approached the Parliament Annexe gate, my attention was drawn towards the huge signboard on the left indicating that a Power Ministers' meet was going on inside. Here, too, security personnel and traffic police had been deployed in adequate strength to monitor the movement of VIPs reaching Parliament Annexe.

I have driven past this road umpteen number of times and therefore, when a senior security personnel, with a walkie-talkie set in hand came running from the direction of the main gate of Parliament House and signalled to the security personnel, who were relaxing, to get alert, I did not consider it unusual. I presumed — as it happens on this road a

number of times every day — that some VIP was approaching and it was time to get into the alert mode.

By this time, my car reached Parliament House roundabout and suddenly there was a commotion, which betrayed a sense of

They had a 'two-pronged' plan

NEW DELHI, DEC. 13. The militants who attacked the Parliament House today were working on a two-pronged plan — causing explosion at one spot to divert the attention of the security forces and then storming VIP entrances, official sources said. A terrorist, shot as he was throwing a grenade at a gate normally used by the Prime Minister, was heard saying "Pakistan zindabad" before going down.

The militants utilised the confusion caused by the blast to reach the three other entrances to the building. Their plot was foiled as the CRPF jawans challenged them at every gate. — PTI

alarm that I have rarely seen in this part of the city. The imposing iron gates of Parliament was suddenly closed by security personnel and one could hear the sound of gun shots from inside. Inside the complex!

Initially, I thought that some fire crackers were being burst. Suddenly, the sound of gunshots intensified and multiple rounds of firing were heard. Even before I could gather my wits, something inside me spoke out: "My God! Parliament has been attacked".

Soon, a massive explosion followed — probably a hand grenade — followed by yet another similar explosion and a continuous burst of gunfire. Immediately, I looked at my watch and it was 11-42 a.m. The attack probably had taken place a few minutes earlier.

The security personnel deployed along Red Cross Road went into the alert mode and took positions behind the trees lined up along the road. But the gunfire continued unabated and there was another explosion. By this time, my car moving slowly, reached the AIFACS roundabout and I immediately rushed to my office. My worst fears had come true.

Attack on democracy, says Ranil

By Nirupama Subramanian

COLOMBO, DEC. 13. The new Government in Sri Lanka condemned the attack on the Indian Parliament today as an attack on democracy.

"I was shocked to hear of the terrorist attack on the Lok Sabha, the symbol of democracy in India. We in Sri Lanka strongly condemn such senseless violence directed against the elected representatives of the people of India," the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, said in a letter to the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee. The Sri Lankan Prime Minister is to make an official visit to New Delhi, his first trip abroad after taking charge last week, from December 22 to 24.

He will be accompanied by the Foreign Minister, Mr. Tyrone Fernando, and will hold discussions with Mr. Vajpayee, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, the leader of the Opposition, Ms. Sonia Gandhi and others.

The talks would include the revival of the peace process in Sri Lanka, and bilateral issues such as strengthening of economic co-operation.

Sound of firing, deafening blasts

By Vinay Kumar *of Parliament*

NEW DELHI, DEC. 13. At first it sounded like a cracker burst in the Parliament House compound but the sound of firing and deafening blasts this morning drove home the rude message that something was amiss in the highly secure citadel of Indian democracy.

What could have gone wrong in the well-guarded compound? Electrical short circuiting or somebody playing a prank? As the sound of firing became louder and regular, the worst fears of Parliament House coming under some kind of attack came rushing to mind.

Sitting in the Parliament House office of the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, I was soon joined by four journalists and the Union Law Minister, Mr. Arun Jaitley, the Minister of State for Commerce, Mr. Rajiv Pratap Rudy, and the BJP MP from Pune, Mr. Pradeep Rawat. Mr. Jaitley's mobile phone rang at least thrice but the line appeared very disturbed. To one caller, he had to yell, telling him to call up again after an hour or so.

The firing outside would not stop. My conversation on the Kargil coffin issue and CAG report with Mr. Jaitley came to an abrupt end. Both Mr. Jaitley and Mr. Rudy wanted to check what was wrong but all the doors had been closed and security personnel asked us to remain where we were. It took a few moments for me, my colleagues and the two Ministers to come to terms with the reality outside. While Mr. Jaitley appeared sure that somebody had tried to storm into the House, Mr. Rudy said the sound of gunshots was for real and some encounter outside was on. When I tried to conjure up the image, the scenario appeared horrific.

Thoughts of the recent suicide attack outside

Jammu and Kashmir Assembly building in Srinagar, which had taken a toll of about 40 innocent lives, came rushing to my mind. But it was Srinagar, I consoled myself, this is Parliament House in the heart of the Capital. Could this symbol of Indian democracy be attacked?

By now the Home Minister's highly secure Restricted Exchange (RAX) phone lines had got engaged and calls were made by his personal staff to several places to know if Parliament House was under attack.

Both Mr. Jaitley and Mr. Rudy were asked to proceed towards Central Hall and within moments I learnt that the Home Minister had been whisked away to safety in Central Hall where other MPs were also assembled. A staff member from the office of the Leader of Opposition, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, came rushing to inform that the Congress president wanted to speak to the Home Minister but he was told that Mr. Advani had already left his office.

Where was the Prime Minister? I asked a tense-looking Mr. Rudy who informed that Mr. Vajpayee had not come to the House that morning. As I tried to step out into the corridor, a grim-faced security personnel asked me and others to remain inside the room. I tried making some calls but to add to the confusion I found that telephones had gone dead and only incoming calls were being received. Those who had mobile phones found them jammed.

I asked the security personnel outside the room on an update of the situation. "I will tell you when it is safe to come out. Right now all doors are closed and no movement is allowed," he said. As minutes ticked away, tension and uncertainty was palpable in the air. I was joined by fellow newsmen in desperately trying to

parliament speak to our office and after repeated attempts, it was only at 12.10 p.m. that my call was put through and I quickly rattled out the bare information to the Chief of Bureau.

The news had already spread like wild fire. In the office of the Home Minister's private secretary, channels were switched to get more information. The staff members there desperately tried reaching out to their families and informing them of their safety. Human life had never seemed so precious.

Though inside the Parliament House and closest to the scene of action, I could only hear sounds of gunshots, indicating the gravity of the unprecedented shoot-out in progress outside. When it came to Parliament House, I thought the massive edifice reinforced with Jaisalmer stone and thick walls always looked invincible. But here it was being penetrated and hit by bullets and blasts in a daring manner.

The sound of gunshots could be heard till about 12.15 p.m. and I also heard at least three to four loud blasts which sounded like bomb or grenade explosions. As the feeling of what had happened outside Parliament House started sinking, expressions of panic, shock and disbelief could be seen writ large on the faces of employees, visitors, mediapersons and Parliamentarians.

The dull morning after an adjournment of both the Houses had suddenly turned into the most daring terrorist attack on the Indian state. And I just thought it was yet another "13" and the year 2001 seemed to me an incredibly long cruel period which had brought with it terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre, Pentagon, Afghan War, plane crash in the heart of New York.

THE HINDU

14 DEC 2001

WHITE AMBASSADOR BEARING AGENTS OF DEATH

- 11.41 am: White Ambassador enters the Parliament complex from Sansad Marg
- Car speeds towards Gate 12, used by Rajya Sabha members
- Parliament House security officer J.P. Yadav asks car to stop. Car speeds on
- Yadav passes on message over walkie-talkie before militants shoot him dead
- 11.42: Joint secretary, security, Maheepathi, orders closure of all Parliament House gates
- Terrorist car runs into Krishan Kant's stationary motorcade, hits a car and stops near Gate 11
- Militants jump out. One of them rushes towards Gate 1, throwing grenades
- Security personnel at gate retaliate. One militant blows himself up
- Others rush towards Gate 5 — the gate the Prime Minister takes — throwing grenades. One militant is killed in the police firing
- One more is killed between gates 5 and 8
- Three are killed near gate 8
- Six Delhi police personnel, including a woman constable, and a Parliament House gardener, are killed



- ARCHITECTS: Sir Edwin Lutyens and Sir Herbert Baker
 - FOUNDATION STONE LAID: February 12, 1921
 - BUILDING OPENED: January 18, 1927
 - TOTAL COST: Rs 83 lakh
- VITAL STATISTICS**
- DIAMETER: 170.69 m
 - CIRCUMFERENCE: 536.33 m
 - COMPLEX AREA: 5 acres

HISTORY OF THE HOUSE

- STRUCTURE AT A GLANCE**
- Open verandah on first floor has 144 sandstone columns, each 27-feet high
 - NUMBER OF GATES: 12
 - Gate No. 1, on Sansad Marg, is the main entrance
- CENTRAL HALL**
- Central Hall with its magnificent dome is the focus of Parliament House.

- Radiating from this centre are the semi-circular Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha and Library Hall
- Originally used as library of erstwhile Central Legislative Assembly
 - The Constitution was framed here
 - Transfer of power from Britain to India took place in this hall
 - Now used for joint sittings of House
 - Heads of state address MPs in this hall
- Picture by Jagdish Yadav

Al Qaida suspect said it all

FROM DEBASHIS BHATTACHARYYA

Mumbai, Dec. 13: Mohammed Afroz told all — even the planned attack on Parliament. The suspected al Qaida operative, held in a Mumbai jail, was not taken seriously.

"If the Union home ministry had taken the report we had sent on the basis of the confession Afroz made, today's terrorist attack might have been averted," police commissioner M.N. Singh said.

Afroz, 25, was arrested in a Navi Mumbai hotel on October 2, initially on charges of extortion and robbery. A few days later, he was booked on charges of conspiring and waging war against the country.

The hotel-owner had tipped off the police, deeply suspicious of the way he had been wine and dining at the hotel.

To Navi Mumbai police, it was just another case of presumed extortion or robbery since those who commit such crimes often fritter away their ill-gotten money on food and drinks and sometimes end up in jail. "We had not taken it seriously at all in the beginning," a senior officer said.

Things changed when they went through the man's suitcase and stumbled into his passport, issued in Mumbai. It logged in detail his all visits to Australia, the US and UK in the last four years. "He hardly looked so-rich as to visit several foreign countries and that, too, countries like the US and UK. That raised police's suspicion," said deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal, who holds home portfolio.

Suspicion deepened when they began to question Afroz. He was handed over to Mumbai police almost immediately.

Then, Afroz, questioned by the police commissioner himself, made the startling confession: he is an al Qaida operative, the police said.

Afroz is scheduled to appear before a court tomorrow, where the police expect him to make a legal confession. The police said Afroz disclosed during questioning that he belonged to one of four al Qaida suicide missions formed for the September 11 attacks in the US, Rolto Towers in Australia and the British and Indian Parliament buildings.

Afroz said he had trained as a pilot in Australia, a fact confirmed by Australia's attorney-general Daryl Williams. He was to have hijacked a jetliner and crashed it into the British Parliament building on September 11. Bhujbal said the "highly classified" information had been immediately passed on to the Union home ministry.

Soon afterwards, home minister L.K. Advani made a statement that al Qaida had a plan to attack Parliament. The police officers were, however, baffled why security was not tightened at the Parliament building.

Born to a tailor from Hyderabad, who had moved to Mumbai four decades ago, and a Gujrati mother, Afroz studied science at Somaiya college in north-east Mumbai before dropping out and leaving for Australia in 1997 to train as a pilot, which his family members said was his childhood dream.

"My brother has always wanted to be a pilot and trained first at Juhu flying club, before deciding to go to Australia to train as a jetliner pilot," brother Farooq said.

He said their father had borrowed money to send Afroz to Australia. "We have an uncle in London, who is a businessman.

He also funded his training in Australia."

The police questioned the family's version, saying it was not so rich as to train Afroz as a pilot in Australia. "It makes no sense when the man himself owned up to what he was up to," a senior officer said.

The police said Afroz had checked in at London airport on September 11 for two flights bound for Manchester along with four others. They had planned to hijack the planes and crash them into Parliament and the tower bridge. But when the news of the US attacks came through they had panicked and fled.

He arrived in New Delhi the next day and immediately took off for Goa to "spend a few quiet days".

He arrived in Mumbai in the last week of September mainly to "see" his girlfriend, but ended up in police hands.

THE TELEGRAPH

14 DEC 2001

OPPOSITION FORCES ADJOURNMENT OF BOTH HOUSES

Turmoil over Ayodhya issue

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, DEC. 6. The Ayodhya issue rocked Parliament today as a determined Opposition forced an adjournment of both Houses, marking the ninth anniversary of the Babri Masjid.

The Opposition put up a coordinated and united show, vociferously demanding that their adjournment motion indicting the Vajpayee Government be admitted. As soon as the Lok Sabha assembled, shouts of "Jai Shri Ram" rose from the BJP benches, which were countered by "shame, shame" from the Opposition members.

For the next few minutes, the House was drowned in the din as members from the Opposition and the ruling coalition were on their feet, raising slogans and at times waving their clenched fists in the air. The Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi's efforts to get on with the business proved futile. "Please allow the House to function. You can raise the issue

during zero hour," he pleaded.

Within minutes, the Speaker, sensing the mood of the members, adjourned the House for the day. In the Treasury benches, the Home Minister, Mr. I.K. Advani, the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, and other senior Ministers were present while the Opposition benches were full and the Leader of the Opposition, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, sat through the turmoil.

The Congress, the CPI(M), the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party had given separate adjournment notices accusing the NDA Government of failing to ensure maintenance of status quo at Ayodhya as per the directions of the Supreme Court. They alleged that the Centre had failed to book the accused in the demolition case and prevent Vishwa Hindu Parishad and Bajrang Dal activists from vitiating the atmosphere.

The script was more or less repeated in the Rajya Sabha. The Opposition raised the issue

as soon as the House assembled, with Mr. Suresh Pachauri of the Congress waving a copy of an English daily which had reported that a secret meeting attended by five Union Ministers was held this week at which the temple construction issue was discussed.

The Samajwadi Party member, Mr. Azam Khan, was seen displaying a placard 'Sharam Divas' (Day of Shame) while other Opposition members lent their voice protesting against the manner in which the Sangh Parivar was still pursuing its agenda. They cited the recent forceful entry into the disputed site by VHP leaders.

With the ruling coalition members joining issue, the House witnessed disorderly scenes for five minutes. The Chairman, Mr. Krishan Kant, adjourned the House for the day. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, was present in the House as the day is reserved for questions relating to his office. But Mr. Vajpayee made no attempt to intervene.

VHP 'firm', Muslims seek President's intervention

By J. P. Shukla

AYODHYA, DEC. 6. The ninth anniversary of the demolition of the Babri Masjid here passed off peacefully with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders reiterating that they would begin construction of the Ram temple at the disputed site any time after March 12, and the Muslims appealing to the President, Mr. K. R. Narayanan, to take all steps to ensure maintenance of rule of law and supremacy of Parliament and the Constitution.

At Karsewakpuram, the speakers, who addressed Bajrang Dal and VHP workers, defiantly announced that it was not for the courts to specify the spot where Lord Ram was born. Acceptance of court verdicts on the Ayodhya dispute was, therefore, meaningless, they said.

Paramhans Ramchandra Das, chairman of the Ram Janmabhumi Trust, said the Prime

Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, had promised to resolve the dispute by March 12. The Prime Minister had told him and the VHP leader, Mr. Ashok Singhal, something in confidence and he could not disclose it. However, even if Mr. Vajpayee failed to resolve the issue as promised, he (the Paramhans) would take the unilateral decision on the temple construction.

According to the Paramhans, the Karsewaks would make attempts for the construction of the temple in a peaceful way. The VHP would not take to violence at any cost, but it would be equally firm in its resolve to build the temple.

The Muslims limited their protests to sending memoranda to the President, drawing his attention to how the demolition of the Babri mosque had attacked the principles of secularism, democracy and the rule of law enshrined in the Constitution. The VHP still held that there would be no legal hurdles because temple construction related to the faith of millions of

Hindus and this was beyond the purview of any court, they pointed out and urged the President to take a firm decision "whether the country would be run by the 'Dharam Sansad' or by the Parliament of India, by the constitutionally-elected Government or by the group of anti-national elements."

Mr. Mohammad Yunus Siddique, the Chairman of the Faizabad unit of the Babri Masjid Action Committee said the members of the minority community had only prayed for the restoration of the Babri mosque.

At Ayodhya, a small group of Muslim leaders also held a meeting and sent a similar memorandum to the President. Shops and business establishments in Muslim-dominated areas of Faizabad were closed.

The twin townships of Ayodhya and Faizabad had been converted into a veritable police camp with heavy forces deployed at all important points.

THE HINDU

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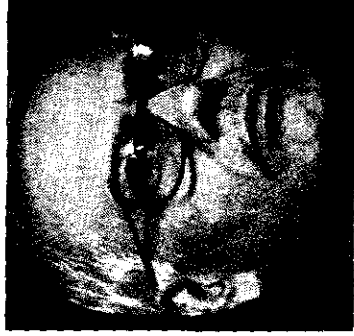
Sinha survives Opp homework on UTI

Deepak Razdan
New Delhi, July 29

THE FIRST week of the monsoon session wasn't too difficult for the Government, though the Opposition's armoury was full. The Opposition had everything to nail the Government — Agra summit, UTI scandal and Manipur. The Rajya Sabha approved President's rule in Manipur despite expressing strong views on the Naga ceasefire. The House has just heard the Prime Minister on his talks with Musharraf at the summit and the debate is yet to begin.

The UTI scam expectedly saw rising tempers, but the discussion was interrupted by Phoolan Devi's untimely death. This gave the Finance Minister a long weekend to prepare his reply.

The discussion began on Tuesday afternoon with spirited



YASHWANT SINHA

speeches from the Opposition. Yashwant Sinha, however, clarified his stance during Question Hour. He had no plans to resign over the US-64 muddle. He said the UTI's investments were its own business.

Sinha's stand did take out some colour from the broader discus-

sion, but there were no doubts that the Opposition was well prepared.

This was particularly clear from the speeches of Kapil Sibal (Congress), Amar Singh (Samajwadi Party), and the observations of the Leader of the Opposition Manmohan Singh.

Sibal held the attention of the MPs with details of the scam. The Chair allowed him to continue after his allotted time following pleas from Opposition colleagues. More financial scams were in the making, he cautioned.

"Nobody would believe, if you said you had nothing to do with UTI," he told Yashwant. When Treasury benches shouted that the Congress had no right to sit in judgment, Sibal's retorted, "You may fault us, but don't follow us", drawing applause.

Amar Singh wanted the Minister's reply on how the UTI under-

went a change of heart over Cyberspace and invested in the controversial firm. But he struck a different note when he did not seek Sinha's resignation. Compensating the poor investors was more important, he said.

The mention of Naga ceasefire was unavoidable during the Manipur debate.

But much of what Viduthalai Virumbi (DMK) and P G Narayanan (AIADMK) said had to be expunged by Vice-Chairperson Suresh Pachouri, because they were talking on home politics. It was the new AIADMK member's maiden speech and he was told he would get another chance.

Although the Government's resolution to confirm President's rule in Manipur was adopted by voice vote, L K Advani had earlier warned the Opposition that it must not oppose the Government on the issue.

30 JUL 2001 THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

More business in Upper House

51-8
ALOKE TIKKU
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

AS the minister of state for parliamentary affairs, Mr O Rajagopal, was reading out the list of business for next week, one member spotted a discrepancy. The minister had mentioned the statutory resolution approving President's rule in Manipur in this list though the House was going to take up this resolution a few minutes later.

Mr Rajagopal had made a mistake. But it was understandable as there was no legislative business on the agenda of the Rajya Sabha which it was able to get over with this week.

Not even a short discussion on the alleged UTI scam which started on the first day of the monsoon session and was con-

sidered so important an issue that the business advisory committee allotted it about four hours instead of the usual two-and-a-half hours.

The discussion started on the right note - not for the government though - with the entire Opposition speaking in one voice and building a case against the finance ministry for

mishandling the UTI issue and demanding the minister's resignation. In this task, Mr Kapil Sibal (Congress) won hands down, if not for his homework then for the way he built his case.

The Elders seemed to be enjoying his speech and persuaded the deputy chairman to let him speak him well beyond the

time limit. It was a request the deputy chairperson could not refuse, explaining his decision to the sore Treasury Benches as "popular demand".

Mr Sinha, however, must be prepared for the criticism to increase next week, especially with the former UTI chairman accusing the finance ministry of interfering in UTI's decision

making. Mr Sinha would have been over with it all had it not been for Phoolan Devi's murder. It was when a discussion on UTI was underway that the House learnt of her death and the House was adjourned.

But still, the Rajya Sabha was a shade better than the Lok Sabha in terms of the business transacted. It approved of the

resolution in favour of President's rule in Manipur with near unanimity. This was largely because the Congress decided to play along and, for a change, did not try to score too many political points.

The CPI-M too seemed to support the move, calling for dissolution of the Assembly and immediate elections without realising that it amounted to supporting the President's Rule. The realisation dawned when Mr LK Advani - basking in the glory of having piloted a resolution to approve the Centre's decision on President's rule - mentioned that it was rare for the House to be unanimous on the use of Article 356.

The CPI-M tied itself up in knots when it protested but finally, put it on record that it was against the resolution.

RAJYA SABHA REVIEW

THE STATESMAN

20/11/2001

Parliament committees sit on Bills

MLOVA ROY CHAUDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 29. — It is not only the sudden death of members that holds up the functioning of Parliament. It is also the increasing lack of seriousness about the legislature's core function; to formulate and pass laws.

Vital legislation gets stalled when a Bill, important or even remotely controversial, is referred to select committees and standing committees. Often, they are almost forgotten by these committees. Politics has become so polarised that one party does not want its rival party to claim kudos for a good piece of legislation, however im-

portant it may be.

Thus, crucial legislation, including key Bills like the Lok Pal Bill, the Constitution (85th Amendment) Bill 1999 (involving the reservation of seats for women in legislatures) and the Constitution (91st Amendment) Bill 2000 (that seeks to extend the freeze on delimitation of constituencies till 2026 and readjust and rationalise constituency demarcation in states and SC/ST seat reservation on the basis of the 1991 census), awaits passage by the Houses of Parliament.

Similarly, vital economic legislation, needed to usher in the second generation of reforms, like the Fiscal Respon-

sibility Act 2001, the Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertaking) and Financial Institutions Laws (Amendment) Bill 2000 (to bring down government equity in public sector banks to 33 per cent) or the Freedom of Information Bill 2000, are pending with standing committees (which comprise 45 members) and it is unclear when they will see the light of day.

Even Bills where the select committee (comprising 20 members) has submitted its report, like the Prevention of Money Laundering Bill 2000, or the Energy Conservation Bill 2000 (where the standing committee on energy submitted its findings to the Lok Sab-

ha on 28.11.2000), have not been passed because other business (usually non-parliamentary) has overtaken its passage. Some bills, like the Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill 2000, designed to reduce the multiplicity of trade unions, could not be passed because the discussion on them was not concluded due to shortage of time.

Each Parliament session begins on a note of hope and many crucial items of legislation are lined up for discussion and passage during the tenure of its session.

The seventh (monsoon) session of the 13th Lok Sabha and the 193rd session of the Rajya Sabha, which began last Monday, has a pending list of 123

pieces of legislation, most of them very important for the country, awaiting introduction, discussion and passage. This is apart from contemporary issues including the Agra summit and the Naga ceasefire.

Any disruption of schedule, like adjournments due to the death of a member, makes everything go awry. Discussions crucial to formulating and passing laws is bypassed.

Probably the most glaring example of this was the summary fashion in which the budget or Finance Bill for 2001-2002 was "disposed of" by a voice vote in the previous session, without even a rudimentary discussion on the allocation of thousands of crores.

9-Parliament
HD-1

Opposition firm: no questions to Fernandes 28/11

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 28. The Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi, has decided to consult party leaders tomorrow to resolve the issue related to the censure motion against the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, even as a determined Opposition continued to embarrass the Minister, refusing to put any questions to him.

The Government view is that it cannot allow the Prime Minister's prerogative to appoint Ministers to be "voted" in a censure motion, and the Congress members, in whose name the notice for the motion stands, insist that it was a serious question of breach of propriety and a fit case for a censure motion.

The Speaker, whose prerogative it is to dispose of the motion in a manner he considers fit, has called a meeting of the party leaders as he wants to arrive at a resolution acceptable to all.

In the Rajya Sabha, it was a near repeat of the Lok Sabha scene last week — today it was Congress member, Mr. K.K. Birla, who refused to put supplementary questions to the Defence Minister, questioning his legitimacy.

As soon as the House assembled for question hour, the Chairman, Mr. Krishan Kant, called Mr. Birla, in whose name the first

question of the day pertaining to the Defence Ministry was listed. Mr. Birla stood up and said that he did not want to put any question to "this Minister". The Opposition members immediately rose in support while the Union Minister, Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu, and others on the ruling coalition benches joined issue.

Unprecedented: Krishan Kant

Sensing the mood, the Chairman, proceeded with the next question even as the verbal duel continued, observing that what was happening was unprecedented.

"This has never happened in Parliamentary history, a member who has been selected by the Prime Minister, given oath by the President, and a member does not want to ask him a question. It is an aspersion and not a correct thing," the chair observed even as Mr. Birla insisted that he would not put his question to Mr. Fernandes.

But the Opposition did allow the Defence Minister later to table papers and perform legislative functions like withdrawing and introducing the Coast Guard (Amendment) Bill.

Tomorrow is again Mr. Fernandes' question day, in the Lok Sabha. And the second question

of the day, again from a Congress member is listed. Again he is likely to face an embarrassment.

In a related development, counsel for Mr. Fernandes has approached the Venkataswami Commission probing the Tehelka issue to allow his client to be examined as a first witness at an early date. Clearly, Mr. Fernandes is anxious to get it over with. The Commission will pass orders tomorrow on the plea. It will also pass orders on the ambit, scope and the aspects that would be gone into the inquiry under the terms of reference pertaining to the making and publication of the expose made by the portal.

The Attorney General, Mr. Soli Sorabjee, wanted the Commission to go into aspects like the manner in which the tapes were made, methods used for the sting operation, technical correctness and omissions in the tapes that would have a bearing on the authenticity of the tapes.

On behalf of former Samata Party president, Ms. Jaya Jaitley, it was pleaded that the ethics of using call girls to trap defence officials and others should also be considered.

On behalf of the portal, it was submitted that Mr. Tarun Tejpal, Editor-in-Chief of tehelka.com and two reporters should be examined in the end.

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

George is back, but the debate rages

27/11/58
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 26. — The censure notice served by Congress members in the Lok Sabha against the government for reappointing Mr George Fernandes as defence minister is causing much debate and hair-splitting.

When Mr PR Das Munshi of the Congress raised the matter during zero hour, the Speaker, Mr GMC Balayogi, said, "It is under my consideration."

The dilemma before the Speaker is not whether the notice is admissible, but whether it can be considered under Rule 184 which requires voting or division of the Lok Sabha at the end of the debate. According to a member of the Lok Sabha Business Advisory Committee, Mr Fernandes' appointment can be discussed in the House. But it is doubtful if the subject can become an issue that would lead to division of the House. The matter may be sorted out in the BAC with the consent of the mover of the notice if they agree to discuss the matter by any rule other than Rule 184.

THE STATESMAN

27 NOV 2007

PM replies to terror war debate today

New Delhi, November 26

A HESITANT Prime Minister was today forced to agree to reply on the debate on the war against terror in the Rajya Sabha tomorrow after Congress members said External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh's intervention was not sufficient.

As soon as Jaswant completed his hour-long intervention on the subject, Vajpayee wondered whether he should reply at all to the debate as the External Affairs Minister had already "given a good and comprehensive reply".

But when the Prime Minister

sought the members' views on the issue, Congress leaders Arjun Singh and Manmohan Singh said the External Affairs Minister hadn't replied to all the points raised by members some issues were yet to be covered.

Deputy Chairperson Najma Heptulla said if the Prime Minister felt the need he may give his reply 10 or 15 minutes.

Vajpayee said he had no problem in giving a comprehensive reply if it satisfied the Congress members. Jaswant today told the Upper House that the Government would soon taking journalists and TV teams to Afghanistan to enable the people

of India to have an insight into the current situation there. Several TV channels were telecasting the situation in Afghanistan, but Indian journalists and the electronic media in the country would be taken to Afghanistan to give details of the events there.

"India is a central factor in the consciousness of Afghanistan. India will play its role in the future of Afghanistan," he said. Indicating that India was not dependent on the international community in its fight against Pakistan-backed terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, Jaswant said: "The J&K issue did not feature in (Vajpayee-

Bush) talks as it related to Pakistan. It was purely a bilateral visit. We had ruled it out completely and unambiguously."

He said India would carry on its fight against cross-border terrorism in Kashmir irrespective of whether it gets the backing of the global coalition or not. Jaswant said the US, Russia and Britain had already expressed their views on Kashmir prior to the Prime Minister's visit. The minister said India's war against terrorism did not start with the September 11 strikes and it had been fighting it for over two decades.

HTC & PTI

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 NOV 2001

Can Parliament be relevant if basic civility is flagrantly violated? Rules of conduct need to be enforced for the dignity and majesty of the institution to be salvaged.

DESTRUCTION OF DECORUM

IS India's Parliament which represents the collective will of a billion Indians becoming an irrelevant institution or is it degenerating into another state assembly of Bihar where rules are meant to be broken and the well of the House is treated as a wrestling ring?

It is now common knowledge that visitors to Parliament who watch the proceedings from the visitors' galleries go away in utter disgust at the way parliamentarians conduct themselves in the House. If the older generation displays its disgust, the school and college-going children who come to the sanctuaries of our democracy with great awe and greater expectations leave the precincts of the House with a wholly lopsided idea of what parliamentary democracy is all about. If they should come to believe that this is what our democracy is, then there can be no great future for our parliamentary system of governance.

When the proposal for live telecast of Parliament proceedings was first mooted some years ago, there were two differing views expressed by the members. One section felt that live telecast will contribute to better debates and sobriety in the House, with members upholding its dignity and decorum. The other section was of the view that live telecast will provide an incentive to perform to the galleries - not of the House, but in their distant constituencies, the target audience being those who elected the members.

Time has demonstrated that the skeptics were right. Televising Parliament proceedings has indeed contributed to making Parliament a place where debate is at a discount and slanging matches between ruling and opposition benches and often between two or more parties have become common. While members indulge in a demonstra-

The author is Minister of Defence, Government of India.

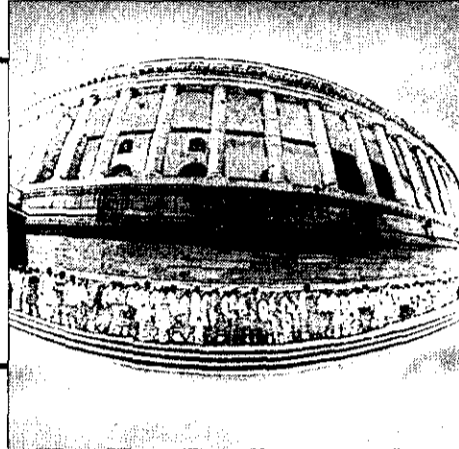
tion of their lung power and block the proceedings to tell the folks back home what a valiant fight they are waging on their behalf, ministers, ever-eager to get a little more exposure on the idiot boxes across the country, indulge in long-winded replies to questions by members during Question Hour and while responding to debates. Pretentious leaders and pre-

By **GEORGE FERNANDES**

to reject the argument of the other side, has more than one chapter to deal with members who do not observe the rules when they are present in the House. These rules provide for suspension from the House for a specific period as well as for permanent expulsion.

Why successive

Televising Parliament proceedings has indeed contributed to making Parliament a place where debate is at a discount



tenders to the Prime Minister's chair think it is their duty to ask their flock to rush into the well of the House and, worse still, to surround the Chair of the Speaker of the House in pursuit of whatever public or private agendas they may have to put on display. That they themselves sit back in their seats and watch their flock perform indicates that either they are aware that what they have asked their members to do is wrong and hence are ashamed to participate in it, or they think that they are superior characters and cannot be part of a shouting brigade. That all this makes a mockery of the rules of conduct in the House and lowers its dignity is not their concern.

Is there no way to deal with those indulging in such wayward and irresponsible behaviour? Of course, there is. Just enforce the rules relating to the conduct of the members. The 1215 page book, *Practice and Procedure of Parliament* by MN Kaul and SL Shaktiher, from whose pages several members quote copiously whenever any knotty question has to be dealt with, and by which they swear to make their point when in doubt or

presiding officers have chosen not to use these rules and thereby prevent members and their so-called leaders from making a mockery of the House and in the process lowering its dignity is an obvious question. The only equally obvious answer would be that in a nation where all laws and rules are thrown to the winds, it may be too much to expect that they will be observed in Parliament. If that would be the likely explanation, then it is all the more necessary that Parliamentarians who enjoy the sobriquet of 'law makers' better be ordered to obey the rules and laws that govern their conduct inside the House and outside. It is only then that they will acquire the moral authority to frame the laws of the land and enforce them. One reason the much-spoken of corruption in public life in our country keeps growing is the failure of our law makers to live by the laws they have framed.

Another factor which points in the direction of Parliament becoming irrelevant is the gradual reduction, over a period of time, of its working days. From a record sitting

for 151 days in 1956, the Lok Sabha touched the nadir in 1999 when it sat for only 51 days. And when one looks at the time spent on blocking the work of the House over some trivial issues, which situation was not there till the Fourth Lok Sabha, it does not require much imagination to realise how our

is doubtful whether it will have any effect when the House meets for the winter session in November. Unless the rules of conduct are strictly enforced, the chances are that there will be further deterioration in members' behaviour, and we may reach a stage when there will be nothing left to retrieve. Only when the following three paragraphs from *Practice and Procedure of Parliament* are observed in practice, parliamentarians will learn what discipline and decorum is: "The House has the right to punish its members for their misconduct. It exercises its jurisdiction of scrutiny over its members for their conduct whether it takes place inside or outside the House. It has also the power to punish its members for disorderly conduct and other contempts, whether committed within the House or beyond its walls. In the case of misconduct or contempts committed by its members, the House can impose these punishments: admonition, reprimand, withdrawal from the service of the House, imprisonment and expulsion from the House.

"If at any stage, the Chair is of the opinion that the conduct of a member is grossly disorderly, the member may be directed to withdraw immediately from the House. A member, who disregards the authority of the Chair or abuses the rules of the House by persistent and wilful obstruction of the business before the House, may be named by the Chair and later suspended from the service of the House on a motion moved by a member and adopted by the House. The purpose of 'expulsion' is to rid the House of persons who are unfit for its membership." It now lies in the hands of the Speaker of the House to enforce every rule in the book and restore to Parliament the majesty and dignity without which its authority, such as is left of it, will also be stripped from it.

In the just concluded monsoon session, there has been some movement in the direction of enforcing discipline on the members of the House. Going by past experience, it

THE STATESMAN

25 NOV 2007

Opp boycotts Fernandes in Lok Sabha

HTF 9
28/11

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, November 22

THE CAMPAIGN against George Fernandes' re-induction as Defence Minister before completion of the tehelka probe took a new turn today with a united Opposition declining to put questions to him in the Lok Sabha. Fernandes was "illegally" holding the post, the Opposition MPs said.

Speaker GMC Balayogi adjourned the House for three hours when agitated Congress, Left and RJD members disrupted proceedings in protest against Fernandes' re-induction even before the Venkataswami Commission had submitted its findings on the Tehelka issue.

The Opposition had announced that it would not rest until the Prime Minister explained Fernandes' return. But its new-found strategy of not letting the minister speak took the Treasury Benches by surprise.

When the Speaker asked Prabh Panda of the CPI to submit his query, Panda said, "I wouldn't like to put a question. He (Fernandes) is illegally occupying the chair."

The CPI MP found great support from other Opposition members led by PR Damunshi. Kamal Nath said, "It is a shame that he has been made a minister without being cleared by the commission."

Balayogi then asked G Putta Swamy Gowda of the Congress to put his supplementary. Gowda too said, "Though it is my right to put a question, I don't want to exercise this right. Fernandes is an illegal occupant of the chair."

Prahlad Patel of the BJP sought to ask a supplementary, but Fernandes said he heard the member in the din.

Govt reaction to WTC strikes hasty: Opp

THE OPPOSITION on Thursday criticised the Government for a "hasty and premature" reaction after the September 11 terrorist strikes in the US. They called for a review of India's foreign policy so that the country had a meaningful role in installation of a neutral Government in Afghanistan.

The Government's reaction to the swift developments in Afghanistan had been rather ham-handed, the Opposition said. India should remain in close touch with countries like Russia, Iran and China and formulate future moves in the war-ravaged country as well as on the global battle against terrorism.

HTC, New Delhi

An upset Balayogi reprimanded the Opposition, "You are setting a precedent. You are free to raise any issue during Zero Hour or follow the procedure for a discussion." When his repeated pleas for calm went unheeded, the Speaker adjourned the House till 2 pm.

The BJP backed the PM's decision to take Fernandes back into the Cabinet. It condemned the manner in which the Opposition had stalled House proceedings.

BJP Parliamentary Party spokesperson VK Malhotra said the PM's prerogative to choose his Cabinet ministers could not be questioned. Moreover, the Venkataswami Commission was taking far too long to submit its report. "We cannot play with the life of a good political person."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 NOV 2001

Walkout in LS over Fernandes' re-induction

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 20. Unleashing a scathing attack on the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, for re-inducting the Samata Party leader, Mr. George Fernandes, in the Union Cabinet as Defence Minister, despite the ongoing Tehelka inquiry, the Opposition in the Lok Sabha today staged a walkout during zero hour.

The major opposition parties were sore over the Government's silence on their request for a statement from Mr. Vajpayee on the circumstances which compelled him to reverse his decision and take back Mr. Fernandes.

'Shame, shame'

The issue also figured prominently in the Rajya Sabha when the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, introduced Mr. Fernandes amid shouts of "shame, shame" from the Opposition.

Raising the matter during question hour, the Congress member, Mr. Suresh Pachauri, sought the intervention of the Chairman, Mr. Kishan Kant, on the ground that the re-induction could cast a shadow on the ongoing probe by the Venkataswami Commission.

His claim was dismissed by the Chairman who said Union Ministers were appointed by the President on the advice of the Prime Minister.

In the Lok Sabha, the Congress chief whip, Mr. Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi, said the re-induction of Mr. Fernandes was an "assault on parliamentary propriety and democratic traditions."

Clarifying that he was not raising the issue out of animosity, Mr. Dasmunshi said the decision amounted to "deliberately destroying ethics of Cabinet and doing away with political morality." The Prime Minister "owes an

19-11 21-11
explanation to the House," he said, adding that it was "amazing" how Mr. Vajpayee had come up with his own verdict when the Venkataswami Commission was still looking into Tehelka expose.

The former Prime Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar, described the re-induction as an issue having "serious implications." It had not added to the grace of either Parliament or Mr. Fernandes. "The Prime Minister should explain his conduct as to why, in the beginning, he had asked Mr. Fernandes to resign," he said.

The CPI(M) leader, Mr. Somnath Chatterjee, said instead of a Joint Parliamentary Committee, the Government had set up a Commission of Inquiry into the Tehelka disclosures. "How can the Prime Minister say that no evidence was found against Mr. Fernandes? What was the urgency? This is a sorry state of affairs."

The Samajwadi Party leader, Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav, assailed the Government for not even bothering to wait for the Commission's report. "The Prime Minister himself has made the matter very serious. Mr. Fernandes had resigned citing moral grounds, why did he agree to return?"

When Mr. Prabhunath Singh of the Samata Party said the Tehelka expose was a "conspiracy" to defame Mr. Fernandes and the Prime Minister re-inducted him when he came to know about it,

angry members from the opposition benches vied with one another to speak. Amid noisy scenes, the members staged a walkout.

'Nothing against Fernandes'

Countering the opposition charge, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, turned down the demand for an explanation by the Prime Minister. He said

9-Parliament
Mr. Fernandes did not face any charges directly or indirectly. "Nothing has been said against him in the notice sent by the Commission. It is the Prime Minister's prerogative to take anybody in the Cabinet. There is no need for the Prime Minister to explain and there is no need for withdrawal of Mr. Fernandes. He is innocent," Mr. Mahajan said.

Opposition agenda

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 20. The Opposition in the Rajya Sabha has decided to focus on the Prime Minister's decision to re-induct Mr. George Fernandes as Defence Minister and the developments in Ayodhya in the current session of Parliament.

At a meeting here today, the leaders of various Opposition parties decided that the other issues of discussion would be the international situation after the September 11 attacks on the United States and the evolving situation in India's neighbourhood, including Afghanistan.

The outcome of the Doha Ministerial round of WTO meeting and its impact on India, the plight of farmers due to non-procurement by government agencies, crash in agricultural prices leading to miseries and sufferings of farming community, growing unemployment on account of overall slowdown of economy and closure of public sector undertakings are other issues which would come under the scanner.

Those who attended the meeting held in the chamber of the Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Manmohan Singh, included Mr. Pranab Mukherjee, Mr. K. Rahman Khan and Mr. Suresh Pachauri.

21 NOV 2007

Speaker rejects motion on Ayodhya

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 20. The Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi, today rejected the Opposition-sponsored adjournment motion on the Ayodhya issue in the Lok Sabha today, while ruling that the issue was "not appropriate" for "adjourning the entire business of the House" even as he suggested that the House could decide on a time for a discussion on the subject later.

In fact, later, the BACs of the two Houses met separately, deciding that the Rajya Sabha will take up the issue through a calling attention motion tomorrow, while in the Lok Sabha it will be taken up for a simple discussion under rule 193 (without voting) on Monday, November 26.

The Lok Sabha will take up issues related to farmers tomorrow, another matter identified by the Opposition as a priority issue for this session. Today's adjournment motion was jointly-sponsored by several Opposition leaders — Mr. Mulayam Singh Yadav (Samajwadi Party), Mr. Somnath Chatterji (CPI-M), Mr. Priya Ranjan Das-munshi (Congress) and Mr. G.M. Banatwala (Muslim League) included.

Even as the pros and cons of taking up the adjournment motion were being discussed in the House, Mr. Banatwala wanted to know if the Government was thinking of banning the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal (some of their leaders have publicly stated they would defy court orders to start building a temple at the disputed spot after

March 12). The Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, made it clear that there was no question of banning the organisations — an earlier attempt to ban them by a Congress government was not upheld by the statutory tribunal.

When the issue does come up in Parliament it is expected to lead to some heated arguments — the Opposition is getting ready to slam the RSS-affiliated VHP for defying court orders to make a forced entry into the sanctum sanctorum of the makeshift Ram temple at the disputed site and for announcing its readiness to defy the Supreme Court, if necessary, and start building on the site on which status quo has to be maintained under orders from the court.

With an eye on the polls in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP is also prepared for some fireworks. The party spokesperson, Mr. V.K. Malhotra, today said Muslims had defied the Archaeological Survey of India's orders to offer 'namaaz' at some protected monuments like the mosque at the Humayun Tomb and Purana Qila (though he admitted later that this practice was allowed by their former minister, Mr. Sikander Bakht).

A PTI report from Neemsar, Sitapur, quoted the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh, as saying that his Government would abide by the Supreme Court directive with regard to the trial of the Union Ministers, Mr. L.K. Advani, Mr. M.M. Joshi and Ms. Uma Bharati, for their alleged involvement in the demolition of the Babri mosque at Ayodhya.

THE HINDU

11 NOV 21 1990

PM draws flak in LS over George

9-Parliament

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 20. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee came under sharp attack from the Opposition in both Houses of Parliament today for taking Mr George Fernandes back into the Union Cabinet as defence minister.

In the Lok Sabha, the volley of fire from veterans like Mr Somnath Chatterjee, Mr Chandra Shekhar and others, however, fell on empty rows of the Treasury Benches as the Prime Minister left the House immediately after making a statement on his foreign tour when the issue was raised by Mr Priya Ranjan Das Munshi (Cong) during Zero Hour.

Mr George Fernandes, too, wasn't present in the House. Other senior ministers, including Mr LK Advani and Dr MM Joshi had left the House with Mr Vajpayee.

"It is an assault on the Parliamentary system and Constitu-

tional morality," said Mr Das Munshi asking Mr Vajpayee to explain his "conduct" in the House.

Mr Chandra Shekhar wondered why the defence minister had resigned when the Prime Minister had said that Mr Fernandes was not at fault. But once the minister had resigned and the inquiry was in progress he should not have been taken back. "It doesn't add grace to the defence minister nor to the Parliament and it doesn't bring dignity to the Prime Minister," Mr Chandra Shekhar said.

Mr Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M) saw in the Prime Minister's statement of giving a clean chit to the defence minister an attempt to "influence the inquiry commission probing the Tehelka episode."

"Mr Fernandes is under the scrutiny of the Commission; how then can the Prime Minister say that there is no evidence against the defence minister," Mr Chatterjee said.



Vajpayee: defends his defence minister

Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav told the House that the home minister was against the inclusion of Mr Fernandes into the Cabinet but it was the Prime Minister who had overruled Mr Advani and re-appointed Mr Fernandes as defence minister.

Mr Prabhunath Singh, a Samata member, while defending Mr Fernandes, said the defence minister was a victim of a con-



Fernandes: 'most wanted'

spiracy hatched by some Congress and BJP leaders.

There was chaos in the House for sometime as Opposition members were on their feet demanding the presence of the Prime Minister. The Congress and the CPI-M walked out of the House in protest when Mr Vajpayee didn't appear. Mr Pramod Mahajan, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, rush-

ed into the House to defend the Prime Minister. "It is the prerogative of the Prime Minister to constitute his council of ministers," he said.

In the Rajya Sabha, amidst shouts of "shame, shame" from Opposition MPs, Mr Jaswant Singh introduced the re-inducted Mr Fernandes to the House. The Opposition MPs pointed out that the Venkataswami Commission had not submitted its final report.

Raising the matter during the Question Hour, the Congress member, Mr Suresh Pachauri, sought the Chairman, Mr Krishan Kant's intervention in the matter saying the re-induction of Mr Fernandes could mar the progress of the probe by the commission. Dismissing the claim, Mr Kant said Union ministers are appointed by the President of India on the advice of the Prime Minister.

Mr Jaswant Singh, the leader of the House in Rajya Sabha, also introduced other minis-

ters, including Mr Shah Nawaz Hussain and Mr Arun Shourie who were elevated to cabinet rank, to the members.

PM defends George again

The Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, today gave a clean chit to Mr George Fernandes and defended the decision to re-induct him saying this was his prerogative as the Prime Minister.

Addressing a BJP parliamentary party meeting, Mr Vajpayee said there was no charge against Mr Fernandes in the Tehelka expose and hence there was no need to keep him out of the government.

Mr Vajpayee's strong defence is likely to silence those in the BJP who had started questioning the decision at the private level. It was also a strong rebuff to the cine actor turned politician, Mr Shatrughan Sinha, who has questioned Mr Fernandes' induction.

49 Bills await clearance

MOHAN SAHAY
STATESMAN NEW SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 19 - Parliament needs to pass more than two Bills a day if it has to clear the legislative workload. This, if achieved, would be an almost miraculous transformation of parliamentary work ethic, especially compared to the last two sessions, budget and monsoon, which were hijacked by political slugfests. Parliament adjourns on 21 December, giving it only 23 working days for the winter session. The total number of Bills before the Lok Sabha, including new ones (20), those carried over (8) and those before standing committees (21), is 49. Even given the Speaker's ruling that MPs entering the well of the House may be suspended — which should dampen agitational instincts — it is unlikely anything close to 49 Bills will be cleared.

There may, therefore, be

considerable prioritisation. The Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance will be a flagged item. But the debate it generates may yet eat into Bills which have been long pending. This includes the controversial CVC Bill - it restores the single directive, which allows officers of the rank of joint secretary and above to be investigated only after permission is obtained from their seniors. Interestingly, and instructively, the Women's Reservation Bill does not figure in the list of business this time. There was no consensus, even among NDA partners, on reserving 33 per cent of the seats for women in the Lok Sabha and in state Assemblies. It appears, therefore, the government decided to bury the Bill for the time being. Another important item on the agenda is The Passport (Amendment) Bill to prevent a criminal or "anti-national" element from leaving the country during the period when

action to revoke/impound the passport is initiated.

The House is also slated to repeal ESMA (Essential Services Maintenance Act), amend the Constitution (the 93rd Amendment) to make provision of free education between ages six and 14 a fundamental right. The Bill to amend Rajya Sabha election laws — it seeks to do away with the proof of domicile clause and proposed open ballot — is also listed for consideration and passage. The Bill has generated controversy and opinion seems to be divided on the subject.

The much talked about Lok Pal Bill is unlikely to be passed this time though it is listed for consideration and passing in case the report of the Standing Committee on the Bill is laid on the Table of the House.

A similar fate may await the Communication Convergence Bill whose passage depends on the tabling of the report of the Standing Committee.

THE STATESMAN

20 NOV 2001

POTO to dominate session

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 18. The Vajpayee Government is going to find itself battling on the back-foot most of the time during the Parliament session that begins tomorrow, with both the BJP and the Opposition positioning themselves for the electoral battle in Uttar Pradesh. Neither the Government seems inclined to seek a genuine understanding with its political rivals nor the Opposition is prepared to make things easier for the Treasury benches.

The most partisan battle is likely to be fought on the issue of ratification of the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (POTO), though for tactical reasons the Government may wait till the later half of the five-week session before seeking parliamentary approval for this initiative.

Since the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, has already opted to take a partisan approach to the POTO ratification, the Opposition is equally keen to frustrate the Government strategy of making political capital out of the internal security-related issues. In any case, the ruling NDA does not have a majority in the Rajya Sabha. The issue of POTO ratification is further complicated by the fact that

while the AIADMK has announced its support, the Akali Dal, the Telugu Desam and the Trinamool Congress may be less than enthusiastic in their support for the Bill.

The Congress, which is being targeted by the BJP-led Government for having different yardsticks in dealing with terrorists by opposing POTO and tackling organised crime in States such as Karnataka and Maharashtra with similar laws, has a major role to play in blocking the Ordinance.

Besides the POTO, the return of Mr. George Fernandes to the Union Cabinet even before his name has been cleared by the Commission of Inquiry in the Tehelka matter, is going to be questioned.

The good news for the Government is that there seems to be little enthusiasm within the Opposition for an effective floor-coordination, with the Congress and the Samajwadi party remaining committed to different Uttar Pradesh-centric political agenda. The Left parties, today decided to coordinate with other opposition parties to work for the defeat of POTO as they strongly disapprove the Government's action in promulgating the Ordinance.

At a meeting here, the parties — the CPI(M), the CPI, the RSP and

the AIFB — decided to highlight the Government attempts to vitiate the communal atmosphere by treating the RSS, the VHP, and the Bajrang Dal leaders, with "kid-gloves". In a statement, the parties said the open provocation by the RSS chief, Mr. K.S. Sudarshan, to acquire arms, the breach of the Supreme Court order by VHP leaders and distribution of tridents were greeted with conciliatory inaction. They will demand the Government come out with details of the plan contemplated by the PM to solve the Ayodhya problem by March next and explain the circumstances in which the Students Islamic Movement of India was banned.

The Prime Minister is expected to make a statement on his recent tour of the U.S., Russia, the U.K. and the U.N. The Left parties today said they would press for a discussion on the issue. A similar demand is expected to be raised when the Government comes forward with a statement on the recent Doha round of the World Trade Organisation.

The five-week winter session would have 22 sittings. However, the Parliament is likely to be adjourned tomorrow as a mark of respect to Madhavrao Scindia.

'Cong. opposition with an eye on polls': Page 15

'Taliban's fall precursor to peace in J&K'

By Sarabjit Pandher

AMRITSAR, NOV. 18. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, saw the defeat of religious fanaticism in Afghanistan as a trend-setting example to the rest of the world and hoped that the fall of the Taliban could well be a precursor to peace in Kashmir. He expected that the so called "jihad" would also meet a similar end in Kashmir as religion was not supposed to repress or deny people their freedom.

Addressing a rally here today to mark the culmination of the celebrations for the bicentennial of the coronation of the legendary Sikh monarch, Maharaja Ranjit Singh, he called for an early end to the war in Afghanistan so that the task of reconstruction could be taken up at the earliest.

As the entire world was united against injustice, the process of rehabilitation of refugees from Afghan-

istan would begin, which would ensure that the people of all communities, especially the Sikhs and Hindus, return to their homes. However, he surprised many by not making even an indirect reference to Pakistan.

Quoting historic Indo-Afghan ties, the Prime Minister foresaw a role for India in the reconstruction of Afghanistan and the rehabilitation of the refugees after the war. He expected that the liberation of Kandahar would lead to the end of atrocities committed on the innocent people in the name of religion.

Mr. Vajpayee complimented the courage of the Punjabi people who fought terrorism without any foreign assistance or "international declarations". He recalled the role of the administration, which stood by the people to turn the tables on the terrorists.

Package for Punjab: Page 13

THE HINDU

19 NOV 2001

Delimitation of constituencies

By Sanjay Kumar

WITH THE passing of the 91st Constitutional Amendment Bill by both Houses of Parliament, it is most likely that a freeze would be imposed on the total number of seats for the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies till 2026. Now it needs to be ratified by at least half of the Assemblies. Both Houses of Parliament has passed it without any sign of protest, and the Bill is most unlikely to face a protest in the Assemblies and is certain to be an Act.

If the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha is not to be increased, the quota of seats for different States is to be allocated on the basis of its population, and the principle of uniform population-seat ratio is followed for all the States, it is estimated that the four Southern States will lose as many as 15 Lok Sabha seats (Andhra Pradesh 3, Tamil Nadu 7, Karnataka 1 and Kerala 4) and the four Northern States of Uttar Pradesh (including Uttaranchal), Bihar (including Jharkhand), Madhya Pradesh (including Chattisgarh), and Rajasthan will gain 5, 3, 3 and 4 seats respectively and increase their quota by 15 seats. This may lead to protests from the Southern States and create a possible North-South divide. Parliament, by passing the 91st Constitutional Amendment Bill, has decided to put a ban on it putting at rest all speculation about any such fresh reallocation of seats between different States.

The ban till the year 2026 had been proposed as the population planners have projected that by that year the population of India would stabilise and the country could hope to have zero growth rate of population thereafter. As per the provisions of the proposed Bill, the next delimitation is to be carried out on the basis of the population of the country after 2026. This would actually mean that the delimitation would take place only after the next census, which would be only in 2031. Hence, the number of seats in the Lok Sabha would not change till 2031, whatever may be the population growth in the country.

The last delimitation committee was set up in 1972, which completed its work by 1975. The Constitution 42nd Amendment had put a ban on any further delimitation of constituencies till 2000 and the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha and the Assemblies had remained the same till then. With the passing of the 91st Constitutional Amendment Bill, the ban would actually mean a freeze for more than 50 years.

The Constitution had laid down provisions for delimitation of constituencies after every census so that the population-seat ratio is maintained within the State and throughout the Union. The constant rise in the population has caused an enormous growth in the electorate. Thus, the electorate is not uniform in all the constituencies. Urban constituencies fac-

for the dissimilar size of the electorate?

The delimitation commission which would be appointed soon would certainly engage itself in the exercise of redrawing the boundaries of the constituencies within the State and would try to do away with such glaring discrepancies. The commission, keeping other principles in mind, would carve out constituencies in such a way that all are more or less of equal size and it would try to maintain as far as possible the similar population-seat ratio within a State.

But we are also aware that some States have witnessed larger growth as compared to others. Population growth has some relation to the level of social and economic development. Developed States have witnessed lower population growth as compared to the backward and

Merely because of the fear of a possible North-South divide, is it right to impose a freeze on the number of Lok Sabha seats till 2026?

ing constant pressure of population migration had witnessed a faster rate of increase in the electorate as compared to other constituencies. It is known that Lok Sabha constituencies such as Outer Delhi and East Delhi have an electorate of 31 lakhs and 23 lakhs, while the average electorate for a Lok Sabha constituency is a little over 11 lakhs. Even in Delhi, the Chandini Chowk Lok Sabha constituency has less than four lakhs electorate. Several issues have been raised in the past about the disproportionate size of the constituencies. With the huge discrepancy in these Lok Sabha constituencies, does the value of the vote in the Outer Delhi and Chandini Chowk constituencies remain the same? Is it justified in having a similar expenditure limit fixed for these two constituencies? Is it correct to allow a similar number of campaigning days for these two different types of constituencies? Is it right to have a similar amount of developmental fund available

the underdeveloped ones. It is precisely because of this that States such as Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh or Rajasthan have seen larger population growth compared to the more developed Southern States. If the number of Lok Sabha seats for different States is not allocated on the basis of their population, the effect would be that backward States would have Lok Sabha constituencies with much bigger electorates as compared to the Lok Sabha constituencies in some of the Southern States. A member of parliament from these backward States would represent a bigger population as compared to an MP from a State with a lower population growth. Does this not lead to disenfranchisement of a large section of the population, a majority of whom are poor, deprived and backward?

With the present population and the existing number of members in Parliament, an MP should represent a population of nearly 19.3 lakhs. However, an MP

from Rajasthan represents a population of nearly 23 lakhs, while an MP from Kerala or Tamil Nadu represents only 16 lakhs. Would this not mean unequal value of the vote for people living in different parts of this country? The value of a vote in Kerala or Karnataka would be greater as than that in Rajasthan.

Further, if the freeze on the number of seats is imposed till 2026, by that time an MP would be the representative of nearly 25 lakh people as the projected population for the country is about 140 crore by 2026. Do we expect an MP to be a representative of 25 lakh people? Can we reasonably expect him to deliver the goods to the people at large? Compared to the western countries, the constituencies in India are already too large and it may not be the right decision to make them larger. With a population of nearly 140 crores, China has nearly 3000 representatives in its apex body.

Merely because of the fear of a possible North-South divide, is it right to impose a freeze on the number of seats till 2026? In the past, from the first delimitation in 1952 till the third in 1972, Karnataka and Kerala gained seats — from 26 to 28 and from 18 to 20 — while Uttar Pradesh lost. From 86 seats allocated during the first delimitation, its number of seats was reduced to 85 during the second delimitation.

The present political and social situation is indeed somewhat different from what it was in the 50s and the 60s. The issue of a decrease in the number of seats for all the Southern States cannot be handled easily, but at the same time it is unwise to put a blanket ban on the number of seats. We need to give serious thought to increasing the number of seats in the Lok Sabha so that a uniform population-seat ratio is maintained in all the States without having any effect on the present total number of seats in the Lok Sabha for the Southern States.

(The writer is Associate Fellow, Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi.)

THE HINDU

17/12/19

Centre stands by US adviser

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 30: The Opposition today walked out of the Lok Sabha when the government rejected its demand to cancel the appointment of B.K. Agnihotri as adviser in the Indian embassy in Washington.

Agnihotri, an RSS leader in the US, is a member of the Overseas Friends of the BJP. Parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan rebutted the Opposition's charges, asserting that the government had not committed "any crime" by appointing Agnihotri.

"Being a member of the RSS is not a crime. There is no bar on ap-

pointment of RSS members. The decision will not be changed," he said, adding that there was nothing wrong in making this "political appointment".

The Opposition, dissatisfied with the minister's reply, called the appointment "totally illegal". The Congress, the Samajwadi Party, the ADMK and the Left parties accused the government of trying to propagate "Hindutva" through such appointments.

Raising the matter during zero hour, Somnath Chatterjee of the CPM said the government had created an "extraordinary situation" by appointing a functionary of a political organisation as "ambas-

sador-at-large" to look after the interests of NRIs.

Seeking a clarification from the government, he said the government should explain Agnihotri's role as there was already an ambassador in Washington.

He accused the government of "gross misuse of power in making an open partisan appointment". Former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, too, expressed his reservations and alleged that the government wanted to propagate "Hindutva" in this manner. Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav said the appointment was "totally against" national interests.

THE TELEGRAPH

31 AUG 2001

ISSUE MAY BE REFERRED TO PRIVILEGES COMMITTEE

Govt. climbdown on 'forged' letter

By Javed M. Ansari 26/8

NEW DELHI, AUG. 27. A determined Opposition today forced the Government to climb down from the high moral ground it had sought to occupy by ordering a CBI inquiry into the alleged "forged" letter written by the Cabinet Secretary. The letter was quoted extensively by the Congress Chief Whip, Mr. Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi, during the disinvestment debate. Though a final decision will come in the form of the Speaker's ruling tomorrow, there were enough indications that the issue would be referred to the Privileges Committee of Parliament.

The Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. G. M. C. Balayogi, conferred with senior leaders Mr. Somnath Chatterjee, Mr. Madhavrao Scindia, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan and Mr. Dasmunshi. Tomorrow, he will meet some more leaders to find a way out.

The controversy arose after Mr. Dasmunshi read out the "letter" purportedly written by the Cabinet Secretary, Mr. T. R. Prasad, to the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary disapproving of Air India disinvestment. The Disinvestment Minister, Mr. Arun Shourie, challenged the authenticity of the letter and promptly ordered a CBI inquiry on the floor of the House.

A significant feature of the animated deliberations on the issue during zero hour was the cohesion and coordination in the Opposition ranks, as the parties joined hands to force the Government to resile from the position when it ordered a CBI inquiry. Mr. Shourie, in contrast, had few backers save his party spokesman, Mr.

V.K. Malhotra. The BJP's allies were conspicuous by their silence as was the Prime Minister.

The charge levelled against Mr. Shourie by the Opposition leaders was that he had committed a serious error and inflicted damage on the dignity of the House by getting an outside agency to inquire into what had transpired in the House. It was the first time such a thing had happened. Stoutly resisting the probe, the

'Got it from Govt. source'

NEW DELHI, AUG. 27. The senior Congress leader, Mr. Priyaranjan Dasmunshi, tonight claimed that a "Government source" and not a corporate house had given him the copy of the letter purportedly written by the Cabinet Secretary opposing Air India disinvestment. "All the information I am getting is from the source of the Government. Whatever material of the Government I am using ... I am obviously getting from the Government source," Mr. Dasmunshi told Star News — PTI

members said it would impinge on their privilege as Members of Parliament.

Though it was Mr. Dasmunshi who brought up the issue, the former Prime Minister, Mr. Chandra Shekhar, Mr. Somnath Chatterjee and the former Speaker, Mr. Shivraj Patil, also chipped in with forceful interventions. Mr. Chandra Shekhar took strong exception to the "intemperate language" used by the Minister on the issue outside the House.

Mr. Chandra Shekhar defended Mr. Das-

munshi saying he had been told in confidence by senior PMO officials that the letter was indeed genuine. He also challenged the Minister's right to order suo motu a CBI inquiry without the Speaker's permission. The best forum to inquire into the matter was the privileges committee. The CPI(M)'s Mr. Somnath Chatterjee supported the demand for referring the matter to the Privileges Committee. By referring the issue to the CBI, the Minister had not added to the prestige of Parliament, he said and urged the members not to treat each other as criminals. The CBI had made its intentions clear by declaring within a matter of ten hours that the letter was forged. "How can they decide within 10 hours, he asked."

Mr. Shivraj Patil made a forceful plea for referring the matter to the Privileges Committee, of which he is a member. He also declared that he would withdraw from the committee if the matter came before it. Quoting from Article 105 of the Rules of Procedure, Mr. Patil said a member was well within his rights to make a statement in any manner he liked. Mr. Shourie had committed a breach of privilege by threatening the member with a CBI inquiry. He was supported by the Bahujan Samaj Party leader, Ms. Mayawati. Mr. V. K. Malhotra (BJP) said it was Mr. Dasmunshi who had initially spoken of referring the matter to the CBI and wondered why he was looking scared now.

Speaking at the fag end of the discussion, Mr. Mahajan indicated the Government's willingness to review its decision. He left the final decision to the Speaker's discretion.

THE HINDU
110-1

'Forged note' issue left to Speaker

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Aug. 27. - The Lok Sabha Speaker may refer the forged letter issue to the privilege committee of the House.

The government may also call off the CBI probe into the matter, sources said. Mr GMC Balayogi held a meeting this evening on this issue.

It was attended by some senior members, including Mr Pramod Mahajan, Mr Priya Ranjan Das Munshi and Mr Somnath Chatterjee.

The members refused to divulge the details of the meeting.

Sources said there is a growing realisation on all sides that a CBI probe, which "is the property of the House", will amount to a "contempt of Parliament". Many within the government feel that Mr Arun Shourie "jumped the gun by rushing to the CBI".

Experts say even the privilege committee can't force a member to reveal the document's source.

The government today agreed to leave

the matter to the Speaker.

The Opposition seems to be trying to make out a case against Mr Shourie, accused of tarnishing the dignity of the House.

Mr Das Munshi raised the matter during the Zero Hour and said the documents produced and statements made by the members are the property of the House, Speaker, and privilege committee.

He then attacked Mr Shourie, whom he described as a "minister who entered politics and Parliament rather late". Mr Das Munshi accused the minister of making unsavoury remarks about him.

Maintaining that the letter is an original one and that the CBI probe is a violation of his privilege, he wanted the Speaker to take up the matter.

The former Prime Minister, Mr Chandra Shekhar, asked how Mr Shourie could ever think of asking the CBI to probe the "property of the House" and also how he could ask on his own the CBI to probe a letter of the Cabinet secretary.

"How could the minister go to the media making allegations against an honourable member of the House and ridiculing the quality of English in the letter".

Mr Somnath Chatterjee sought a clarification from the Prime Minister on Mr Sourie's conduct. Former Speaker, Mr Shivraj Patil, himself a privilege committee member, said he would withdraw from the committee if the matter is referred to it.

The BJP's Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra's efforts to defend the government by saying Mr Das Munshi himself had sought a CBI probe were in vain.

He said since the letter was never placed on the table by Mr Das Munshi, "it's not a property of the House."

The parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, intervened to say the government was ready to leave the issue to the Speaker.

He, however, recalled how members often seek CBI probe into each and every matter.

THE STATESMAN

27 AUG 2001

Code of conduct for legislators proposed

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 25. — In an unprecedented development, the country's guardians of democracy have adopted a resolution to "preserve the prestige of Parliament and Legislatures" and prescribed a set of 'Dos and Don'ts' for MPs and MLAs across the country. The developments came in the background of an unanimously perceived sharp erosion in the practice of the parliamentary system of government in the country.

Today's all-India conference on 'Discipline & Decorum in Parliament and State Legislatures', held under the aegis of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, adopted a resolution calling upon leaders of political and legislature parties to reign in their members so that they don't indulge in 'disorderly conduct' in the House.

Attended by the Vice-President, Prime Minister the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, several chief ministers of states and presiding officers of state Legislatures, the conference suggested remedial steps to ensure a minimum of 110 days of sittings of Parliament in a year and 90 or 50 sittings of Legislatures, depending on the size of the state. It also suggested amending the

MIND YOUR MANNERS

DOS

- Maintain inviolability of question hour
- Refrain from entering the Well of the House
- Declare financial assets and liabilities
- Keep public interest above all else

DON'Ts

- Interrupting a member while speaking by disorderly conduct
- Tearing of documents in House
- Dharna inside the House
- Cellular phones within the House
- Reading written speech without the Chair's prior permission
- Securing business from government for any organisation

Constitution, if necessary, to ensure a reasonable duration of working days for Parliament and Legislatures.

All agreed that "All violations or breaches of code of conduct be duly punished which may include withdrawal from the House and even automatic suspension of the defying members".

Reflecting on the need for a code, the Vice-President, also the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Mr Krishan Kant, asked "So, what has happened in the last few years that our parliamentary institutions have slipped from the commanding

heights over which they once stood? Why is there the impression gaining ground that Parliament and state Legislatures are letting the Indian people down?" Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee deplored the members' tendency to disrupt the address given by the President to the joint session of Parliament and by the Governors of states to state Legislatures.

The Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr GMC Balayogi, cautioned that if the existing system fails, some other 'organs' may fill up

■ See CONDUCT: page 8

26 AUG 2001

THE STATESMAN

CONDUCT:

(Continued from page 1)

the vacuum. Mrs Sonia Gandhi observed, "The sad fact is that in the general public's estimation there is no high regard for Parliament".

The prescribed 'Don't's' for MPs and MLAs inside a House are: MPs and MLAs shouldn't interrupt any member while speaking, by disorderly expression or noise or any other disorderly conduct (common scene in Parliament). No tearing of documents inside the House. No sit-in dharna inside the House or within the precincts of Parliament.

No cellular phones inside the House. (Everyone does). No more reading of a written speech without prior permission of the Chair. Not trying to secure business from government for any organisation with which the member is directly or indirectly associated. No sub-letting of official residence for profit. No more writing letters recommending employment or contracts for a relative.

The 'Do's' are comparatively less. Maintain inviolability of the Question Hour. Refrain from entering the Well of the House. Declare financial assets and liabilities and keep public interest above personal interest.

The conference felt that one of the principal causes of the malady afflicting parliamentary functioning was the inadequate time given to the members.

This resulted in frustration, since many people's representatives felt that they were being denied opportunities to raise matters of public interest.

The meet perceived that at times, the unresponsive attitude of a government and the 'retaliatory' manners by the members on Treasury Benches also create misgivings. This tendency should also be curbed, the resolution said.

Who'll run the House — media or legislators?

7618 —
Parliament

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Nov. 25. — Parliament's Central Hall which has been a witness to the making of India's history since 1947 was abuzz this morning to ponder over how to save the democracy under the Westminster system.

Some thought "chaos and disorder" in Parliament and state legislatures were the media's gift. Members have often jumped into the well and torn documents and even clothes at times to attract media's attention. "We should decide if the media will run Parliament and legislatures or we should run the House," said Mr Dhiru Bhai Shah, Speaker of the Gujarat Assembly.

Mr Somnath Chatterjee saw a lurking danger to the Parliamentary form of governance from the Presidential system if the erosion is not checked. Outside the Central Hall, he

And who would have better first hand experience of vandalism in the House than the Uttar Pradesh Assembly Speaker, Mr Kesari Nath Tripathi. He wanted an end to the kind of disorder witnessed in the UP Assembly where members throw missiles and hit one another.

The Jharkhand Speaker, M. Namdhari Singh, wanted "protection to the Speaker who has to enforce the code of conduct on the members".

It was amusing to listen to Mrs Sonia Gandhi say "democracy is not about disruption, it's about debate". It's the Congress members in Lok Sabha who create disruptions most of the time.

Mrs Gandhi would better recall her own conduct when she was seen gesturing to the Congress MPs to enter the well of the House in the last budget session, during the turbulent days of the Tehelka controversy.

As a young MP I saw veterans like Madhu Limaye and Ram Manohar Lohia would be present during the morning hours when the press gallery was packed and leave after the journalists had left the gallery. The craving for publicity is one reason why MPs or MLAs have little regard for the legislative business. Mr Shivraj Patil, a former Lok Sabha Speaker, held Zero Hour as the villain of the piece. The trouble started after the Zero Hour was included in the parliamentary proceedings.

Dr Farooq Abdullah, J&K chief minister, had no hesitation in telling the House that MPs and MLAs had become "self seekers" and didn't bother to serve the people who elected them.

He was a Lok Sabha member in 1980 and had taken great pride in asking his fellow members where Nchru, Patel and Maulana Azad used to sit in the House.

D-Parliament

Speaker cracks the whip

10/1 21/8

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 23. If the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. G. M. C. Balayogi, has his way, frequent disturbances and adjournments in the House may become a thing of the past, for he intends to get the rules of procedure changed to provide for members being automatically suspended for a week if they walk into the well of the House or make noise that disturbs the regular business. And he intends to use the new stick.

At a meeting of party leaders convened by him here this morning, Mr. Balayogi said it was becoming increasingly difficult to conduct the House business in an orderly fashion. The situation was "grim" and it called for urgent attention. He suggested changes in the rules to allow for "automatic suspension" of members who defy the chair, break the decorum or in any way make it impossible for

the House to function.

Party leaders across the political spectrum supported the move, and it was agreed that a meeting of the rules committee would be convened on Monday, August 27 (Mr. Balayogi is the chairman), to discuss the matter and submit a report. This would be placed in the House. Reportedly, the Samajwadi Party member, Mr. Beni Prasad Verma, expressed reservations about the "automatic suspension" saying sometimes circumstances compelled members to go to the well of the House to protest extraordinary incidents needing urgent attention.

The Speaker pointed out that in the 22 days of the current monsoon session, 28 hours and 49 minutes had been wasted, and not only the Opposition parties but also those of the ruling benches had contributed to the forced adjournments. The Parlia-

mentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, apparently admitted that he was "ashamed" particularly when MPs of ruling parties broke the protocol — although no party was named. The reference was perhaps to the DMK and the Samata Party.

The former Prime Minister, Mr. S. Chandra Shekhar, reportedly supported the move to change the rules to provide for the automatic suspension of members. Mr. Sharad Pawar (Nationalist Congress Party) was also in favour of changing the rules before MPs were reduced to becoming a laughing stock, while Mr. Madhavrao Scindia, Deputy Leader of the Congress, approved of the change provided the rules were applied to members of all parties without discrimination.

The CPI(M)'s Mr. Somnath Chatterji said it was particularly disconcerting to see the ruling

party MPs forcing adjournments.

It was also suggested that the Speaker call a meeting of editors and senior journalists to ask them not to encourage bad behaviour among MPs through extensive coverage to disturbances in the House. However, it was felt that the members should first attempt to set their house in order.

Separately, at a meeting of the Lok Sabha Business Advisory Committee this afternoon, the Government indicated that it would like to place before the House for consideration and passing the Freedom of Information Bill next week. Insurance related legislation is also expected to come up but those bills are likely to be sent to a standing committee.

The Government has agreed to two debates next week — on telecom and on national security and related issues.

THE HINDU

24 AUG 2001

Legislature seats frozen till 2026

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

571 22/8

7-Parliament

NEW DELHI, Aug. 21. - The Lok Sabha today passed the Constitutional Amendment Bill to freeze the number of Lok Sabha and state Assemblies constituencies till 2026 by 284 votes to 2.

The Constitution (Ninety-First Amendment) Bill 2001 seeks to amend Articles 55, 81, 82, 170, 330 and 332 of the Constitution. The Bill ensures continuity in terms of number so that states failing to check population don't benefit by having more seats in the Lok Sabha and states implementing population control measures are not punished by reduced representation in the lower House.

Four southern states - Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh would have to reduce their representation in the Lok Sabha by 29 seats on the basis of the 1971 census as they have recorded a decline in population.

Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan would get 15 seats extra for registering increase in the population since 1971.

An identical amendment (42nd amendment) was passed by Parliament in 1976 with the same objective but it failed miserably.

Members cutting across party lines blamed the governments at the Centre and in states for failing to implement the family planning norms to check the fertility rate in the country. The health minister, Dr CP Thakur, looked on helplessly as Mr Somnath Chatterjee accused him of doing nothing to implement the population policy.

The law minister, Mr Arun Jaitley, who piloted the Bill, said the government had decided to extend the freeze of constituencies as part of the National Population Policy strategy. Once the amendment became part of the Constitution, a delimitation commission would be constituted to carry on the delimitation of parliamentary and Assembly constituencies and bring uniformity in terms of the number of electorates. Parliament would enact the legislation and the task of delimitation should be completed by 2006, Mr Jaitley said. The base would be the 1991 census.

The delimitation commission would ensure uniformity in the number of constituents in one state at least, Mr Jaitley said. But the figure could vary from state to state. The government has also decided to undertake readjustment and rationalisation of territorial constituencies in the states and it also plans to refix the number of seats reserved for SCs and STs in the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assemblies on the basis of 1991 census.

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

Partition will not be repeated: PM

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: Apparently stung by the continuing criticism of his handling of the Agra summit, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee counter-attacked strongly in his reply to the discussion on the Agra summit in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

Mr Vajpayee not only challenged Pakistan's stand on the dialogue process but also countered domestic criticism of the summit. His detailed account of his one-on-one meeting with General Musharraf appeared to be a direct response to critics who had accused him of being "too soft".

Mr Vajpayee claimed the meeting had resulted in open talks. He said he had asked Gen Musharraf whether he desired another war, having seen the outcome of the previous three.

India would not allow the division of the country on the basis of religion for a second time, he said, asserting that "Kashmir is an integral part of India and our friends in Pakistan should understand this". Affirming that the two countries had agreed to continue talks, he said a broader framework had also been put into place. Pakistan had not raised the Kashmir issue at the recent meeting of foreign secretaries in Colombo and it was expected that the same course would be followed in future.

Mr Vajpayee said he had asked the General about the one-third of Kashmir that was with Pakistan and questioned him as to whether Pakistan had tried to ascertain the wishes of the people there before

sending in raiders into Kashmir. Mr Vajpayee said he had told the general that Kashmir was the basis of Indian nationhood. Terrorists being supported by Pakistan now, would later turn on Pakistan itself, the general was told.

India had not accorded legitimacy to the general, Mr Vajpayee asserted and said the former had come to India after consolidating all powers in his own hands.

In a politically loaded comment, the import of which was not lost on observers, the Prime Minister said the talks had continued for so long that a worried Mr Advani had sent in a man to see whether the two leaders were talking or "merely chatting".

Mr Vajpayee said the Agra summit was a continuation of the Lahore process, the difference being in the change of guard in Pakistan and the Kargil conflict that had created a huge chasm and a crisis of trust.

While India had earlier mandated dialogue with Pakistan on the issue of cross-border terrorism, in the intervening two years, Pakistan had been isolated diplomatically and there was an increasing demand for dialogue, both domestically and internationally.

Mr Vajpayee defended the government's handling of the summit, saying the government was maintaining norms and could not have engaged in a question-answer session to counter Pakistani propaganda. However, there should have been more contact with the media, he admitted.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

17 AUG 2001

Govt on the mat again over J&K

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 9

THE ENTIRE Opposition walked out of the Lok Sabha today demanding the Home Minister's resignation over the situation in Jammu and Kashmir, putting the Government on the mat for the second day in a row.

The Opposition MPs were not satisfied with LK Advani's reply to a calling attention motion. Congress Chief Whip P R Das Munshi wanted to know whether Jammu and Kashmir had asked for more troops after the failure of the Agra talks. And why, he asked, had Advani "failed to take cognizance" after the first massacre in Doda last month.

Advani tried to evade answering the first question, but angry MPs of the Congress, RJD, CPI (M) and AIADMK demanded

HURRIYAT REACTION

The Hurriyat deplored the "disturbed area" tag and said it would resume its agitation which were suspended since the Agra summit.

Related reports on Page 7

a "straightforward" reply.

Moving the calling attention motion, Congress MP from Chandigarh Pawan Bansal began by saying that the killings in the Jammu region had "shattered to smithereens the steely fibre of the person who describes himself as the second Sardar Patel". He found Advani's statement, which came after the motion was moved, "disappointing, to say the least".

Advani dwelt on how the Centre always responds to the needs of the Srinagar-based Unified

Headquarters and reminded the House that there were now more paramilitary forces in the State than before the Kargil intrusion.

The UHQ would be directed to devise "fresh tactics" and "dynamic deployment" to "crush" militancy, Advani said. Besides, 1,000 additional special police officers and village defence committees would be appointed in inaccessible areas.

CPI(M)'s Somnath Chatterjee told Advani: "You are not making us any wiser by saying what the militants' plans are. What is the Government doing about its resolve to fight terrorism?"

Advani would not accept that the Doda and Jammu incidents pointed to Government failure.

The J&K Cabinet today passed a resolution declaring the districts as "disturbed" and sent it to the Governor for approval.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

10 AUG 2001

PM cautions Pak against divisive approach

9-Parliament
5-1
8/8

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

PERVEZ HOPEFUL

NEW DELHI, Aug. 7. — Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today cautioned Pakistan to stop trying to break up India and accept that J&K is an integral part of India.

He was replying to the discussion on the Agra summit in the Lok Sabha. While rejecting the Two Nation Theory, the Prime Minister said: "We will not allow such attempts to succeed."

However, he pointed out that India would continue with the peace process in the subcontinent. It was ready to discuss Kashmir, but not on any condition set by Pakistan.

The Prime Minister's proposed visit to Islamabad will depend much upon Pakistan. Unless the latter changes its attitude towards certain issues, including cross-border terrorism, raised by India at Agra, the visit will be kept in abeyance. This was the impression Mr Vajpayee gave in the Lok Sabha.

From the tone of his statement (in Hindi), it seemed that he had not failed to put forward India's point of view when he met Gen. Pervez Musharraf. Mr Vajpayee admitted indirectly though that the Indian team had failed to give the media regular updates.

But he disapproved holding summit-level talks through media publicity, though he agreed that something would have to be done because of the media's changing role.

He said he had reminded Gen. Musharraf that terrorism was a double-edged weapon and that there were reports of activities in Pakistan that might create problems for Islamabad.

Gen. Musharraf had remarked that given the choice, he would "shoot such kind of terrorism", the Prime Minister said.

The Pakistani President had termed the militancy in J&K as a "jehadi struggle" and descri-

bed the terrorists there as "freedom fighters". This was not acceptable to India, Mr Vajpayee said.

"I told the General that you have forcibly occupied one-third of Kashmir and one part of occupied Kashmir you have given to China. For you Kashmir may be a piece of land. For us, it is our life," he said.

"It appeared that Gen. Musharraf was not anticipating such candid observations from me when I told him that he had talked of knowing the views of the people of Kashmir. But did he try to know the public opinion when he took over as head of the state of Pakistan," the Prime Minister added.

"I am glad the talks were held in a cordial and friendly atmosphere despite my frank observations on certain issues". Mr Vajpayee said he told the General that a generous approach by a country like India should not be mistaken as weakness.

ISLAMABAD, Aug. 7. — Gen. Musharraf told his top army commanders yesterday that the Agra summit helped initiate a fresh process of dialogue between India and Pakistan.

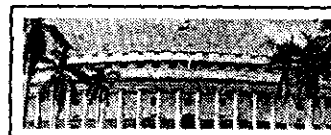
The summit was "inconclusive but not a failure," he told the corps commanders and principal staff officers of the army at Rawalpindi.

The summit helped initiate talks that had been stalled during the last few years, he was quoted as saying.

The Pakistani President said Mr Vajpayee deserved praise for inviting him to New Delhi and conceding that Kashmir was an unresolved issue that needed to be sorted out through peaceful means, the Dawn reported today, quoting informed sources. — PTI

THE STATESMAN

- 1 AUG 2001



'White paper on ISI under consideration'

New Delhi, Aug. 7: Various aspects pertaining to a white paper on Pakistan's Inter State Services activities in India are presently under the consideration of the government, minister of state for home affairs Vidyasagar Rao informed the Lok Sabha during question hour on Tuesday. Mr Rao was replying to a question whether the government proposed to bring out a white paper on ISI activities in the country. Diplomatic initiatives have also been taken with various countries to enlist their support in countering the activities of militant groups.

The Centre has also been sensitising the state governments about the threat perception and activities of ISI.

Militants: As many as 466 civilians and 273 security personnel were killed in Jammu and Kashmir till July 15 this year. The number of militants killed was placed at 865. Mr Rao said in another written

Summit: Terrorist groups and especially Pakistan-based and Pakistan supported groups like Lct. Jem have continued their violent activity before, during and after the Agra Summit in an attempt to sabotage the peace initiative and other steps taken by the government to restore peace and normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir.

Subsidy: State governments are against some of the recommendations of the Expenditure Reforms Commission, particularly pertaining to seven per cent annual increase in farm gate price of urea, replacement of existing retention price-cum-subsidy scheme by a group based concession scheme based on averaging of retention prices and dual price scheme, chemicals and fertilisers minister Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa said.

The Centre is examining the recommendations of ERC with a view to formulating a new pricing policy for urea units, which will consider all relevant factors.

Jobs: It has been estimated that the number of unemployed rural persons in labour force is 43.35 lakh.

Ban: Anjuman Nusrat-ul-Islam is among eight associations prohibited from accepting foreign contribution under section 10(A) of the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act 1976.

The others are Kolping Society National Centre, Tibetan Culture and Education Foundation, Anjuman Hulamia Education Association, Asian Aid Organisation Welfare Trust, Christ Helping Hand Children Home, Omakarananda Saraswati Charitable Trust and Mahabodhi Society of India.

The Centre is reviewing the coal mining policy of 1979 since it did not yield fruitful results, minister of state for coal Shahnawaz Husain has said.

Under the 1979 policy, mining operations were confined to non-coking coal and opencast operations in small

pockets only. In view of the projected gap in the demand and supply of coal in coming years it was considered necessary to enlist the support of state governments for augmenting coal production.

Therefore, the policy is being reviewed, he said. Mr Khan ruled out the possibility of privatising washeries of the Coal India Limited.

There is no proposal to privatise the washeries of Coal India Limited, he said in reply to another question.

Cil operates 19 coal washeries in the country at present.

The government has constituted two sub-groups on women and children to review the laws concerning women, human resource development minister Murlidhar Manohar Joshi said.

The sub-groups have undertaken review of the laws and their recommendations are in the process of submission to the chairman of the task force set up to review the laws concerning women, he said. (UNI)

LOK SABHA

'Opening defence sector not to affect national security'

New Delhi, Aug. 7: The government has said that the opening of the defence sector for foreign investment will not affect the national security and strategic secrecy of the country.

The minister of state for commerce and industry Raman Singh informed the Rajya Sabha during question hour that the opening of defence industry sector to private sector participation, including foreign direct investment upto 26 per cent is subject to licensing and security requirements.

He said that the decision on private sector participation in the defence sector is aimed at supplementing government effort in this sector.

FDI approvals: The minister said that there has been inflow of Rs 16867.79 crore as against an approval of Rs 28366.53 crore during the year 1999.

Similarly the inflow was of Rs 8005.33 crore as against approvals of 14086 crore during the year 2001 (January-June).

The minister said the inflows of foreign investment including investment by FIs are dependent upon various factors, which include domestic conditions policy regime governing foreign investments, world economic trends and strategy of global investors.

Exports to China: The value of Indian exports to China during 2000-2001 was of the order of US \$829.24 million. In the previous year the exports to China were estimated at US \$538.75 million, the minister of state for commerce and industry Digvijay Singh informed the Rajya Sabha during question hour.

Chicken legs: The government has informed the House that there has been no import of chicken legs during April-June 2001.

Wheat exports: Mr Digvijay Singh informed the House that India exported 294445 MT of wheats during May 2001.

In the first four months of the year the wheat exports has 244279 MT, 180151 MT, 439835 MT and 292810 MT (January, February, March and April).

Mr Singh said that the export of wheat would depend upon international demand and supply position, domestic demand and domestic prices, consumer preference, varieties traded and the actual shipment against contracted quantities.

Airport security: The government has assured the House that the security of the airports will continue to remain with the government agencies, as at present, even after leasing of the airports.

The minister for civil aviation Sharad Yadav said in a written answer that

specific clauses on security aspects will be incorporated in the agreement to be entered into with the prospective operators to ensure fulfilment of all security related requirements.

Remodelling defence aerodromes: The minister denied that there was no proposal with the government for remodelling some of the defence aerodromes to be used for regular civil aviation purposes.

He however said that the Airports Authority of India is constructing a civil enclave at Pathankot airport with a view to provide connectivity through air services by large aircraft to the tourist places of Himachal Pradesh. Mr Sharad Yadav informed the House that the Emirates and Malaysian Airlines are presently operating from Hyderabad to Dubai and Kuala Lumpur respectively. (UNI)

RAJYA SABHA

INDIAN EXPRESS

7-8 AUG 2001

Full of sound and fury signifying nothing

ALOKE TIKKU
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

A week which started with a whimper and ended with a bang in the government's Rajya Sabha or the people outside any wiser. Because even as the Opposition cried itself hoarse — before and during his reply — they could not get the finance minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha, to part with any more information than the government already had. That is, if it was the whole idea.

On the other hand, if the aim was to hit at the credibility-factor, it might just have succeeded marginally. But for that, the Opposition has a lot to thank the Shiv Sena member,

Mr Sanjay Nirupam for, he by pointing fingers at PMO officials, brought about a near-crisis in the government prompting the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, to offer his resignation.

The Opposition did manage

to complete these two formalities, the man who CBI suspects of misappropriation of funds worth Rs 32 crore, would have continued to be in the saddle.

Mr Sinha also skirted the question about PMO officials

RAJYA SABHA REVIEW

That there is no need for him to resign because it will benefit the small investor and resolve the UTI issue. Mr Sinha in his reply said that the former UTI chairman was given the boot, only because of administrative lapses.

Of not informing the UTI board or the Finance ministry of the trouble that US 64 was in. Not because of decisions he took. Which implies that had

the House on her last day as a Rajya Sabha member. The man who bore the brunt of the attack for a larger part of last week and this, Mr Yashwant Sinha, however, can rest easy. It is all over for him. Even with the explanations he provided.

speaking to the former UTI chairman, saying he could not be expected to provide details of the telephone numbers revealed by the Shiv Sena member as he was not a telephone operator.

But it was politics and not concern for the investor which dominated the content of most speeches made during the short-duration discussion. And that is what the

Opposition got from Mr Sinha, who had the Congress busy trying to defend their actions rather than target him. They protested, raising a din every time he took a leaf out of history to remind them of their role in the way UTI has matured today. Mr Sinha's speech over — delivered over three days as the Opposition forced repeated adjournments on two days — the House did get back to business.

It discussed and passed the Trade Unions (Amendment) Bill and started the discussion of the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Bill. There were, however, only a handful of members in the House at that time. Till it was time for scoring political points again over the killings in Moradabad.

- 6 AUG 2001

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BALAYOGI PLAYS PEACEMAKER

JPC on stock scam to probe UTI fiasco also

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A/8

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 3. The tussle between the Government and the Opposition on the Unit Trust of India fiasco was resolved today when the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Mr. G. M. C. Balayogi, announced that "all issues relating to the UTI, including issues discussed in the House, will be considered by the Joint Parliamentary Committee" already looking into the stock market scandal.

The Opposition, which had demanded a separate JPC into the issue, seemed to be satisfied after Mr. Prakash Mani Tripathi, chairman of the ongoing JPC, assured party leaders in the Speaker's chamber that the committee would look into all UTI-related issues as well. That served their purpose.

This formula was the "compromise" arrived at among the leaders of various parties at a meeting called by Mr. Balayogi where Mr. Tripathi was also present. After Mr. Tripathi said his committee could take up all issues related to the UTI, and the Government agreed to go along with the Opposition's insistence that an announcement to this effect be made by the Speaker in the House, the matter was resolved.

During the meeting, the Government refused a suggestion by the Congress that the terms of reference of the JPC probing the stock market scam be changed to include the UTI issue, saying the existing terms included the role of all financial institutions. The Opposition apparently wanted a specific reference to the UTI mutual fund. Instead, the Opposition's viewpoint was accommodated

through the announcement by the Speaker through which the terms of reference stood practically enlarged. Both the ruling parties and the Opposition were thus in a position to claim that they won the day, and both did exactly this.

After launching a blistering attack on the NDA Government in the Lok Sabha on the UTI muddle yesterday, the Opposition camp

appeared to have run out of ammunition.

The Congress chief whip, Mr. Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi, raked up the issue during zero hour saying the Government must devise ways to protect the interests of millions of small investors in the UTI and the CPI(M)'s Mr. Somnath Chatterjee said there was no dispute on the seriousness of the issue which must be addressed.

The Congress Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha, Mr. Madhavrao Scindia, said the interests of millions of investors were at stake and urged the Speaker to find ways to resolve the issue. The BJP member, Mr. Vijay Goel, criticised the Opposition for its conduct. "Why was the Finance Minister not allowed to speak last night?"

Sharing the concerns of the members, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, suggested that the terms of reference of the JPC on stock market scam could, with the consensus of the House, include the issues relating to the UTI.

With the additional workload, the 30-member JPC headed by Mr. Tripathi, constituted during the budget session to go into the scam and submit its report to Parliament by the end of the ongoing session, is expected to ask for more time.

Speaking to *The Hindu*, Mr. Tripathi said it was decided that the JPC would now meet during the inter-session period and not during the ongoing session as planned. The JPC would utilise the period to complete its paperwork and go full steam ahead after the monsoon session.

However, earlier Bharatiya Janata Party leaders were pointing out that the JPC had already issued notices to the UTI for taking evidence on August 28. That was before the adjournment motion on the UTI in Parliament. That was being cited as "proof" that the ongoing JPC was already looking at UTI-related issues and therefore a separate JPC was not needed.

Ex-UTI chief denied bail

MUMBAI, AUG. 3. The former UTI chairman, Mr. P. S. Subramanyam, the mutual fund's suspended executive directors and stock broker, Mr. Rakesh Mehta, held on the charge of misappropriating Rs. 32 crores, were today remanded to judicial custody till August 7 by a special court which rejected their bail plea. The CBI prosecutor, Mr. Gopal Sharan, pleaded that the agency had come across vital documents and needed Mr. Subramanyam's custody to confront him with these papers. Besides, the CBI had to collect details of conversations he had with some persons on his mobile phone on August 2.

The agency opposed the bail plea of the accused saying they had close nexus with co-accused, Mr. Arvind Johari, promoter of Cyberspace Infosys Ltd. and main beneficiary in the scam.

The CBI said their links with Mr. Johari vis-a-vis other public financial institutions and even Jardines, a foreign company, needed to be probed. Seeking bail, lawyers for the accused said the latter had been in custody in the last 14 days and all documents had been seized. Therefore, they should be freed. This is for the first time the accused have been remanded to judicial custody. They were arrested on July 21 and remanded to police custody. — PTI



The former UTI chairman, Mr. P. S. Subramanyam, being taken to a court in Mumbai on Friday. — AP

THE HINDU

DMK, AIADMK clash in Rajya Sabha

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Aug. 3. - The DMK and AIADMK today accused each other of violations of law at the time of Mr M Karunanidhi's arrest.

The occasion was a discussion in the Rajya Sabha on a private member's resolution on increasing erosion of federal principles in Centre-state relations.

Mr C Ramachandran Pillai (CPI-M, Kerala), who had moved the resolution, was the first one to broach the topic to emphasise that the Centre had not followed the recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission in the recall of the former Tamil Nadu Governor, Ms Fathima Beevi.

Mr Ravi Shankar Prasad, BJP member from Bihar, defended the government's decision. There were some protests from the AIADMK as he did so and the vice-chairman, Mr Suresh Pachouri, saw the writing on the wall.

And before going on to the next speaker, he requested members to stick to the points under discussion and avoid speaking about controversial aspects.

But when it was DMK's turn, it only spoke about the manhandling of its leaders by the Tamil Nadu government and questioned why the state government was unnecessarily opposing transfer of three senior police officers to Delhi. He was, in course of his speech, interrupted several times by the AIADMK members who vehemently opposed his allegations.

The same thing happened when it was AIADMK's turn. The member, Mr PG Narayanan, too, except for a brief while, spoke in great detail about the conduct of the former chief minister and the two Central ministers.

But he was careful not to name them. The DMK members, however, found his assertions objectionable and another round of heated exchanges followed.

Order was restored following an assurance by the vice-chairman that he would scrutinise the records later and expunge remarks which he found to be objectionable.

THE STATESMAN

- 4 AUG 2001

Opposition motion on UTI defeated

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, August 2

THE CONGRESS-SPONSORED adjournment motion on the Unit Trust issue was defeated by a voice vote in the Lok Sabha today. But that was not the end of the story for Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha. The Opposition emerged from the episode steeled in its resolve to carry on the fight.

Precedent was created when the Finance Minister, whose resignation was the clarion call of the Opposition, was denied the opportunity to give a reply to the motion. A few minutes into his speech, the Congress and Rashtriya Janata Dal(RJD) members raised a din over his remarks on the speech delivered by RJD leader in the House, Raghuvansh Prasad Singh.

After nearly an hour's deadlock, during which they ignored Speaker GMC Balayogi's entreaties and even an attempt at intervention by the Prime Minister, Deputy Speaker PM Sayeed took over. He forced a voice vote that brought the curtains down on the acrimonious debate.

Sinha, after bearing the Opposition's full onslaught for nearly six hours, rose to make a speech. He began by making references to what the Congress' Priya Ranjan Das Munshi and Mani Shankar Aiyar and the RJD's Singh had earlier stated. It was when he said, "I consider it unnecessary to comment on what Raghuvanshababu said," that pandemonium broke out.

The Congress and RJD members went as a body to the Well of

the House and began demanding an apology from Sinha. In degrees their slogans grew to cover the Finance Minister's resignation and a JPC probe into the muddle under debate.

In all 19 MPs participated in the debate. Sparks flew throughout, particularly when George Fernandes rose to defend the Government. Tehelkagate's shadow was unmistakably hanging over the Samata leader. For over 20 minutes the Treasury and Opposition sides exchanged slogans.

After Aiyar added fuel to the fire by flaunting currency notes to suggest corruption in defence deals, another Congress MP asked how Fernandes could be speaking from a minister's seat. When the dust settled, Fernandes charged there was a "conspiracy" behind the UTI muddle to slow down the economic growth. BJP MP Kirit Somayya also put the current scam in historic perspective.

Significantly, not one Shiv Sena MP rose to participate in the debate. Manohar Joshi and Suresh Prabhu joined the proceedings at the eleventh hour. But they maintained a stony silence through the pandemonium.

As the principal speaker from the Treasury benches, Law Minister Arun Jaitley shifted the focus of the discussion by recounting the Congress Government's decisions during the period 1992-1996 to change US-64's character from a debt-based fund to an equity scheme. He said by 1997 the equity component of US-64 had become 70 per cent which made it extremely vulnerable to vagaries of the stock market.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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2/8

Opposition motion on UTI muddle defeated

By Alok Mukherjee

NEW DELHI, AUG. 2. An Opposition-sponsored motion censuring the Government on the Unit Trust of India (UTI) issue was negated in the Lok Sabha today amid uproarious scenes and without the Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha, being permitted to finish his reply to an acrimonious debate earlier.

The debate on the adjournment motion moved by Mr. Priyaranjan Dasmunshi of the Congress turned into an unprecedented event as the Finance Minister finally got up to reply.

A grim-faced Mr. Sinha, who had been targeted by many members for his "failure" to manage the UTI affairs and whose resignation had been sought by almost all Opposition members, made some references to Congress member, Mr. Mani Shankar Iyer's intervention and then turned to

the RJD member, Mr. Raghuvansh Prasad. "His intervention is not worth my reply," the Finance Minister said which immediately provoked the Congress and RJD members to protest the Minister's "indiscretion".

The Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi's ruling that he would look into the records and take action, if necessary, failed to pacify the members who then stormed the well of the House.

The atmosphere became tense as the NDA back-benchers also stood up and joined in the slogan-shouting. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Leader of the Opposition, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, were present.

While a section of members who were in the well demanded an apology from Mr. Sinha, some others demanded his resignation. Slogans like "vit mantri istifa do" (Finance Minister must resign)

rent the air which was soon replaced with the demand from the Opposition "we want a JPC."

Prompt came the reply from the BJP benches who replaced JPC with BJP. Mr. Dasmunshi continued to demand a JPC probe as well as an inquiry into the role of the Prime Minister's Office in the UTI affairs.

While the slogan-shouting lasted for quite a while, the Prime Minister did make an attempt to address the House, but soon gave up as the din continued.

With the situation running into a stalemate, the Deputy Speaker, Mr. P.M. Sayeed, who was now in the Chair, announced that the Finance Minister would not reply and put the motion to vote which was negated through a voice-vote.

Earlier, during the debate, the Finance Minister came in for considerable attack. Mr. Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M) read out from the UTI Act to establish the fact

that the Government was deeply involved in the setting up and functioning of the UTI.

Mr. Sinha's contention that it was an autonomous organisation in which the Government had no role did not wash, he emphasised.

Reminding Mr. Sinha of the Constitutional responsibility of a Minister to inform Parliament and through it the people about matters affecting the public, Mr. Chatterjee said the Finance Minister had failed on this score.

"He has forfeited his right to sit in that chair. Mr. Finance Minister, you have abdicated your responsibility. You should resign," he said.

Mr. Raghuvansh Prasad, in his intervention, pointed out that under Mr. Sinha's stewardship of the Finance Ministry, there has been a stock market scam, an excise scam in which the Chairman of the Central Board of Excise and Customs was arrested on corruption charges and now the UTI scam.

"On charges of conspiracy, Mr. Laloo Yadav is being sent to jail repeatedly while he is sitting here." Mr. Prasad said pointing to Mr. Sinha. "He says he did not know anything. Can an ignorant Minister continue in Government. He should resign and he should be arrested," Mr. Prasad said.

While the Congress and the NDA members charged each other with mismanaging the UTI at different points of time, some members from other parties referred to the fact that blaming each other would not solve the issue and instead an attempt should be made to correct things so that ordinary investors were not duped in future.

Sinha goes on the backfoot: Page 13

Slogans, counter-slogans

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, AUG. 2. The Lok Sabha today witnessed unprecedented slogan-shouting and counter slogan-shouting between the treasury benches and the Congress members, during the debate on the adjournment motion on the Unit Trust of India fiasco.

Two of the more controversy-prone members — Mr. George Fernandes and Mr. Manishanker Iyer — were at the core of the slanging match.

Trouble arose when the treasury benches objected to what they thought was flaunting of a currency note at Mr. Fernandes by the Congress member.

The treasury benches were on their feet, vociferously protesting what they thought was an unparliamentary reference to the Tehelka episode. The Opposition was not amused that Mr. Fernandes, facing a probe by the Venkataswami Commission, had taken it upon

himself to issue certificates of good conduct to the Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha.

And, predictably, the Congress benches were unwilling to be cowed down. They trooped into the well of the House, shouting slogans: "We want a JPC".

This was countered by the BJP MPs, who shouted: "We want BJP". The slogan-shouting persisted for nearly five minutes.

Order could be restored only when the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, asked the treasury benches to behave while the Deputy Speaker, Mr. P.M. Sayeed, promised to look into the record and to have expunged unparliamentary remarks, if any.

However, the eruption was only an expression of the tension that has been building in the two Houses between the treasury benches and the Opposition, which has sought to capitalise on the discord within the NDA.

THE HINDU

3 AUG 2001

UPROAR IN RAJYA SABHA

UTI: Sinha blames previous govts. ①

By Sandeep Dikshit 1/8

NEW DELHI, JULY 31. The sharpening political divide once again cast its shadow on the continuing debate on the US-64 debacle in the Rajya Sabha today with the Union Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha, finding himself unable to close the credibility gap.

An unconvinced Opposition began interrupting Mr. Sinha just when he was warming up with his defence. The Opposition did not take kindly to his bid to apportion the blame for the sharp fall in stocks held by the United Trust of India to previous regimes. Accusing him of not addressing the pivotal question of involvement of the North Block and the Prime Minister's Office and household in the UTI's questionable investment decisions, the Opposition clashed with the Minister.

The decibel level rose perceptibly as the Opposition protested vociferously and an unyielding Mr. Sinha continued through the din with his theme of neglect of the UTI by previous Governments. The Rajya Sabha Chairman, Mr. Krishan Kant, was finally forced to declare a 10-minute time-out to allow tempers to cool.

The "interval" did not have the intended effect and the Opposition and the Minister remained unmollified. The former increased the tempo of protests as it felt Mr. Sinha did not have the requisite authority to respond to accusations directed at the Prime Minister's establishment. Only the Prime Minister should reply to the charges, it insisted. In a repeat of his previous performance, Mr. Sinha stodgily ploughed through a prepared text. Another adjournment came within minutes as the acting moderator failed to restore order.

During the time afforded by the Opposition, Mr. Sinha was able to establish two points. One, the UTI will not be left in the lurch by the Government for want of funds when it begins buying back US-64 units from small investors from tomorrow. And, two, the catastrophe had gathered critical mass during the Narasimha Rao years when his (Mr. Sinha's) party was dwelling in the Opposition.

Remarks withdrawn

In between, the Minister's attempt to get back at Mr. Kapil Sibal for his acerbic speech yesterday rebounded. The Chair felt the motives attributed by Mr. Sinha to Mr. Sibal were unwarranted though they could remain on record as they were not deemed un-

parliamentary. Mr. Sinha withdrew his remarks.

The manner in which Mr. Sinha opened his speech indicated that the barbs from the Opposition and even the treasury benches during the six-hour debate spread over a week had hit home. "I have been the target of vicious tongue-lashing. I might have squirmed but never intervened. I hope this House will show me the same courtesy." But that was not to happen and Mr. Sinha was left to speak his mind to some Ministers and BJP backbenchers after the main body of MPs had left.

In the time he was able to address the Upper House, Mr. Sinha said the UTI had ignored the warnings of the Joint Parliamentary Committee in 1993 to scale down its exposure in stocks which kept on increasing since 1991-92. This disturbed the earlier equilibrium of keeping a higher proportion of investments in debt instruments and a lower percentage in shares.

The UTI was also affected by the fall in market value of PSU shares which it was forced to purchase during the Congress regime. The UTI's bailout in 1998 involved the Government buying back those shares from the UTI, he clarified adding the issue merited a through inquiry. The UTI also dipped heavily into its reserves during the Congress years (between 1995 and 1998) to maintain an unusually high rate of dividend.

Minister confident

Despite the storm clouds over the country's largest and oldest mutual fund, Mr. Sinha was confident that its corpus would reach the pre-June 30 level. Discounting the general impression that part of the corpus was pocketed by some people, the Minister said the factual position was that the value of stocks held under the US-64 scheme fell due to fluctuations in the stock market.

There were three main features in the US-64 scheme, he explained, of which only one was impaired leading to anxiety among investors. The scheme afforded capital gains for investors who sold the units back to the UTI at a higher rate; an annual dividend which was given regularly; and, instant liquidity. The six-month freeze announced by the then UTI Chairman affected only the liquidity part of the scheme which, confessed Mr. Sinha, was not liked by the investing public.

More reports on Page 15

THE HINDU

THE HINDU

1 AUG 2001

RS members close ranks, target Sinha for UTI bungle

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Rajya Sabha members, without exception, severely criticised the Union finance ministry for the unfolding Unit Trust of India scandal. Finance minister Yashwant Sinha came in for especially severe criticism. The debate ended on Monday evening and Mr Sinha will reply at noon on Tuesday.

Although ruling alliance members did not call for Mr Sinha's resignation, almost everyone else either did or implied that it was the honourable thing to do. Everyone had the same basic question—what was the mighty finance ministry doing all the while by allowing UTI's now-disgraced management to play ninepins with citizens' money?

Even members who refrained from collaring Mr Sinha made it

clear that the official statements left too many questions unanswered. Fali Nariman wanted to know how UTI's now-jailed ex-chairman, P.S. Subramanyam, had got the job. Cho Ramaswamy demanded to know what the plan was to ensure that the money that was "swindled" was restored and that those responsible did not get to enjoy their ill-gotten gains.

General Shankar Roy Chowdhury wanted to know what the senior civil servants in the finance ministry—all 22 of them by his count—had been doing all these years. Just what sort of monitoring had they done and why had they done such a bad job? Journalist Kuldip Nayar, who said he was among the citizens who had lost a lot of savings by trusting UTI, said peoples' faith in autonomous institutions as much as in the government had gone for a toss. It was a point echoed by others as well.

Others directly called for Mr Sinha's scalp. Some gave useful

solutions. Mr Nariman was listened to with appreciation as he called for urgent legislation to ensure a permanent parliamentary panel to oversee the functioning of statutory financial institutions like UTI, LIC and IDBI, as well as one to ensure that their functioning was subject to the government's general direction on policy matters.

Everyone wanted a comprehensive probe and asked that the findings be tabled before parliament. Mr Cho Ramaswamy said that a more basic issue was the belief among citizens that public money was a legitimate target for looting—the traditional rules of honesty did not apply here. Only the leadership could set an example in reversing this trend, he said.

PTI adds: Shiv Sena member Sanjay Nirupam said three telephone calls were made by Mr Subramanyam from Mumbai to Delhi between July 17 and July 21, two of which, he alleged, were traced to the PMO.



Yashwant Sinha

Centre warned
over continuing
Manipur
ceasefire

Lok Sabha on fire over Naga truce

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 24. - The Opposition members in the Lok Sabha today attacked the government for "the messing up of the North-East through ill-thought extension of the ceasefire with the NSCN (I-M) beyond the borders of Nagaland." The TDP also joined the Opposition in asking the government to take immediate steps to rectify the "explosive situation."

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, Mr Somnath Chatterjee of CPI-M denounced the high-handedness of the Centre in taking such a sensitive decision "without even caring to take the chief ministers of the region

into confidence."

Citing the unabated violence in Manipur and other states, the CPI-M leader said: "The government is fiddling when Manipur is burning. I demand immediate action by the government."

Mr Santosh Mohan Dev of Congress asked: "Who is guilty? Who is in charge of the situation, the Prime Minister or the home minister? I want to know what is the locus standi of this government interlocutor, Mr K Padmanabhaiah, what does he know about North-East." While opposing the ceasefire extension beyond Nagaland, he asked the government not to negotiate with the NSCN leadership outside India.

The former Prime Minister, Mr Chandra Shekhar of BJP

said the government has set out on a "dangerous course" in the North-East. As a result, if the ceasefire is not reviewed, violence will further flare up in Manipur, and if the government reverses its decision Nagaland may witness large-scale violence.

He wondered how the Centre thought of even ignoring a seasoned and patriotic chief minister of Nagaland while taking the decision.

The TDP leader, Mr Yerran Naidu, asked the government to take the members from the region into confidence while deciding on the review of the

ceasefire before the 31 July deadline.

Many of the members from the North East were seen emotionally protesting against the ceasefire extension and demanding its review. The Congress member from Arunachal Pradesh, Mr Rajkumar, said the "The Centre, through this irresponsible decision, has encouraged the spread of extremism in the region. Even my state, the most peaceful one, started witnessing violent incidents following the decision." He also cautioned the government of some extremists infiltrating through China.

The members from Nagaland, while joining others in opposing

the territorial extension of the ceasefire, said the government, while reviewing the decision, should be cautious to deal with a possible escalation of attacks by the Naga militants in the state.

Responding to the discussions, the parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, promised to convey the "sentiments and apprehensions of the House" to the home minister and to request him to consult the North-East MPs on the matter.

He also informed the House about the Prime Minister's scheduled meeting with all the North-East chief ministers to discuss the ceasefire issue on Saturday.

MPs, MLAs FACE PROTESTERS' WRATH

IMPHAL, July 24. - Anti-ceasefire extension protesters continued to target residences of the Manipur MLAs and MPs who are being seen here as the main cause behind extension of the NSCN(I-M)-ceasefire area into Manipur.

The former chief minister, Mr RB Koijam's residence at Thangmeiband was attacked tonight by several protesters. However, reports, received so far, said no major damage has been inflicted. Security forces, present in the house following earlier threat, managed to repel the crowd. At least two protesters were reported to be hurt in police firing. Earlier today, protesters also attacked the residence of former arts and culture minister and BJP MLA, Mr W. Thoiba's residence but timely intervention of police saved the house. Protesters yesterday burnt the former power minister Mr Gobindas' house and also attacked the houses of Union minister for food processing, Mr Th Chauba Singh, Rajya Sabha MP, Mr W Angou, BJP legislator and former CM, Mr RK Dorendro. - SNS

Naga remark on Meities draws flak

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 24. - A politician and an educationist of Manipur have described as "communally provocative" the reported statement of some Naga activists that the Meities exploit the Nagas and Manipuris oppose the extended ceasefire because they want to continue doing so.

True, violence has rocked Manipur but there have been no communal attacks against the Nagas, many of whom live in the Meitei-majority Imphal Valley, the dean of humanities in Manipur University, Prof PC Thoudam, said here on Monday.

The Manipur State Congress Party (Nipamacha) MLA, Mr Laishram Jatra Singh corroborated him.

"We're worried, for such statements can complicate the situation," Mr Singh said. The statement should not have been published during these volatile times.

Prof Thoudam and Mr Singh said it is not true that the Meities were "filling their pockets" with money meant for the tribal-inhabited hills around the Imphal valley.

The Manipur budget has two sub-heads, one for the valley, one for the hills. The funds allocated are non-transferable. Furthermore, departments like tribal development are always headed by tribal ministers.

Prof Thoudam and Mr Singh said the Meities are "tolerant and secular." Manipur became a state in 1972. It spent 13 years under two Tangkul Naga chief ministers - Mr Rishang Keishing and Mr

Yangmasho Shaiza - and three under Mr Alimuddin.

Meitei chief ministers have ruled the state for just nine years. "Since 40 of the 60 Assembly seats fall in the Meitei-majority valley, this would not have been possible if Meiteis had been communal," Prof Thoudam said.

They said it was misleading to say, as the Naga activists had done, that people living in a mere 10 per cent of Manipur's land area - Imphal valley - had been deciding the fate of the entire state.

The question was of population, not area, they said. The valley is home to the largest chunk of population in the state. According to the 1991 census, the valley population was 2.2 million out of which only 632,000 people lived in the tribal-dominated hills.



Naga students during a march from Dimapur to Kohima on Tuesday hold placards lending their support to fire between the Centre and the NSCN(I-M). - PTI

Rajya Sabha turns UTI heat on Yashwant

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 24

THE OPPOSITION today cornered Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha in the Rajya Sabha on the US-64 muddle. And as a beleaguered Sinha embarked on a long-winded reply, Opposition MPs sought to cut him short by saying they had supplementaries to ask.

Congress leader Pranab Mukherjee began the Opposition assault by demanding a precise answer to whether Sinha had any prior inkling about the UTI decision to freeze the US 64 scheme.

Sinha, however, ran into trouble trying to answer Mukherjee in detail. As his answer meandered on, several Opposition members including Jayanthi Natarajan (TMC) protested strongly, since they also wanted to ask supplementaries.

Natarajan asked the Finance Minister if he would accept "moral responsibility" for the failure of the UTI scheme and if he did, would he resign. Jibon Roy (CPI-M) also supported the demand.

Sinha denied, "with all the emphasis at his command" that his Ministry was in the know of the happenings in the UTI. The UTI took its investment decisions "entirely on its own", he said, adding that the Government "does not interfere or influence" those decisions.

The Ministry was, however, "concerned and worried" and

PM rejects Sinha resignation calls

THE PRIME Minister on Tuesday rejected the Opposition demand for the resignation of Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha over the UTI fiasco. He told at the parliamentary party meeting that all steps were being taken to revive UTI and "the question of his (Sinha's) resignation does not arise".

PTI, New Delhi

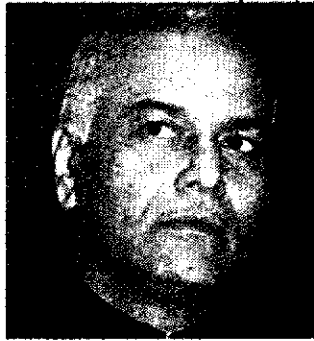
had tried to keep track of UTI's health, all the while "assured that the UTI was capable of tackling the problem".

Opposition members asked the minister if the Government had "drawn any lesson" from the collapse of the US 64 scheme and whether Government control over the UTI would be restored.

C P Thirunavukkarasu of the DMK created a flutter when he quoted a weekly and alleged that sacked UTI Chairman P S Subramanyam was appointed "on the recommendation of AIADMK chief J Jayalithaa".

AIADMK members protested vociferously but the DMK member stood his ground, reiterating that he "only wanted a clarification from the minister".

Sinha said "regular procedure" was followed in Subramanyam's appointment. As for repositioning of UTI's investments, he told Ravi Shankar Prasad of the BJP that a three-



member committee was examining the matter. Its report would be available shortly, following which the Government would take a "comprehensive view on it".

Sinha said it was on June 30 that the Finance Secretary received a letter from the UTI Chairman at his residence, saying that the UTI "had a problem". The matter, it said, would be placed before the Board of Trustees. Sinha said the letter also spelt out the option of a six-month freeze on sale and re-purchase of US 64 units.

Sinha claimed he learnt about the matter only on July 2 when Subramanyam drew his attention to it. His Ministry could not take immediate action as the UTI's balance sheet was to be declared soon by the Board of Trustees. Any intervention at that stage could have "severely affected the interests of the country's largest mutual fund and the 2 crore investors in units".

Oppn accuses govt of giving Pak a 'propaganda victory'

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 24 JULY

THE POST-mortem session on the Agra summit — which began in Lok Sabha on Tuesday — may further reduce the prospect of an early resuscitation of a serious dialogue with Pakistan.

The debate started off on a confrontational note with the Samajwadi Party leader and the Congress accusing the government of giving a propaganda victory to President Pervez Musharraf and holding out a clear warning to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee that continuing the journey on the "high road to peace" will not be possible without considerable political costs.

The Samajwadi Party and the Congress — never mind their mutual squabbling — were one in attacking the government for rushing into the dialogue without reading Gen Musharraf's mind. Of the two, the Samajwadi Party leader was particularly severe. The Congress kept its criticism at a different level, attributing the fiasco more to the lack of temperament needed for good governance and successful diplomacy. But the message to the government was clear — pressing ahead with unilateral initiatives when Pakistan remains intransigent carries a risk.

The BJP read the signal right with Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, the party's opening batsman,

accusing the rivals of reneging on the understanding reached at the all-party meeting for the sake of brownie points. Mr Malhotra said the government did only what it was mandated to do at the all-party meeting. Moreover, he made it plain that the BJP will not allow its rivals to muscle their way into its "nationalism" turf unchallenged. He latched on to Mr Yadav's thesis about how gains made on the battlefield were often surrendered at the negotiations to compliment Mr Vajpayee for breaking with the tradition of surrender and capitulation. "He is the only Prime Minister in the last 50 years who didn't compromise on principles," Mr Malhotra said.

Mr Malhotra then hit out at Mr Yadav, this time citing the Congress' decision not to accord excessive legitimacy on Gen Musharraf's certification of the Hurriyat. "Why did you attend the tea party at the Pakistan embassy when you know that it was meant to make the Hurriyat a player?" he asked.

While trying to score debating points, the participants laid — perhaps not fully by design — a threshold that has to be crossed before the "threads are picked up again." The minimum pre-requisites include Pakistan's acceptance that the terrorists in Kashmir are what they are, and not freedom fighters. Mr Musharraf may find

this a tough condition to accept. Secondly, the deliberations made it clear that the government will be required to secure a clear guarantee from Pakistan that it will not harp on its K-centric agenda — again not an easy task for Mr Musharraf.

The wish list is going to get larger and more stringent with indications suggesting that the rhetoric can get only tougher as the debate progresses. The BJP side, which was taken somewhat by surprise by the shrillness of Mr Yadav and the Congress speaker Madhavrao Scindia, is now ready to come up with a sharp rejoinder.

The debate will conclude on

Thursday with Mr Vajpayee's reply to the criticism. It began on Tuesday with Prime Minister's statement. The statement which Mr Vajpayee chose to read out, much to the disappointment of his partymen, didn't contain anything new.

But it was enough to douse the speculation still lingering in some quarters that the disappointment at Agra will not be an impediment to fresh unilateral initiatives. Quite to the contrary, it marks a commitment to Parliament that the government will not be a party to any effort to discuss Kashmir if Islamabad doesn't agree to rein in the terrorists it has let loose on the side of the border.

THE ECONOMIC TIMES

'No pact sans mention of terrorism'

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 24

PRIME MINISTER Atal Bihari Vajpayee made it clear today that in his future negotiations with Pakistan he will continue to voice India's concern over cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir and will not agree to sign any document which does not mention this burning issue.

In a restrained attack on Islamabad in the Lok Sabha today, Vajpayee said no worthwhile purpose would be served by a debate on whether Jammu and Kashmir was a "core issue". Pakistan's refusal to end cross-border terrorism was the main hurdle in the creation of a conducive atmosphere, he said.

In his first post-Agra summit statement, delivered in a somewhat emotional note, the Prime Minister said insurgency in



ATALSPEAK

- Cross-border terrorism to be India's central concern in future talks with Pakistan.
- No joint declaration which does not mention Pak-sponsored terror.
- Acceptance of J&K by India as "issue", but not the "core issue".
- Economic progress of entire Kashmir, including Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

Jammu and Kashmir, with its foreign mercenaries and generous assistance from abroad, could not be glorified as "jihad" — it was terrorism. "Please reflect that soon after the Agra summit had concluded, our pilgrims on their way to Amarnath were killed and just two days ago, another massacre occurred," Vajpayee said.

The PM announced he had received President Musharraf's invitation to visit Pakistan. Another formal letter has been received by External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh from his Pak counterpart requesting him to make a trip to Islamabad. However, during his brief address to members of the Lower House, Vajpayee gave no sign of his enthusiasm to go to Pakistan in the near future.

He said the summit had seen the striking of a degree of understanding between himself and Musharraf. Though a joint document could not be concluded, India would try and build on it to increase areas of agreement.

Vajpayee confirmed media reports that efforts to develop a final declaration document at Agra fell through because of differences in perceptions over Jammu and Kashmir and cross-border terrorism. The two leaders had tried to put in place a future dialogue structure covering all issues from the erstwhile Composite Dialogue Process. Some of them were to be held at an official level while others at ministerial and summit levels.

"Eventually, however, we had to abandon the quest for a joint document mainly because of Pakistan's insistence on the settlement of the Jammu and

Kashmir issue as a precondition for the normalisation of relations. Pakistan was also reluctant to acknowledge and address cross-border terrorism. My Cabinet colleagues and I were unanimously of the view that our basic principles cannot be sacrificed for the sake of a joint document," Vajpayee said.

Vajpayee recalled that during their extensive one-on-one talks spread over July 15 and 16, Musharraf focused almost exclusively on Jammu and Kashmir. The PM, on the other hand, emphasised the importance of creating an atmosphere of trust for progress on all outstanding issues including Kashmir. He also mentioned specific issues like the case of the 54 prisoners of war, extradition of known terrorists, the upkeep of Gurudwaras and Hindu temples in Pakistan and the enhancement of trade relations.

He also mentioned specific issues like the case of the 54 prisoners of war, extradition of known terrorists, the upkeep of Gurudwaras and Hindu temples in Pakistan and the enhancement of trade relations.

OPPOSITION TO COOPERATE ON IMPORTANT ISSUES

Agra, UTI to dominate session

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 23. The fallout of the Agra summit and the Unit Trust of India scandal are expected to dominate the proceedings in Parliament tomorrow when the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, is scheduled to make a statement on the summit in both the Houses.

Today, Parliament adjourned without transacting any business after paying homage to the assassinated King Birendra and Queen Aishwarya of Nepal.

In the Rajya Sabha, Mr. Vajpayee's statement will naturally lead to members seeking clarifications but it seems that if the Government is agreeable to a full discussion later, and indications were that it was, those could be put on hold. This means the focus could shift to the UTI scandal, an issue on which some Opposition parties have demanded the resignation of the Union Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha.

However, in the Lok Sabha it seems Mr. Vajpayee's statement would be followed by a full discussion on the events which led to the summit and what followed. The Opposition has already blamed the Government for going to the summit without adequate preparation.

Several members have already given notices under different rules on both the subjects, and on the Manipur crisis, which is also



The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, with the Prime Minister, Mr. Vajpayee, at Parliament House in New Delhi on Monday. — Photo: V. Sudershan

crying for urgent attention. Cutting across the political spectrum, parties have demanded that the ceasefire agreement with the Naga group, NSCN(I-M), be limited to Nagaland and not be applied to other northeastern States. The Manipur MLAs are under pressure to get the ceasefire agree-

ment changed by July 31, failing which they may be forced to resign.

At a meeting of party leaders convened by the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi, immediately before the start of the session this morning, the Government made it clear that it was

willing to discuss any subject.

Both the Government and the Opposition seemed to be conscious of the impasse caused by obduracy from both sides during the budget session. They spoke of the need for "cooperation" this time, with the Opposition saying that if the Government was willing to be "reasonable and sensitive" to its demands for discussion on subjects of public importance, it would not be found wanting.

Today, both the Houses made obituary references to King Birendra of Nepal. In the Rajya Sabha, the Chairman, Mr. Krishan Kant, said India would cherish the memory of the King's friendship.

The Rajya Sabha condemned the killing of 13 persons during the Amarnath yatra, and observed a minute's silence in memory of those killed in the Kozhikode train accident. The Chairman also made obituary references to the Tamil cinema star, Sivaji Ganesan.

Three members — Mr. Dalit E. hilmalai (AIADMK), Mr. Pramoc Panda (CPI) and Mr. Ram Murt Singh Verma (SP) — took oath as members of the Lok Sabha, while five members — Dr. Manmohar Singh (Congress), Mr. Indtaman Bora (BJP), Mr. Rao Man Singh (INLD), Mrs. Gurcharan Kaur (BJP) and Mr. Kalraj Mishra (BIP) — took oath as members of the Rajya Sabha.

PM to make statement in Parliament HD 1

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 18. There were no surprises at the meeting of National Democratic Alliance leaders here this evening. About 20 leaders of the ruling coalition got a detailed briefing on the summit talks, they were told that the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, refused to yield ground on issues of paramount national interest and in gratitude they congratulated him for his boldness.

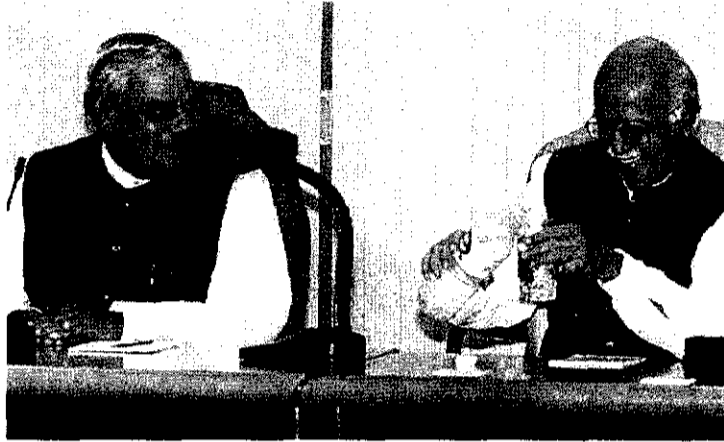
Briefing reporters later, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, said: "a detailed statement on the Agra summit would be made by the Prime Minister in Parliament on the first day of the monsoon session." He added that all the NDA leaders "were happy that the Prime Minister had raised India's concerns strongly, that he had not compromised, and they congratulated him".

But party leaders did caution Mr. Vajpayee, and his senior colleagues, Mr. L.K. Advani, Home

Minister, and Mr. Jaswant Singh, Minister for External Affairs and Defence, that militant and terrorist activities could be stepped up and the Government should be fully prepared to meet the challenge. The Government should

take these threats seriously, they said. In response, it was Mr. Advani who was reported to have assured the coalition partners that every step that was needed would be taken.

Mr. Mahajan insisted that no



The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, at the meeting of the NDA in New Delhi on Wednesday. — Photo: S. Arneja

party leader, not even the Shiv Sena's Mr. Suresh Prabhu, suggested that in these circumstances Mr. Vajpayee should not visit Islamabad (it had been announced that he had accepted the Pakistan President's invitation), nor did anyone express the view that perhaps Mr. Vajpayee had made a mistake in extending an invitation to the Pakistan President.

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Mr. Mahajan suggested that in any case no suitable dates for a visit to Islamabad might be found in the remaining part of the year as there were the monsoon and winter sessions of Parliament, and a visit to Russia by the Prime Minister, possibly in October. "There is also the much-delayed Japan visit for which dates have to be found."

There was apparently no voice of dissent, and no one expressed unhappiness over the way the summit ended.

Legislation to be introduced in monsoon session of Parliament

Labour laws to be amended

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, May 16. — Stiff resistance from trade unions notwithstanding, the government said today it would go ahead with the proposed amendments to the Industrial Disputes Act and Contract Labour Act for effecting lay-off, retrenchment and closure.

"The legislation, whose provisions may apply to industrial units employing not less than 1,000 workers instead of 100, would be introduced in the monsoon session of Parliament," the labour minister, Mr Satyanarayan Jatiya, told reporters here.

Trade unions including the Sangh Parivar-affiliated Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS), have come out openly against the proposed changes in these two acts saying that the amendments would make the laws essentially anti-worker.

Mr Jatiya, however, sought to allay apprehensions in this regard asserting that no steps would be taken against the interest of workers.

He said the labour ministry would consider various aspects before

implementing the policy, as nearly 80 per cent of the units came under the category where the number of workers was below 1,000.

The labour minister also said that the government would wait for the Second National Commission on Labour to submit its report on various crucial issues before taking any final decision on major policies. "The report is likely to be submitted by December," he said.

Recognising the problems faced by the unorganised sector, Mr Jatiya said the government was contemplating the creation of a Rs 150 crore Welfare Fund for agricultural workers, who constituted 60 per cent of the unorganised sector.

Stating that the Centre was keen on providing insurance to agricultural workers, he said the government was ready to contribute double the amount paid by the labourers as premium.

He said that in due course, the facility would be extended to *beedi* and mine workers as well.

Mr Jatiya said that these and other issues are likely to come up for close scrutiny at

the Indian Labour Conference here on 18 May.

The Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, will inaugurate the session to be attended by representatives of employees, employers and the government.

Mr Vajpayee had recently held in-depth consultations with leaders of various trade unions on major labour issues, in order to understand their concerns and to arrive at a consensus.

However, the central trade union leaders appeared to be unhappy over the government's policies, particularly, the disinvestment policy.

They were also of the view that amendments in the two acts would promote 'hire and fire' policy, though government justified the decision saying it would ensure protection to the labour force.

On the contentious issue of disinvestment, the labour minister said trade unions were welcome to give their suggestions, but did not elaborate whether they would be consulted before a decision was taken to disinvest a public sector undertaking.

17 MAY 2001

10-12 ✓
TUESDAY, MAY 1, 2001

OVER TO THE JPC

THE CONSTITUTION OF a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to probe the latest stock market crisis is inopportune and unlikely to benefit either policy-makers, the capital market or the investors. Neither the diagnosis of the stock market's problems nor the possible solutions are beyond average comprehension. If a comprehensive review was at all needed, a team of inter-disciplinary specialists might have fitted the bill better and saved considerably on time and costs. Going by the experience of the earlier JPC, this one might find it difficult to complete its rather ambitious agenda within the time-frame of 3 to 4 months assigned to it. Especially because this time key State elections are round the corner. There will be a prolonged bout of uncertainty even as the JPC grapples with its tasks.

There are other more direct costs arising out of the JPC. The agenda this time is even wider than last time and because the stock market has grown exponentially since, the list of agencies and institutions which the JPC will investigate has grown longer. It is common knowledge that the financial costs of a JPC-type investigation are high and a large percentage of those are borne by the institutions investigated. All those would be understandable if only the JPC investigations and follow-up lead to a better financial system. A cost-benefit analysis of the JPC can be undertaken from two standpoints. One, the earlier JPC took two long years to complete a voluminous report. Most of its recommendations were implemented. However, another crisis necessitating a new JPC has surfaced within a short span of seven years. It is difficult to see what new ground the latest JPC will cover.

Second, this time there has already been a flurry of regulatory action that, though akin to fire-fighting, has had much the same effect as a

11/5
follow up to a JPC-type report would have. For instance, a hastily-drawn RBI circular of November 2000 permitting banks to invest substantially more in the stock market has already been modified. Cooperative banks at the centre of the latest crisis have been asked to roll back their stock exposures. The SEBI on its part has been hyper active — banning short sales, speeding up corporatisation of stock exchanges, penalising high profile share price manipulators and is close to ushering in rolling settlement for all categories of shares. Regulatory action even when undertaken under pressure can have salutary results. Hopefully the setting up of the JPC will catalyse the regulators. On no account should it lead to another prolonged bout of inaction. Nor should the several ongoing investigations by the IT authorities, the CBI, the SEBI and the RBI be delayed.

In short, there are only muted expectations from the JPC. However, it can contribute immensely if it concentrates on a few specifics. The role of the small investors is one area that needs to be addressed. Another area for the JPC is it should find out why existing laws and regulation are inadequate to prevent a recurrence of market crisis. Even more basic of course is to define the contours of a crisis that requires extraordinary intervention such as is happening now. This time, for instance, there are few indications that the stock market malaise is widespread. The failure of one obscure cooperative bank does not lead to a facile conclusion of a broker-banker nexus. As for the heavy and disastrous betting on technology stocks, the JPC needs to be reminded that just a year ago it was sheer heresy even to countenance their fall. There could be wisdom in hindsight but it will not be useful for a JPC-type solution, which in all probability will identify a systemic failure.

THE HINDU

1 MAY 2001

Sonia's outburst unwarranted: PM

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Two days after leader of opposition and Congress chief Sonia Gandhi's impromptu outburst in the Lok Sabha against Prime Minister Vajpayee's concluding speech, the man who caused the shocking incident — Vajpayee — has denied he had anything to do with it, possibly further fuelling the controversy.

Nearly 48 hours after Sonia upbraided home minister Advani for the BJP using abusive language against former prime ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, Mr Vajpayee said the episode had lowered the "prestige of the Indian Parliament". Seething with anger, Sonia exploded when Mr Advani approached her on Friday evening to fulfil the end-of-session parliamentary niceties of thanking the opposition for cooperation in the conduct of the House's business.

In a statement on Sunday, Mr Vajpayee asserted he had not said "anything objectionable" to warrant Sonia's "emotional outburst" in the Lok Sabha and dismissed as "baseless" her charge that the government was vindictive towards her and members of her family.

Mr Vajpayee said he was "pained" by the emotional outburst of Sonia at Mr Advani who "had gone to greet her and other members of the opposition as was customary at the end of the session". "It was not an occasion to express anger. Such episodes lower the prestige of the Indian Parliament," he said.

In an aggressive and unyielding statement, Mr Vajpayee said, "I fail to understand how my speech provoked such an angry and personalised outburst from the leader of the opposition." He refuted Sonia's charge that the BJP had allowed "abusive language" to be used against Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, which, he said, "Several Congress MPs used against me in the House."

Mr Vajpayee's reference clearly was to the chant of *chor hai, chor hai* that the opposition, mainly Congress and RJD members mounted, inside the House in the wake of the Tehelka exposé. "As the leader of the opposition, and even when I was an ordinary MP, I always stood up to stop the use of derogatory and unbecoming remarks in Parliament," Mr Vajpayee stressed.

WAR OF WORDS

- The Tehelka episode is both a challenge and warning to all of us.

- I said *hamara dimag khula hai, lekin khali nahi* (We have an open mind but not an empty one).

- No one should doubt my integrity.

- If morality is the concern, then some of the issues surfacing will affect them also on that count.



- The exposé has raised serious doubts about the integrity of the government.

- They began throwing abuses at us; they

insulted my mother-in-law, my husband, even now me and my children are being called thieves. I am not going to put up with this any more.

- There was an attempt to compromise national security, we will continue to raise it.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

30 APR 2001

House order is collective responsibility: Balayogi

THE TREMORS that rocked the recent Budget session had two epicentres: An obturate Opposition and an unrelenting Treasury. But the Speaker's office emerged unscathed from the brawl that left both sides badly bruised.

As an institution, Parliament's image was dented. For the first time, the two Houses were adjourned sine die a fortnight ahead of schedule. But Speaker G M C Balayogi managed to contain the damage by ensuring a preference of a debate on the Union Budget.

Into his second term as Speaker, the unassuming TDP MP has often found himself in unenviable situations in a deeply fractured House. But his unflappable demeanour amid frequent pandemonium has often stood him in good stead. Excerpts from an interview:

Q: As the presiding officer of the Lok Sabha, you have often expressed concern about the loss of time due to Members' obvious lack of restraint. But your appeals have not had the desired

impact. Do you see the need to be more strict while disciplining members in future?

A: Somehow, I'm not comfortable with the use of phrases like 'disciplining Members.' That applies more to schools where one has to address young and impressionable minds. A legislating institution is an assembly of matured individuals, each representing a large number of people. In the case of the Lok Sabha, some of its Members represent 15-20 lakh people.

As the presiding officer, I am obviously concerned about proper use of time of the House. Whenever required, I have always appealed to the members' good sense. Generally this works. Sometimes, it may not.

The problem of maintaining order in the House has long been a matter of concern. Lok Sabha's 'Golden Jubilee Resolution' binds Members to ensure proper functioning of the House. But unfortunately, even that is not being adhered to.

During my discussions with

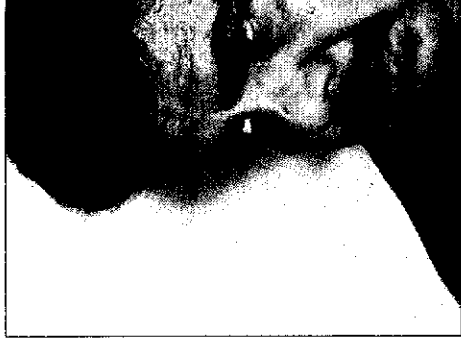
leaders and MPs, the need for an implementable Code of Conduct has been recognised. I'm certainly thinking of initiatives in that direction. Ensuring order in the House is not confined to the Chair. It is more of a collective responsibility.

Q: Should there be a written code of conduct for Members?

A: Yes, an implementable code as I said. In the past, several meetings of presiding officers, floor leaders, chief whips were held. They spoke of the need to uphold the dignity and decorum of legislatures. I want to go further and crystallise an understanding, which would commit all sections of the House including the presiding officer to act in such a way that disorder will be a thing of the past. I know it is not going to be an easy task.

Q: Is it true that the brief truce you managed between the Government and the Congress came about after your warning that you will not preside over the passage of Budget without debate?

A: I don't believe in issuing



warnings. In the resolution of the recent stalemate, both sides played the part expected of them, though a bit late. It was a process of discussion and evolution towards an understanding. I have to maintain the sanctity of that process.

As the presiding officer involved in the process, I con-



veyed my concerns and feelings to all concerned. Everybody felt that the passage of Budget should follow proper debate and discussion.

Q: Are you upset that you presided over the first-ever premature adjournment of the Budget session? The session was curtailed in deference to the demand

of some leaders who wanted to campaign for the Assembly polls. Hasn't this set a precedent?

A: I do believe that the sanctity of schedule of Parliament once announced shall be maintained. In fact, the appropriate thing would be to sit longer than scheduled so that our sincerity and commitment to Parliamentary institutions is vindicated. I fondly hope that curtailment of this Budget Session shall remain a one-time departure and will not be quoted as a precedent. Elections have their own place and significance in our polity and keep happening in one or the other part of our country. Maybe the experience of this Budget session will help avoid any repeat of curtailment.

Q: The PM has said that his 'open' mind on the JPC on tel-elment would approach the demand with an 'empty' mind. Does this mean that the accord you brokered on the issue would have no relevance when Parliament reassembles for the Mon-

soon session in July?

A: I have no reasons to believe that the two sides will not cooperate with each other in the true democratic spirit and in the larger interest of proper functioning of Parliament. In our Parliament, the Treasury and the Opposition have always worked together with a spirit of accommodation. I am sure the same spirit will continue to prevail.

Q: The truncated Budget Session brought out unprecedented bitterness between the Leader of the House and the Leader of Opposition. In fact, the widening gulf between Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Sonia Gandhi manifested so sharply in their comments before and after the adjournment of the House. Would you appeal to the two leaders to sort out differences in the interest of their constitutionally assigned roles?

A: The Prime Minister and the Leader of Opposition are responsible and respected leaders. They are always guided by their concern for proper functioning of Parliamentary institutions. It

was reflected in their recent communication to each other. Like they co-operated with each other in the resolution of the recent stalemate in Parliament, I am sure they will do so in future too, if required.

Q: Do you visualise a role for senior members like Chandrashekhar, Somnath Chatterjee, Sharad Pawar and Shivrāj Patil in exercising a sobering influence on others, including backbenchers?

A: Certainly. The House is a fine blend of very senior and experienced Members, some enthusiastic and able Parliamentarians and first-timers. New Members always look up to the seniors for advice and inspiration. You would have seen that on several occasions, senior Members disproved of the unreasonable attitude of their junior colleagues, which significantly helped in retrieving the situation. In fact, I have always held the view that proper functioning of the House is a collective responsibility and therein fits the role of senior Members.

JPC probe into Tehelka ruled out

PM and Sonia spar as Houses adjourn

9-
Parliament

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

5/1 2/19

NEW DELHI, April 27. — The last day of the stormy budget session saw an aggressive Prime Minister and an upset and gesticulating Mrs Sonia Gandhi.

The Congress president's outburst came immediately after the adjournment — the Prime Minister had earlier rejected the demand for a JPC on Tehelka and taken the Congress to task on the issue — when Mr LK Advani and Mr Pramod Mahajan went across to the Opposition benches to exchange the customary end-of-session pleasantries. But Mrs Sonia Gandhi was anything but pleasant.

Winding up the budget session, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee today rejected the Congress' demand for a JPC probe into the Tehelka charges, clarifying in his valedictory address to the Lok Sabha that "*mere khule dimag ka matlab khali dimag nahin tha*". (the open mind did not mean an empty mind).

As to why the government did not even agree to a discussion in the Lok Sabha on the JPC, as promised, Mr Vajpayee said: "I could have agreed to a JPC had there been any unanimous decision or if the House had decided by a majority for appointing a JPC on Tehelka." But this was not the case, he added.

He made it clear to the Congress that two investigations — one by the judicial commission of inquiry and another by a JPC on the same subject (Tehelka) could not be conducted simultaneously. Since the government had already instituted a judicial inquiry into the charges, there was no question of having a JPC probe, Mr Vajpayee told the House.

Mr Vajpayee reminded the House how he was subjected to abusive onslaught by the Opposition members which never happened in the past.

Mrs Gandhi gave vent to her anger when Mr LK Advani walked across to the Opposition benches to exchange pleasantries after the House was adjourned sine die by the Speaker. According to Mr S Jaipal Reddy who was standing beside Mrs Gandhi, the

■ See SONIA: page 8

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SONIA

(Continued from page 1)

Leader of the Opposition told Mr Advani how on the same floor of the House her late husband was "crucified" and "you people did not spare even my children."

"We will not take it lying down, It will not go without a fight," Mrs Gandhi was reported to have told Mr Advani who was fumbling for words to respond to her sudden offensive.

Mrs Gandhi wondered why the Prime Minister had one standard for himself and another standard for Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. She also criticised the self-righteousness of the Prime Minister.

Earlier, Opposition leader regretted that the government did not respond to her demand to appoint a JPC to probe the Tehelka charges which created doubts over the country's security and defence procurement.

The Congress would continue to agitate inside and outside Parliament on the Tehelka charges, she said.

The Samajwadi Party members were quick to point out how the Congress fooled the people by staging a mock offensive on the Tehelka charges and then compromised on the issue by joining hands with the government in aborting the Tehelka issue, for which the Congress held Parliament to ransom and did not allow the Lok Sabha to function normally.

The Speaker, Mr GMC Balayogi, told a Press conference that curtailment of the budget session, which was adjourned ahead of schedule in view of the Assembly elections, should not be quoted in future as a precedent. It was a deviation from the set course. The Lok Sabha lost 73 hours and 49 minutes due to the forced adjournments during the session which failed to take up the listed business, including many legislations.

Some of the important legislation which could not be tabled and taken up during the session included the Women's Reservation Bill, the Lok Pal Bill and the CVC Bill.

THE STATESMAN

28 APR 2001

Politics rules JPC selection process

SANJAY SINGH
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BLACK FRIDAY RETURNS

NEW DELHI, April 27. — The Bahujan Samaj Party MP, Mr Rashid Alvi, who recently alleged that Reliance had misappropriated and diverted funds raised through public issue, has been left out from the Joint Parliamentary Committee set up to probe the stock exchange scam.

Sources said while a formal request was made by the government to different parliamentary party leaders to nominate their party MPs for the panel, an 'informal' request was made to BSP chief Miss Mayawati.

Knowing her weakness for the Dalits, she was requested to put a Dalit member on the panel.

She failed to see through the

MUMBAI, April 27. — It was the return of black Friday. Sebi's announcement of complete ban on carry forward and introduction of rolling settlement in over 200 scrip on 2 June 2001, coupled with the government's decision to probe stock scam through a JPC ruined the market today with little hope of recovery. The Sensex of Stock Exchange, Mumbai, opened 167.87 points below Thursday's final figure of 3557.19 points. After opening 3389.22 it fell to 3357.83 and finally closed at 3422.76 points, which was a 134.43 points loss over the preceding day's trading. — SNS

'design' and picked up Mr Baliram, a dalit MP, for the panel and not Mr Alvi, who most leaders thought, would have been a better choice with his background as a lawyer who recently had showed the courage to take on the biggest business house of the country.

The nomination of Mr Premchand Gupta as an RJD nominee in the panel from the Upper House also came through after some backroom politics. The government sent the request to Mr Ranjan Yadav who continued to be the RJD parliamentary party leader in the Rajya Sabha.

Party sources said Mr Gupta, a Haryana-based businessman was keen to be on the panel but he and some other party MPs suspected that Mr Ranjan Yadav would nominate himself or somebody who profess loyalty to him and not to Mr Laloo Yadav.

Mr Gupta immediately contacted Mr Laloo Yadav. A fax signed by Mr Laloo Yadav reached the offices of the chairman and deputy chairman of the Rajya Sabha and the parliamentary affairs minister. It informed them that Mr Ranjan Yadav had been removed from the post and Mr Ramdeo Bhandari would be the new parliamentary party leader of RJD in Rajya Sabha. Mr Bhandari immediately nominated Mr Gupta on the panel.

THE STATESMAN

28 APR 2001

Opposition leader erupts in House

Sonia's anguish explodes on Atal

FROM KAY BENEDICT AND RASHEED KIDWAI

New Delhi, April 27: Sonia Gandhi does not speak much in Parliament. Today she did, in a torrent. For two minutes, words poured out of her mouth in a volcanic eruption, scalding a stunned Lal Krishna Advani and Pramod Mahajan.

Less the leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha than a mother and a woman who had lost her husband and mother-in-law in assassinations, Sonia's emotional explosion took place just after Parliament adjourned for the current session.

"My own husband was crucified in this House by the Opposition. Even my children are being subjected to all sorts of sacrilegious campaigns..." Sonia screamed. Never before has such a thing happened in the Lok Sabha.

Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee escaped simply because Vande Mataram separated him from Sonia's outburst. Vajpayee had walked out after his speech wrapping up the session, microphones had been switched off and members were preparing to shuffle out.

Advani and Mahajan walked across to the Congress bench to the right. Folding his hands in a *namaskar*, Advani, with Mahajan in tow, went towards Sonia for a "courtesy greeting" as the House had adjourned.

Sonia and other Congress members were getting up to leave when she saw Advani approaching. "Was not the House stalled by you in the past when you were in the Opposition? Will you recall?" she burst out, throwing Advani off balance.

The immediate provocation was Vajpayee's speech attacking



My husband was crucified in this House by the Opposition. Even my children are being subjected to all sorts of sacrilegious campaigns. We will not take it lying down.

Sonia Gandhi

the Congress for stalling the House.

As Advani tried to gather his wits about to say something, he was hit by another blast: "Do you recall the number of objectionable slogans raised against my husband and my mother-in-law when they were Prime Ministers." (A reference to the BJP slogans: *Gali gali mein shor hai, Rajiv Gandhi chor hai*.)

The Prime Minister in his speech had objected to the Opposition slogan in the wake of the Tehelka revelations that Vajpayee "is a chor".

"Why one standard for Vajpayee, why another standard for former Prime Ministers?" asked Sonia as Advani stood fumbling for words. Taking a few rapid strides towards the exit, the Congress president ran back gesticulating at the home minister. As if possessed, she said: "Why does the Prime Minister continue to adopt double standards? Why this display of self-righteousness on the part of the Prime Minister?"

"For the sake of democracy, I did not speak up," she told a numbed home minister.

As she spoke, senior Congress leaders Madhavrao Scindia, Mani Shankar Aiyar and Renuka Chowdhury stood beside her.

"After doing all this, you have the cheek to say that you never did anything. Is that right?"

Asked why she did not express her feelings before the House was adjourned, Congress spokesperson Jaipal Reddy said that soon after Vajpayee finished his speech, Vande Mataram was being sung and any interruption would have amounted to dishonouring the anthem.

Unexpected though the onslaught was, Sonia has been biding her time for an opportunity. The place and the timing were surprising, but the leader of the Opposition said what she has been wanting to say for a long time.

Her outburst was aimed at Vajpayee, challenging his image as the benign elderly statesman. Sonia saw as hitting below the belt Vajpayee's sanction for a CBI probe into Subramanian Swamy's allegations where Rahul Gandhi, too, was not spared. It was an act that betrayed, according to Congressmen, "vindictive, mean and vengeful traits".

When some party leaders sought to paralyse Parliament over the issue, Sonia had told them not to bother. "It is my battle and let me handle it," she had said. Privately, she has been saying that BJP ministers were, perhaps, not aware of "the stuff I am made of".

With Assembly polls in five states due soon, Sonia wanted to make a forceful point: the NDA government headed by Vajpayee has unleashed a smear campaign against her to counter the Tehelka impact. She wishes voters to ponder over the Centre's intentions before they give their verdict.

When Vajpayee today spoke of erosion of values, Sonia tried to get even, pointing at the Opposition's tirade against Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi.

THE TELEGRAPH

28 APR 2001

VAJPAYEE SPITS FIRE, SONIA HITS BACK

Parliament session ends on a bitter note

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 27. The two Houses of Parliament adjourned *sine die* today, but not before cumulative bitterness of the budget session asserted itself. Harsh words were spoken and harsher sentiments expressed, signalling that the truce between the ruling NDA and the Opposition, Congress, was over the moment the Finance Bill got passed.

In the Lok Sabha, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, allowed an unusually partisan and combative note to creep into his concluding remarks. Referring to the allegations against the Government in the wake of the Tehelka expose and the demands for his resignation, Mr. Vajpayee bitterly complained that he did not deserve this denouement after 40 years in Parliament.

"I was abused in this very House; no one intervened to say this was unparliamentary and that these type of words should not be used," he complained. Invoking Lord Rama, Mr. Vajpayee said, "I am not afraid of death, but I am afraid of infamy." Virtually accusing the Opposition of adopting unparliamentary tactics calculated to defame leaders' im-



age, the Prime Minister cautioned that ultimately it was the country's image that was being besmirched.

Later, the Leader of the Opposition, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, promptly hit back, chastising the Prime Minister for sermonising and having called her and her family "thieves" in the same House.

Combative tone

Adopting a minatory tone, the Prime Minister cautioned against invoking the morality criterion to demand his resignation. "There are many issues — and there can be many more — which would

enjoin a morality judgment; moral standards cannot be reserved only for one side," he warned. For good measure, Mr. Vajpayee also rejected the Congress demand for a JPC on the Tehelka expose. (According to PTI, Mr. Vajpayee said he had spoken of the Government having an "open mind" on the issue, but "open mind does not mean an empty mind".)

Even Mr. Vajpayee's senior colleagues were taken aback by the unusually combative tone; however, when after the House stood adjourned and the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, went over to the Opposition side to exchange pleasantries, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, Congress president, gave an uninhibited expression of her pent-up feelings of resentment.

Earlier, Ms. Gandhi, in her concluding remarks, reiterated that "our demand for a JPC was a legitimate one, was a valid one", and warned that since the Government was unwilling to concede this demand, her party "will continue to agitate the issue both inside and outside the House".

It was earlier left to the Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi, to refer to the ugly disruptions throughout the session, when the Railway budget was passed without dis-

cussion and amid a pandemonium. "I only hope that such a situation of passing the budget without discussion would never recur."

Walkout in RS

The Rajya Sabha was also adjourned *sine die* nearly a fortnight ahead of schedule with the Congress staging a protest walkout ahead of the customary end of the session speeches, which were not as acrimonious as in the Lok Sabha.

Returning after the brief protest, the Leader of Opposition, Dr. Manmohan Singh, said the Congress did not favour curtailment of the budget session which began on February 19. He said the Congress would have preferred a discussion on several issues including widespread corruption in defence, national security concerns, the Railway and the general budget among others.

Dr. Singh said his party had "grave doubts" about the management of education especially "attempts to promote a type of obscurantism rather than building scientific temper". The developments in Central Board of Excise and Customs, and the "casual" manner in which decision were taken in telecom sector, he said lead to doubts about transparency and objectivity in decision-making.

Referring to the Government's decision to push second generation economic reforms, Dr. Singh said there should have been a structured debate. He was also critical of the "casual manner" in which the Government introduced changes in labour laws through the budget without waiting for the report of the Labour Commission.

The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, said the Government shared the anguish of the Leader of the Opposition over the premature adjournment. Mr. Singh, who is the Leader of the House, said he did not wish to either trade charges or assign reasons on who was at fault.

The proceedings in the Lok Sabha, in particular, betrayed the total breakdown of communication and civil manners among the parties. Senior Ministers such as Mr. Advani, Ms. Sushma Swaraj, Mr. Ananth Kumar and Mr. Arun Shourie wore a supercilious look of arrogance and parliamentary insensitivity as the Congress and others staged a walkout on the Tehelka issue.

And as if the bad blood between the BJP and the Congress was not bad enough, the RJD and some others nearly came to blows and it took some efforts on the part of the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, to see to it that the verbal duels did not degenerate into physical assaults.

THE HINDU

28 APR 2001

Parliament adjusts itself to election timetable

By Neena Vyas

HD-1
27/4

NEW DELHI, APRIL 26. The budget session is to be cut short by two weeks and Parliament will be adjourned *sine die* tomorrow. Two separate announcements were made today — in the Rajya Sabha by the chairman, Mr. Krishan Kant, and in the Lok Sabha by the Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi.

The Government was able to "persuade" the Congress on Wednesday night not to push for a third leg of the session after a recess. This was formalised this morning when the Speaker called the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, and the Congress deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, Mr. Madhavrao Scindia, to his chamber.

However, in spite of this "agreement" between the leading party in the ruling coalition and the main Opposition party, the Speaker reportedly told them that he would place the matter before the House. At 2 p.m., Mr. Balayogi told the House that a "general desire" had been expressed by the "leaders of parties and groups" that "the House be adjourned *sine die* on April 27" in view of the Assembly elections in five States, and that the "time lost" could be

made up by "a comparatively longer monsoon session". After the House gave its consent to this proposal, he announced that the Lok Sabha would be adjourned *sine die* tomorrow.

But curiously, well before the announcement in the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha Chairperson announced soon after 12 noon that the House would be adjourned *sine die* on April 27, citing a decision of the Business Advisory Committee of the Upper House.

Though Mr. Balayogi took the precaution and showed the courtesy of consulting the Chairperson and keeping him informed before placing the proposal in the Lok Sabha, he did not know when he went to meet Mr. Krishan Kant that the Rajya Sabha had already announced the adjournment, taking for granted that the Lok Sabha would also agree to adjourn the House similarly.

Several party leaders admitted privately that Parliament may have set a bad precedent by cutting short a crucial budget session on the pretext of Assembly elections which have become a frequent phenomenon and which could be used again to cut short the life of any parliamentary session. This is perhaps the first time

that an Assembly election timetable is not only impinging upon the parliamentary timetable but virtually being allowed to dictate its schedule.

Later, Mr. Jaipal Reddy, Congress spokesperson, placed on record his party's reservations about adjourning Parliament *sine die* but added that in view of "tremendous pressure" from some parties the Congress had decided to leave the matter to the Speaker. Perhaps that was why the party did not oppose the "proposal" put to the House by the Speaker.

Informed sources confirm that the Government had put tremendous pressure — even on the Speaker — to try and push the Finance Bill and other financial business through last week and it wanted the House to be adjourned *sine die* last Friday. In fact, that decision was taken at two meetings chaired by the Prime Minister and attended by senior ministers last week.

However, the Speaker decided to make one more effort to break the impasse on the demand for a joint parliamentary committee on the Tehelka issue. If the Government had its way, Parliament would have adjourned *sine die* on April 20.

THE HINDU

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27 APR 2003

Parliament to be adjourned sine die

5A today 27/4

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 26.— Both Houses of Parliament will be adjourned sine die tomorrow, thus bringing the curtain down on the budget session, leaving a behind a trail of disruptions and adjournments on the Tehelka issue.

In the Lok Sabha, the Speaker, Mr GMC Balayogi informed the House that in deference to a "general desire" of the members in view of the forthcoming Assembly elections "Lok Sabha may adjourn sine die on 27 April 2001". An identical statement was made in the Rajya Sabha by the Chairman, Mr Krishna Kant.

Mr Balayogi informed the Lok Sabha that the time lost due to the early adjournment of the House, may be made up by having a longer monsoon session.

The Congress registered its note of dissent to the Speaker saying it was not in favour of curtailing the duration of the budget session which was to continue till 11 May. However, the Congress left it to the discretion of the Speaker to adjourn the House ahead of schedule.

The Congress had yesterday agreed for a 10-day second recess to allow the members to participate in the election process in states but on the condition that the House would resume its third leg of five working days on 14 May.

According to Mr S Jaipal Reddy, party spokesman, that situation had changed since the government did not agree to run Parliament in the absence of the Prime Minister who would be on a foreign tour in the middle of May. "Hence our note of dissent", Mr Reddy said.

With only a day left before the session ends, the Congress would raise the JPC demand on Tehelka tomorrow to, as Mr Reddy claimed, "clinch the issue".

THE STATESMAN

27 APR 2001

NDA dominates 30-member JPC on stock scam ^{of Parliament}

HD-1
27/4
By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 26. The Government today appointed a Joint Parliamentary committee (JPC) to probe the recent stock market scam. Making the announcement about the JPC in the Lok Sabha, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, said it has been asked to submit the report by the end of the next Parliament session. He also spelt out the terms of reference of the JPC.

The ruling National Democratic Alliance has a majority in the newly set up JPC. Out of a total of 30 MPs nominated to the JPC, 16 are from the NDA including nine from the BJP, six each from the Congress and the People's Front and the remaining two are from the BSP and NCP who could be described as "independents".

For the first time, a nominee of the CPI, a national party, has been omitted. Mr. S.S. Ahluwalia is the only member who had served on the JPC which probed the Harshad Mehta scam in 1992. On both occasions he was a nominee of the ruling party — earlier the Congress and now the BJP.

The JPC has been given six wide-ranging terms of reference which includes suggesting measures to protect small investors who have been the worst affected in the recent stock market crash. The JPC has also been asked to probe recent irregularities and manipulations in the stock market in all their ramifications in all transactions including insider trading, relating to shares and other financial instruments. It would also go into the role of banks,

brokers and promoters, stock exchanges, financial institutions, corporate entities and regulatory authorities and fix responsibility of persons, institutions or authorities in these transactions. It would also suggest deterrent measures against those found guilty of violating the regulations.

The JPC would start functioning from the day it is constituted. It would also identify the misuse, if any, of and failures or inadequacies in the control and supervisory mechanism. The Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi, would nominate one of the members as its chairperson.

The 20 members of the JPC from the Lok Sabha are: Mr. Prakash Mani Tripathi, Mr. V.P. Badnore, Mr. Vijay Goel, Mr. Maheshwar Singh, Mr. Kirit Somaiya, Mr. Kharabela Swain and Mr. Harin Pathak (all BJP) Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar, Ms. Margaret Alva, Mr. Pravin Rashtropal, Mr. S. Jaipal Reddy (all Congress), Mr. Anant Geete (Shiv Sena), Mr. C. Kuppusami (DMK), Mr. Jagannath Mallik (BJD), Mr. Rupchand Pal (CPI-M), Mr. P. H. Pandian (AIADMK), Kunwar Akhilesh Singh (Samajwadi Party), Mr. Prabhunath Singh (Samata Party), Mr. Baliram (BSP) and Mr. K. Yerran Naidu (TDP).

The 10 members named from the Rajya Sabha are: Mr. Ram Das Agarwal and Mr. S. S. Ahluwalia (both BJP), Mr. Nilotpal Basu (CPI-M), Mr. Prem Chand Gupta (RJD), Mr. K. Rahman Khan and Mr. Kapil Sibbal (both Congress), Mr. Praful Patel (NCP), Mr. C. Ramachandraiah (TDP), Mr. Amar Singh (Samjwadi Party) and Mr. C. P. Thirunavukkarasu (DMK).

THE HINDU

27 APR 2001

Stock scam JPC with wide reach

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

J. Parliament 5-1 27/4

New Delhi, April 26: More than a decade after a Big Bull forced Parliament to peep into the furtive world of high finance, the House today named a team to scan another stock market scam involving another Big Bull.

The joint parliamentary committee (JPC) formed today will probe the recent stock scam which swallowed the fortunes of hundreds of investors, stubbed out the budget euphoria and sullied the reputation of some of the biggest players in the field.

The sweeping inquiry will cover the role of banks, brokers, promoters, stock exchanges, financial institutions, corporate entities and regulators. The JPC will fix responsibility of individuals, institutions or authorities in the stock market transactions.

The last time a JPC was set up — in 1992 — was also for probing a stocks scam. If 'Big Bull' Harshad Mehta was the central figure then, big-ticket broker Ketan Parekh, who has been arrested, is

on the hot seat now. Some banks, investment powerhouses and high-profile companies are also under a cloud for ramping up prices of select shares.

The finance ministry had initially resisted the proposal to float the JPC but had to relent today after key ministers made it clear that the government had little choice. A section of the government also felt that the JPC probe would help deflect attention from the Tehelka scandal.

However, the Congress' Jaipal Reddy, a member of the committee, said the terms of reference were so broad that the JPC might spell more trouble for the BJP government than it had bargained for. "Everybody thought Jaipal was being nice and was setting soft terms. But I have seen to it that all corporate financial institutions registered in India can be probed," Reddy said.

This means that public and private financial institutions, banks, stock brokers, merchant bankers and even foreign institutional investors could be investigated.

Reddy said he insisted that the

JPC probe any mode of transaction of securities, not just the sale of shares through the stock market. The JPC could thus end up looking into allegations of manipulations in VSNL share prices or how Balco was sold to a company that is being probed for share-price rigging.

The committee will also identify loopholes in the market supervisory mechanism and suggest safeguards.

BJP MP Kirit Somaiyya, another member of the JPC, has been insisting that foreign institutional investors were involved in hammering down key PSU stock prices to ensure that their stake was sold cheap.

The JPC will draw 20 members from the Lok Sabha and 10 from the Rajya Sabha. The members from the Lok Sabha include, apart from Reddy and Somaiyya, Mani Shankar Aiyar, Margaret Alva, Harin Pathak, and Yerran Naidu, who is expected to be the chairman of the committee.

Those from the Rajya Sabha include S.S. Ahluwalia, Nilotpal Basu, Kapil Sibal and Amar Singh.

THE TELEGRAPH

27 APR 2001

Stung Speaker rings curtain down on toughest session

FROM KAY BENEDICT AND
RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, April 26: Speaker G.M.C. Balayogi is unhappy with the turn of events that cut Parliament short by nearly two weeks just when a semblance of normality was restored to the House.

"This, I think, has been the toughest and most disturbed session in parliamentary history," Balayogi told reporters today. "I am pained."

Observers believe the statement reflects his anxiety on not

just the repeated stalling of the House but the unprecedented passage of the rail budget without a discussion.

Sources said Balayogi is unhappy for several reasons. He had convened an all-party meeting yesterday to decide whether the House should opt for an adjournment or a recess in view of the Assembly elections. The consensus was that there should be a break after which the House should reconvene for five days.

However, parliamentary affairs ministry sources virtually

checkmated the decision by announcing last night that the House would be adjourned *sine die* on April 27 as Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee will be away in Malaysia those five days. Therefore, it would be "improper" for Parliament to meet in his absence.

The government's assertion apparently came after parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan met Congress leaders Manmohan Singh and Madhavrao Scindia separately. They in turn briefed party president Sonia Gandhi, after which the Congress

"reluctantly" agreed to the proposal. The Speaker's secretariat, however, refused to endorse the move to push through a *sine die* adjournment and said they would await a "consensus".

Today, Rajya Sabha chairperson Krishan Kant announced that the business advisory committee had decided that Parliament would be adjourned *sine die* on April 27. The declaration came before the Speaker spoke on the matter and seems to have virtually forced his hand.

The Speaker's announcement,

read out from a written statement, went through substantial amendments. Copies of the original version were released to the press.

"I have to inform the House that at the leaders' meeting held yesterday, the leaders of all parties and groups expressed a desire, in view of the forthcoming Assembly elections in five states, the Lok Sabha may adjourn *sine die* on 27th April, 2001," it said.

"It was also the unanimous view of the leaders that the time lost due to the early adjournment of the House may be made up by

having a compensatingly longer monsoon session. In view of the unanimity on the above proposals, if the House agrees, Lok Sabha may adjourn *sine die* on 27th April, 2001."

The version eventually read out in the Lok Sabha dropped the word "all" from the phrase "leaders of all parties" and substituted the words "unanimous" and "unanimity" with "consensus". A dead

giveaway of the perception that the Congress and the RJD were not happy with abrupt termination of the session.

THE TELEGRAPH

27 APR 2001

Proposal to shut Parliament clouds Tehelka debate fate

Cong wears April Fool hat in House

FROM KAY BENEDICT

New Delhi, April 25: The government is learnt to have persuaded a restive Congress and a reluctant Speaker to accept a proposal to adjourn Parliament *sine die* on April 27, almost a fortnight ahead of schedule.

If the consensus holds, the Speaker will make an official announcement of the adjournment.

By agreeing to the adjournment, the Congress has walked into a trap as it will hardly get any time to discuss a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) on the Tehelka scandal — an issue on which the House was crippled for several days in a row.

The Congress had insisted during the day that it would agree to only a short recess from Friday. The party wanted the House to meet again for five days from May 14 after the Assembly elections.

However, the government late tonight persuaded the Opposition party to switch from "recess" to "adjournment", pointing out that the Prime Minister would be abroad in mid-May.

All that the Opposition managed to get was an assurance that the government would announce tomorrow the setting up of a JPC to probe the stock scam.

Both the Houses have no specific business on Friday, when the Congress can raise the issue of the Tehelka JPC. However, weekend attendance is usually thin as most members leave for their constituencies. This time, fewer MPs are expected because of the elec-

tions in five states, which makes the possibility of a trenchant discussion look remote.

Ever since the Tehelka expose rocked the NDA establishment, the government and the BJP wanted the House to be adjourned. The coalition managers felt that the loss of days could be made good through an extended monsoon session. But Speaker G.M.C. Balayogi sent a clear message that unless there was a consensus, he would not adjourn the House *sine die*.

The Speaker today called on President K.R. Narayanan and briefed him on the impasse and the proposal to adjourn Parliament. Balayogi later convened an all-party meeting on the demand to cut short the budget session.

Barring the BJP, a few allies and the IUMI, most parties, including the Congress, favoured a fortnight's break. The Congress was keen on a five-day session after the recess as it wanted to keep the Tehelka issue alive beyond the Assembly polls.

However, at an "informal" meeting tonight, the Congress "reluctantly" agreed to the adjournment plan. Unless some restive members raise objections, the Congress is expected to inform the Speaker of its rethink.

Parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan told Congress leaders that the Prime Minister would be in Malaysia between May 13 and 18 and it would not be proper to discuss crucial issues in Parliament in his absence.

■ See Page 9

THE TELEGRAPH

26 APR 2001

The parliamentary process

By V. R. Krishna Iyer

Only under the severest provocation does the House set aside its supreme purpose of decision by debate and victory by convincing argument. To do less is to forfeit the raison d'être of Parliament itself.

HD-12
26/4

OUR FOUNDING Fathers wrote into the Constitution a parliamentary system. Parliament is a grand inquest of the nation, the great auditor and ombudsman of the Executive, the final arbiter, policy monitor and destiny designer of the people. The members deliberate, debate and discuss with reasoned arguments, dissect with political lancets, autopsy with accuracy and expose every wrong and crime done to the country's social, economic and cultural autonomy with focus on the betterment of "We, the People of India". The two Houses are the most august institutions representing a billion Indians, with a certain gravity, dignity, solemnity, responsibility and complete commitment to the country's progress. Values of high moment, corruption of shocking dimensions, legislative bills of Constitutional dimension, global issues which affect Bharat Kashmir and other critical problems and treaties claim every hour of the Houses while sitting and transacting serious business. That is Parliament's noble purpose and public trust.

The misdirection and misappropriation of this national time and institutional session is a shock and shame and stultification of the sovereignty of the people by its own surrogates. Only under the severest provocation, facing national insult or attack, does the House set aside its supreme purpose of decision by debate and victory by convincing argument. To do less is to forfeit the *raison d'être* of Parliament itself.

I remember, as member of the Madras Legislative Assembly, participating in orations and perorations in battles of words and blistering replies. But in the early 1950s, with Rajaji as Chief Minister and T. Prakasam as the Leader of the Opposition, we did not convert the House into a noisy wrestling ring. Once, right in the beginning of the first session, there was a walkout when Sri Prakasam protested against the Governor's address. Later, a motion of censure was brought by Rajaji for the contempt of the House by the Opposition's walking-out demonstration. Now the scenario has suffered asphyxiation. The House adjourns, amidst shouts, transacting no business, reassembles, recommences the deafen-

ing scenes and repeats of the same process ensue day after day. What I emphasise is not merely the extra-ordinary waste of public money which is considerable but the insult and humiliation, the shock and shamelessness showered, which make the finest institution of Parliament a limping hostage, defeating the Constitution and disenchanting the vast masses who look for action against corruption and for good administration.

Every proposition of Government can be countered in debate. Every guilty conduct or gaffe of the Ministers can be torn to pieces in the loud transparency of the House. Every rogue, rascal and freebooter in the country, every predator, grabber and swindler from the public exchequer can be, and ought to be, criticised in sharp diction shaking up the nation to what catastrophe and "GATTastrophe," the country is being dragged into. A token walkout may perhaps be understood as a technical protest but hours and days, and season after season, cannot be sacrificed. The Government is really rescued from exposure by this negative locomotion. Argument cannot be substituted by any locomotion. The citizens who are the silent majority in the country are victims of this functional futility unlimited.

Walkout is escapist. Policies there are which betray the nation and its resources. Betrayals there are which surrender our sovereignty and facilitate recolonisation. But these acts and omissions must be brought to light through the great instrument of Parliament. The means that democracy allows are defeat by speech and by demand to dismiss Government by vote inside or people's upheaval through the process of public education, mass mobilisation and, in India, by Gandhian satyagraha or by judicial writ on proof of corruption of Ministers. On the contrary, walkouts facilitate a guilty Government to get through its business after the ballyhoo is over. Many Bills can be passed

without legitimate criticism when the Opposition benches are empty.

Before I conclude, I must here record my appreciation of a measure to arrest corruption. The Minister for Law and Justice, Mr. Arun Jaitley, a sound lawyer, good parliamentarian and efficient Minister, has achieved the limited beginning of seeking and securing approval of the Union Cabinet for the Lok Pal Bill which will cover, I assume, the Prime Minister down to the minions of the state. We need a Lok Pal against party bosses — a lesson from Tehelka and some parties becoming Big Business and Politicos Unincorporated — independent and powerful, fearless and totally free from bias. Kerala, unfortunately, has a curious Lok Ayukta with no *suo motu* jurisdiction which is full of flaws and weakness built-in, so that it is example of frustration of its objective. The Lok Pal Bill, I hope, will appear in the Houses for debate and not for walkout. I impress upon the people of the country, the NGOs, the political parties and social activists to press for the passage of this Bill with wide jurisdiction and effective jurisprudence. A Government can be truly democratic only if its operations can be transparent and ombudsmanic and engineered by a powerful instrumentality.

John Pilger quotes Napoleon Bonaparte under the heading 'A Cultural Chernobyl'. "There is only one thing in this world, and that is to keep acquiring money and more money, power and more power. All the rest is meaningless." Alas, this miasmatic mantra is currently the Indian politicians' dharma. Do you know Romain Rolland reminded us "France fell because there was corruption without indignation". If Parliament is condemned into comatose or bellicose mood constantly, democratic governance becomes a rope of sand. I conclude with a poignant quote. "The conditions which surround us best justify our co-operation; we meet in the midst of a nation brought to the

verge of moral, political and material ruin. Corruption dominates the ballot box, the legislatures, the Congress, and touches even the ermine of the bench" (Populist Party Preamble 1892). Does it ring a bell as we watch our pervasive corruption and democratic mafia nexus with politics?

Perhaps we may add that some of our panchayats belong to the host of polluted institutions. "Among a people generally corrupt liberty cannot long last". (Burke). Our penal code and criminal laws face an open challenge, a threat and unconstitutional intimidation by political parties who dare to denounce debate and unpatriotically assert that Parliament shall not be permitted to work. This is silencing the voice of the representatives of a billion Indians. Is this a crime? A traitor's success? Or a contra-constitutional Opposition reducing the Indian Republic into a deaf, dumb orphan with none to protest, resist or call to order the challenger. Imagine this fate befalling all the courts in country with no judge, no writ, no command or contempt power! Will India survive? This Operation Jettison is terrorism to the nation for which our generation must answer before long.

The Treasury Benches, because of a brute majority cannot deny a JPC. But, it is bizarre to have a judicial commission, a JPC and a criminal investigation (on the Tehelka issue) simultaneously. Their purposes may partly overlap but are different processes. The sooner the criminals are prosecuted the gladder the people will feel that justice has been done. Here we must have a system of independent investigation, independent prosecutors and some Indian Judge Sirica to speed up the trial and convict the guilty politicians. The rule of law is in peril if the law limps, the police shuffle and suffer the dependencia syndrome acting under orders from the Home Ministry, and the judge, day in and day out, calls for case diaries or otherwise interrupts or distorts investigations. The Nixon trial is a lesson for the Indian system. Tehelka is a crime and the court must deal with it. Once before the FIR was sought to be shot down by counsel for the prosecution, the then Law Minister and, alas, the robed gentleman on the Bench. Will Tehelka face such a shame? Quo vadis India?

THE HINDU

26 APR 2001

Accord, discord and uncertainty

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, APRIL 25. Even as the fate of the remainder of the budget session remained uncertain today, the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi, called on the President, Mr. K.R. Narayanan, for about 30 minutes, presumably to brief him on the happenings during the session.

Though the Speaker's visit was described as a "routine courtesy call" it is understood that the recent stalemate in Parliament, its resolution and the continued uncertainty about the length of the session figured prominently during their meeting.

If the Government has its way, the budget session would end as soon as possible, perhaps by Friday, April 27, especially now that the Finance Bill is out of the way. It had offered to add a few days to the monsoon session to make up for the curtailment of this session.

The strategy appeared to be to take a long break to allow people and parties to forget Tehelka altogether, and perhaps to simultaneously "persuade" the Venkataswamy judicial commission to submit its report at the earliest and thus "kill" the idea of a joint parliamentary committee probing the issue. For the record though, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, continued to maintain that the Government had an "open mind" on a JPC.

This is how the drama unfolded. In the morning, the Speaker met the President for 30 minutes. In the afternoon, at a meeting of party leaders called by Mr. Balayogi, the "unanimous" view that emerged was in favour of a break between April 28 and May 13 and a short five-day session from May 14 to 18, contingent upon "the convenience of the Government".

However, by evening it was conveyed by the Government to the Congress and the Speaker that in view of the Prime Minister's trip to Malaysia from May 13 to 16 the dates were not suitable and the session should be adjourned sine die on April 27.

The Prime Minister's visit to Malaysia had been put off because of the Gujarat earthquake. The tour dates were not mentioned at the meeting although those dates had already been fixed.

Another round of discussions and another meeting of party leaders tomorrow is likely to take place. All along, the Government made no secret of the fact that it favoured an abrupt end of the session after the passing of the Finance Bill. But the Speaker was not willing to go with the plan without all parties agreeing to it.

Moreover, now the Government is committed to keeping an "open mind" on setting up a JPC on the Tehelka issue and therefore it may be difficult for it to oppose another leg of the budget session. The Left parties, the Rashtriya Janata Dal and some others also favour a third leg of the session.

Tentatively, tomorrow the Lok Sabha is to be devoted to a discussion on farmers' issues, and the day after to a discussion on the scandal and corruption that has surfaced in the Customs Department with the former chief himself under arrest. The leaders took the view that if the Government was conceding a JPC on the stock market scandal, that issue need not be discussed by Parliament.

The Congress stance was definitely different. For one, its leaders did not oppose the idea of yet another break in the session, and today the party did not raise the Tehelka issue and there was no demand for fixing the dates for a discussion on it; and certainly the modalities of setting up a JPC were not mentioned although at the very outset the Speaker identified two issues as the agenda of the meeting, one of them the modalities for a JPC for Tehelka.

But the meeting focussed on the second subject mentioned by the Speaker — the question of a break in the session as demanded by several MPs. Perhaps it suited the Congress as well as the BJP to keep the Tehelka matter "hanging" during the Assembly election process.

THE HINDU

25 APR 1991

Parliament heads for sine die adjournment

MOHAN SAHAY 26/4
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 25. — Parliament is likely to be adjourned sine die on 27 April. This follows a last-minute communication by the government tonight that it was not possible to resume the budget session after a break of 10 days for the Assembly elections.

Throughout the day there were hectic parleys, including a meeting between the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr GMC Balayogi, and the President, Mr KR Narayanan, over the fate of the budget session.

At the all-party meeting called by the Speaker, it was decided to let Parliament go into a second recess after 27 April. This would allow members to participate in electioneering in four states and a Union territory. The session would resume on 14 May and continue till 18 May.

However, in a late night communication the government informed the Speaker that it was not possible to resume the budget session on 14 May as the Prime Minister would be away on a foreign tour.

Surprisingly, at the all-party meeting the government did not mention that Mr Vajpayee would be out of the country between 14 and 18 May. According to notified schedule, Parliament was to function till 11 May.

Mr Balayogi sought an appointment with the President. The President is understood to have approved of the Speaker's proposal to allow a long break of the current session and then resume it on 14 May.

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(Continued from page 1)

The Congress had agreed to the proposal and even told the Speaker that it would not press for a discussion on its demand for a JPC probe into the Tehelka issue tomorrow.

The demand could be taken up after the break on 14 May, the Congress had concurred at the all-party meeting earlier in the day.

The Congress is likely to ask for an immediate discussion on its JPC probe demand in the Lok Sabha tomorrow itself.

A final decision will be taken at the political affairs committee of the Congress tomorrow morning, a party spokesman said tonight.

THE STATESMAN

25 APR 2001

149-12
WEDNESDAY, APRIL 25, 2001

BREAKING THE DEADLOCK

THE AGREEMENT REACHED to break the parliamentary deadlock engenders two distinct reactions. First, a sense of enormous relief that the crisis — which had virtually paralysed Parliament for around a month and resulted in the travesty of a railway budget being passed by a hurried voice vote — is over. And second, a feeling of utter bewilderment over why such an agreement was not forged much earlier. The substantive elements of the deal struck between the BJP Government and the Congress(I) for the smooth resumption of Parliament were embarrassingly simple — they hardly required protracted negotiations or extensive diplomatic skills, leave alone a 'summit' meeting between the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Congress(I) president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi.

The Government's concession essentially comprised an offer to address with an "open mind" the question of whether a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) should be set up to inquire into the Tehelka tapes expose. This falls well short of the Congress(I)'s relentless demand that the constitution of the JPC is a precondition for its participation in the smooth proceedings of Parliament. But the offer to debate the JPC issue with an "open mind" — in contrast with bland refusals to constitute such a body coupled with mere declarations that it was willing to discuss the Congress(I) demand in Parliament — does represent, at least in a formal sense, a small but significant concession on the part of the Government.

Increasingly isolated within the Opposition ranks and faced with growing criticism that it had taken its strategy of stalling Parliament to unacceptable levels, the Congress(I) had few options but to stage a tactical climb-down. To have been held responsible for stalling the discussion on the Finance Bill

(scheduled to be debated on April 25) and for forcing it to be passed as the railway budget was is something that would have taken the party a long time to live down. In retrospect, the Congress(I) strategy has only served to benefit a Government mortified by the Tehelka expose and deeply embarrassed by a string of other issues such as the stock scam, the telecom controversy and weaver suicides. The tactic of stalling Parliament protractedly had unfortunately resulted in shifting the focus on the tactic itself and away from these and other issues on which the BJP-led Government needs to do a lot of answering.

While it is a welcome thing that both the Government and the Congress(I) climbed down from their obdurate perches, a good part of the credit for breaking the parliamentary deadlock must go to the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi. Having already expressed his extreme unhappiness over the hurried and unseemly manner in which the railway budget was passed, Mr. Balayogi apparently used the moral persuasion of his office (and possibly also some mild threats) to bring the two sides together and effect a breakthrough. The unprecedented paralysis of Parliament over two sessions — which has caused a considerable amount of public revulsion — should serve as a lesson for all political parties in the future. If this experience fails to make them understand that it simply will not do to lower the dignity of Parliament and hold it a hostage to petty politics, then nothing will. The breaking of the parliamentary deadlock represents the end of what is incontestably one of the most shameful episodes in its history. As the nation welcomes the fact that the impasse is over, the political class must also ensure that this never happens again.

THE HINDU

25 APR 2001

Cong smells a kill in PM's 'open mind' on JPC

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 24

THE GOVERNMENT-CONGRESS entente built around the Prime Minister's offer of an "open mind" on a JPC into tehelka may have set the stage for smooth passage of the Finance Bill tomorrow. But neither side has really softened its adversarial stance on the issue.

If anything, both sides are gearing up for the second bout of the tussle. Congress strategists feel the accord brokered under Speaker Balayogi's aegis has put them back into the fight.

The main Opposition just grabbed the "open mind" proposal as it offered new opportunities to pin the Government down on Tehelka. It knows, any move to scuttle a JPC now would make the PM the target of public opprobrium.

It appears in hindsight that the Congress' main interlocutors, Madhavrao Scindia and P R Dasmunshi, already had a road map ready for the party while preparing ground for the Vajpayee-Sonia summit.

Congress circles are already



abuzz with questions that may dominate Act II of Tehelka. "Now that we are back in Parliament, won't people ask why the Government is afraid of a JPC?" a senior leader said.

That the BJP has been resisting the demand is because the

prospective 45-member panel would be dominated by the Opposition. It is also not certain of the quality of support from its NDA partners in the event of such a probe. But more than anything else, the BJP wants to shield Bangaru Laxman and Jaya Jaitley from inquisition by potential JPC members like Scindia, Dasmunshi, Arjun Singh, Jaipal Reddy, Mani Shankar Aiyer or Kapil Sibal.

The Congress gameplan is to put the Treasury on the mat by juxtapositioning these contradictions with the PM's solemn assurance to approach the issue without predilections. "How will Vajpayee reject our demand without appearing unreasonable? Won't he come across as less than a gentleman?" asked a Congress MP. The idea essentially was to exploit the PM's sensitivity about his public image and the BJP's reliance on it.

In giving its offensive a moral clothing, the Congress hopes to at least shine in contrast to the BJP's likely blockage of a JPC on the basis of numbers and procedural wranglings.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

APR 24 2001

Govt, Opp make peace for now

Decks cleared for Budget passage

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 23

IN WHAT could turn out to be a temporary truce, the Government and the Opposition today offered each other leeway to clear the decks for orderly passage of the general Budget on February 25.

It took a meeting between Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Leader of Opposition Sonia Gandhi to break the week long logjam over the Congress' demand for a JPC into the thelka expose.

After day-long, behind-the-scenes bargaining, which saw emissaries rushing to their respective high commands, the warring sides arrived at a "mutually acceptable" arrangement in which the Government clarified that it had an "open mind" on the JPC demand. At the same time, the Congress further diluted its hardline stance by deferring its combative stance until the passage of the Finance Bill.

The formulation, the Opposition party cited to explain this tactical shift, read as follows: "The Prime Minister said the Government would have an open mind on the formation of a JPC on the Tehelka expose and take a final view on this as and when this issue is raised in the Lok Sabha after the passage of the Finance Bill."

The phraseology itself was hammered out in Speaker G M C Balayogi's chambers after the latter had put both sides on notice by stating that he would not preside over House proceed-

ings if the Finance Bill were to meet the Railway Budget's fate.

Even while the Congress latched on to the escape route provided by the Government's "open mind" posturing, the possibility of the Treasury bench acceding to a JPC seemed remote. Such an eventuality was not lost on the principal Opposition party, which, in a statement after the Balayogi-brokered truce, said: "The Congress party will continue to agitate for the JPC after the financial business is concluded."

It also clarified that the Congress' decision to participate in the debate was prompted by "wider national interest." It did not imply any dilution of its demand for a parliamentary probe. Emerging from the Speaker's chambers, the AICC president hoped the Government would respond positively to her party's demand. But there was no such clear-cut signal from the Government. Instead, the ruling side cited reasons why a JPC was impractical. As per the NDA's calculations, the panel would be heavily weighted in favour of the Opposition, with only 21 NDA members to the non-NDA's 24.

Be that as it may, the Lok Sabha Business Advisory Committee will take up tomorrow the date and manner in which the JPC issue would be raised after April 25.

"The Government cannot announce a JPC on its own. Someone has to move a resolution," said Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan.

Parliament condemns BDR atrocities

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 23

PARLIAMENT TODAY condemned the brutal killings of BSF jawans, demanding that New Delhi ensure that Dhaka did not let the guilty BDR personnel go unpunished.

Articulating the nation's outrage, most Members displayed the restraint guiding Indian diplomacy in the face of the unprecedented border provocation. External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh said in both Houses that India had not taken the killings lightly. The Bangladesh Government was investigating the whole affair and "it was now up to the Government of Bangladesh to act against the perpetrators of these crimes and restore confidence and trust."

Instead of training their guns on the Bangladesh regime, headed by a friendly Sheikh Hasina, the Opposition expressed anger at what it said was the Government's intelligence and security failures. While some members were worried about the Vajpayee dispensation's soft and "diplomatic" approach in the matter, others warned that a careless move could create more problems for the country.

In her carefully-worded remarks in the Lok Sabha, Leader of the Opposition Sonia Gandhi wanted the Government to probe possible intelligence failures or lack of vigil on India's part. Sharing the Treasury's anguish, she said acts of "criminal adventurism" should not be allowed to jeopardise New Delhi's close ties with Dhaka.

However, an NDA ally, Mohan Rawale of the Shiv Sena, joined Opposition leaders Mulayam Singh Yadav (Samajwadi Party) and Raghuvansh Prasad (RJD) in accusing the Government of playing with the lives of Indian soldiers.

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 APR 2001

Speaker forces Atal-Sonia House truce

FROM KAY BENEDICT

New Delhi, April 23: Softened by a stream of letters and nudged by the Speaker, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Sonia Gandhi today reached a compromise to break the logjam in Parliament after a tactical somersault by the Congress and a climbdown by the government.

The Congress relented after Vajpayee assured Sonia that the government was open to all options, including setting up of a joint parliamentary committee to probe the Tehelka exposé, after crucial finance Bills were passed. Today's understanding will allow the budget to be passed after discussion.

According to sources, Telugu Desam leader N. Chandrababu Naidu played an indirect role in ending the stalemate. Naidu kept in touch with Speaker G.M.C. Balayogi on a day-to-day basis since the JPC demand paralysed Parliament after it reconvened on April 16. Balayogi, a Desam nominee, expressed his displeasure over the way the railway budget was passed without discussion — an unprecedented step in parliamentary history.

Sources said during his meetings with government representatives, Balayogi threatened to stay away from the House when the general budget was taken up if the government went ahead and passed it without discussions.

The government had been opposing a JPC probe because the arithmetic was against it. If a JPC of 45 MPs were to be set up, 21 would be from the ruling alliance and 24 from the Opposition as the NDA is in a minority in the Rajya Sabha.

Sources said the government could now allow a discussion on a JPC knowing that it can shoot the proposal down in the Lok Sabha, where the NDA is in a majority.

But with the Congress condition of a JPC before it allows any discussion in Parliament holding up some key finance Bills, including the budget, Vajpayee wrote to Sonia late last night seeking her party's cooperation.

Sonia responded immediately.

"I... completely share your concern about the current impasse in Parliament. This year's budget has so many negative aspects that its discussion is not only a constitutional formality but a practical imperative," she said.

Sonia appealed to Vajpayee to reconsider the government's stand and agree to a JPC and take "appropriate initiative for evolving a mutually acceptable solution".

Vajpayee wrote to Sonia again today, appreciating her stand and suggesting that they meet.

Madhavrao Scindia and Priya Ranjan Das Munshi accompanied Sonia for the 20-minute meeting at Balayogi's chambers. Pramod Mahajan assisted Vajpayee.

The Prime Minister later told reporters that Sonia had "responded positively" and said "we still stand for JPC but in the national interest we shall see that the budget is passed". He said the "government will take a final view on the issue (JPC) with an open mind as and when it is raised in the House".

"Where is the question of stalling Parliament when the government has said it has an open mind on JPC?" Sonia said.



Atal, Sonia

THE TELEGRAPH

24 APR 2001

MONDAY, APRIL 23, 2001

UNDERMINING PARLIAMENTARY PROCESS

A RAILWAY BUDGET passed without a hint of discussion and within the space of a stormy few minutes. The possibility of the Finance Bill being passed this week in a similar and just as deplorable a manner. In their blatant disregard for the functioning of Parliament, the country's political class has touched a new low. To have passed a railway budget by a hasty voice vote is to make a mockery of Parliament, the highest policy-making body in the country and the very cornerstone of our democracy. In the circumstances, it is difficult to conceive of what other alternatives there were before the Lok Sabha Speaker given the Constitutional obligation of approving the railway budget within a specific time-frame. Indeed, Mr. G. M. C. Balayogi, who has expressed anguish over the turn of events, was caught between a rock and a hard place. Faced with an obdurate Government which has handled the fallout of the Tehelka expose with a complete lack of candour as well as tact, on the one hand, and confronted with a couple of Opposition parties (the Congress and the Rashtriya Janata Dal) which seem hell-bent on paralysing Parliament at any cost, the Speaker's task, to say the very least, was extremely awkward.

The stalemate, a manifestation of the lack of even a semblance of consensus between the Government and the principal Opposition party, now threatens to affect the manner in which other financial business is dealt with — the most important being the Finance Bill which is scheduled to be passed on April 25. As matters stand, unless the Congress and the RJD are prepared to delink the discussion over the budget from their demands relating to the Tehelka expose, Parliament may suffer the unprecedented ignominy of witnessing the Finance Bill passed by a hasty voice vote and amidst unseemly pandemonium. It is the duty of every political party to ensure

that this does not happen and it is imperative that some kind of agreement is arrived at towards this end. A smoothly functioning Parliament is the sine qua non of democracy and it will be a matter of enormous shame if political expediency continues to prevail over political common sense. Sadly, until now the latter has completely overridden the former.

25A The Congress, which has been demanding the setting up of a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) as a pre-condition for permitting Parliament to function, has altered track somewhat. Having maintained that any debate on the Tehelka expose must follow the setting up of a JPC, it has given a notice for discussion (which includes voting) in the Rajya Sabha where the Opposition enjoys a clear majority. The move is clearly aimed at embarrassing or exposing the BJP-led Government which would prefer to discuss the Tehelka expose in the Lok Sabha, where it has a larger number of MPs. It is a game of numbers, another illustration of the hypocrisy and opportunism which has characterised the manner in which both sides have dealt with the Tehelka tapes issue. The Tehelka expose has raised a number of important issues but the question now is whether the smooth functioning of Parliament should continue to be disrupted because of it. The demand for the constitution of a JPC, given the persistence with which the Opposition has sought it, is something that deserves to be debated, in both the lower and the upper Houses though with setting up of a commission of enquiry the demand has lost some of its force. But the important thing now is to ensure that Parliament — the proceedings of which have been stalled for an extraordinary long and painful period — is no longer held hostage to short-sighted and opportunistic party politics.

THE HINDU

23 APR 2001

Budget: PM writes to Sonia

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, APRIL 22. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, is believed to have made a last minute appeal to Ms. Sonia Gandhi, Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, to allow the budget process to be debated and voted in a normal manner.

In a communication to Ms. Gandhi late this evening, the Prime Minister suggested that both the Government and the Opposition had a constitutional obligation to pass the budget, and that the Opposition could continue to make its protest without disrupting the proceedings.

After the railway budget was passed last Friday amidst slogan-shouting, sober elements within the ruling party and the Opposition have been trying to impress upon the hardliners that a way must be found to conduct parliamentary business in a decent and civilized manner. The Prime Minister's appeal is intended to help the Congress and its leadership find an excuse not to disrupt the Lok Sabha on April 23 when the union budget will be taken up for consideration and voting. The Prime Minister's communication would be considered by the Con-

gress's political affairs committee on Monday morning.

Earlier in the day, the Congress Working Committee member, Mr. Natwar Singh, demanded that the Prime Minister make a statement in the two Houses on the developments on the India-Bangladesh border.

The Congress leader let it be known that the party would listen respectfully to the Prime Minister, and that it would want the Leader of Opposition to be heard in the matter. This willingness to have an undisturbed discussion is a departure from the otherwise unrelenting insistence on a JPC before the Lok Sabha could be allowed to conduct any business.

In his letter, the Prime Minister has tried to strike a conciliatory tone, invoking the institutional prestige and dignity of Parliament and the obligation of the political parties to see to it that the people were not deprived to their right to an orderly parliamentary process.

The late night communication should help the Congress find a way to keep up its demand without disrupting the Lok Sabha proceedings. The Speaker is also believed to be of the view that the Government should not be un-

reasonably adamant, but the Opposition too has to give him some elbow room to protect the prestige and dignity of the House.

Speaker upset over deadlock

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 22. Yet another bid to resolve the Parliamentary deadlock is expected to be made tomorrow by the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi. Upset at the idea of having to possibly preside over a disorderly House during the passing of the union budget scheduled for Wednesday, he telephonically contacted the Congress as well as some in the Government today.

Tomorrow morning, he may call senior leaders from both sides to express his strong views against the continued deadlock — and the heat may not be only on the Opposition. Apparently, what is worrying him is that this budget session could set a wrong precedent for the future.

It is indicated that he is not savouring the idea that he would be in the chair when the budget may be passed without a discussion and without even a proper vote.

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Govt pushes through Rly Budget

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 20 *J. Parikh*

THE LOK Sabha today made history of sorts, passing the Railway Budget by a voice vote in a record five minutes.

There were strong protests from the Congress, which still insisted on a JPC probe before it would allow a debate on the Budget.

The Speaker, G. M. C. Balayogi, sought a voicevote on the Railway Budget as the House reassembled after lunch. RJD, RSP and some Left MPs joined agitated Congress members who rushed to the well. The few Samajwadi Party members present in the House also stood up to register their protest.

Balayogi ruled that it was impossible to hold a debate and allow cut motions under the circumstances, drawing loud protests from Opposition benches.

Madhavrao Scindia (Congress) said the Government had not acted in a democratic way in not responding positively to his party's demand for a JPC probe.

The former Union Minister felt that a parliamentary forum should function on the basis of a give-and-take relationship between the Government and the Opposition. There could be no space for an absolute use of power. He said JPCs have been formed in the past when Parliament was not in session.

Scindia clarified that the Congress was in favour of a detailed discussion on the Railway Budget. "But we strongly believe that the parliamentary forum is essentially a give-and-take mechanism," he reiterated.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan said he appreciated the spirit of give-and-take, but the Congress's actions reflected only a "take-and-take" policy. "The give-and-take-policy does not mean that either you give JPC or we will paralyse the House," he said.

Mahajan said the Government was bound by the Constitution to pass the General and Railway budgets before April 25. "Let us fulfill our obligations. The Congress can continue its agitation after that," he suggested.

The Congress later told journalists that the day would go down as a "black day" in the country's history of parliamentary democracy.

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 APR 2001

প্রয়োজনে বিতর্ক ছাড়াই বাজেট পাশ জেপিসি নিয়ে কংগ্রেস চায় স্পিকারের আশ্বাস

স্টাফ রিপোর্টার, নয়াদিল্লি, ১৯ এপ্রিল— তহলকা নিয়ে বাজেটের উপর সরকারের আস্থা থাকলেও কংগ্রেস আজ তাদের সুর বেশ কিছুটা নরম করেছে। তহলকা-অভিযুক্তদের বিরুদ্ধে আইনানুগ ব্যবস্থা নেওয়ার দাবি থেকে কংগ্রেস সরে এসেছে। তারা এখন বলছে, স্পিকার যদি জে পি সি-র দাবি বিবেচনার আশ্বাস দেন, তা হলেই তারা সংসদ চলতে দেবে। সরকার অবশ্য তাদের অবস্থানে অনড় থেকে জানিয়েছে, কোনও শর্ত তারা মানতে রাজি নয়। প্রয়োজনে কোনও আলোচনা ছাড়াই তারা বাজেট পাশ করবেন। তবে কাল সরকার কংগ্রেসের দাবি মানতে রাজি হলে অচলাবস্থা কাটতে পারে।

স্পিকারের ডাকা বিজনেস অ্যাডভাইসারি কমিটির বৈঠকে ঠিক হয়েছে, আগামিকাল রেল বাজেট পাশ করানো হবে। সোমবার এবং মঙ্গলবার বিভিন্ন মন্ত্রকের বায় বরাদ্দের দাবি এবং বুধবার সাধারণ বাজেট ও অর্ধবিল পাশ করানো হবে। সরকারি সূত্রের খবর, কংগ্রেস হাইচই করলে আলোচনা ছাড়াই বাজেট পাশ করানো হবে। আলোচনা না-করে বাজেট পাশের পুরো দায় তাদের উপর পড়ছে দেখে, কংগ্রেস আজ প্রথমে স্পিকারের উপর চাপ দেওয়ার কৌশল নেয়। বাজেট পাশের সূচি মেনে নিয়েও কংগ্রেস মুখপাত্র জয়পাল রেড্ডি বলেন, “সরকার নিরপেক্ষ আশ্বাসের ভূমিকা থেকে স্পিকারকে সরিয়ে আনতে চাইছে। কিন্তু আমরা জানি স্পিকার তা হতে দেবেন না। তিনি এই ভাবে বাজেট পাশ করতে দেবেন না।” কিন্তু ক্রমশ তারা একেবারে কোণঠাসা হয়ে পড়ছে বুকে রাতে জয়পাল সুর নরম করে বলেন, স্পিকার যদি জে পি সি নিয়ে নির্দিষ্ট আশ্বাস দেন তা হলে কংগ্রেস সহযোগিতা করতে প্রস্তুত।

সাধারণত বিস্তারিত আলোচনার পরই রেল বাজেট ও সাধারণ বাজেট পাশ করা হয়। আলোচনা ছাড়া পাশ করার অর্থ বাজেটকে পুরোপুরি মেনে নেওয়া। গত কাল স্পিকারের ডাকা সর্বদলীয় বৈঠকে বাম দলগুলি আলোচনা ছাড়াই বাজেট পাশের ব্যাপারে কোনও আপত্তি করেনি। কিন্তু তাতে তাদের অন্তর্ভুক্তির অবস্থায় পড়তে হবে বুকে, আজ মত বদলে লোকমোর্চার বিধি দিয়ে বলেছে, তারা আলোচনা ছাড়া বাজেট ও রেলবাজেট পাশের বিরোধী। আলোচনা ছাড়া বাজেট পাশ হলে তার দায় সরকার এবং কংগ্রেসের। সরকার আগেই জানিয়েছে, তারা আলোচনা করেই বাজেট পাশ করতে চায়। কিন্তু নিয়মানুযায়ী, ২৬ এপ্রিলের মধ্যে লোকসভায় বাজেট পাশ করিয়ে রাজ্যসভায় পাঠাতে হবে। কংগ্রেস যে হেতু সংসদ অচল করে রাখছে তাই আলোচনা না-করেই পাশ করতে হবে। না-হলে

সাংবিধানিক অচলাবস্থা দেখা দেবে।

এই অবস্থায় আলোচনা না-করেই বাজেট পাশের দায় পুরোপুরি কংগ্রেসের উপরেই এসে পড়ছে। সরকারি তরফ থেকে আজ কংগ্রেসকে এই প্রস্তাবও পাঠানো হয়েছিল যে, বাজেট-আলোচনার জন্য তারা সংসদ চালু রাখুক। বাজেট পাশ হয়ে গেলে তারা অব্যবহৃত তহলকা প্রস্তুত রাখুক। কিন্তু তাতেও কংগ্রেস রাজি হয়নি। তাদের বক্তব্য, সরকার জে পি সি মেনে নিক। তা হলেই সংসদ চলবে। কংগ্রেসের বক্তব্য, জে পি সি না মানলে বুঝতে হবে যে, সরকারই সংসদ চালাতে দিতে চায় না। এ ক্ষেত্রে বি জে পি-র প্রশ্ন, “আমরা যখন জে পি সি করতে চেয়ে কংগ্রেসকে প্রস্তাব দিয়েছিলাম, তখন কেন তারা রাজি হয়নি।” এর কোনও যুক্তিগ্রহণ্য জবাবও কংগ্রেস দিতে পারছে না। সে জন্যই তারা নরম হয়ে বলছে, অন্তত স্পিকার জে পি সি মানার প্রতিশ্রুতি দিন। তা হলেই কাল তারা সংসদ চলতে দেবে।

এ দিকে, এত দিন চূপচাপ থাকার পর তেলুগু দেশমের নেতা চন্দ্রবাবু নাইডু আজ বলেছেন, কংগ্রেস যে জে পি সি-র দাবি জানাচ্ছে, তা অগণতান্ত্রিক। আগে সংসদে আলোচনা হোক, তার পর যে কোনও সিদ্ধান্ত নেওয়া যেতে পারে। কিন্তু কোনও বকম আলোচনা হওয়ার আগেই কংগ্রেস কিছু নেতাকে কাঠগড়ায় দাঁড় করাতে চাইছে। তেলুগু দেশম পাশে দাঁড়ানোর বি জে পি-র শরিক বা সহযোগী দলগুলিকে নিয়ে আর চিন্তা থাকল না। ফলে তারা আরও কঠোর হয়েছে। দলের পক্ষ থেকে বলা হয়েছে, জে পি সি-র দাবি নিয়ে কোনও প্রতিশ্রুতি দিতেও তারা নারাজ।

তবে ভবিষ্যতের কথা ভেবেই বাজেট পাশ করানো নিয়ে যাতে কোনও অশ্রীতিকর অবস্থা এল্লং তিক্ততার সৃষ্টি না-হয় সে জন্য সরকার সচেষ্ট। কারণ, রাজ্যসভায় বিরোধীদের সংখ্যাধিক আছে। তারা সব বিল আটকে দিলে, বড় ধরনের সমস্যায় পড়বে সরকার। সে জন্যই তারা কংগ্রেসকে অনুরোধ করেছে, তারা যেন বাজেট পাশে খুব বেশি বাধা না-দেয় এবং সাংবিধানিক সঙ্কট হতে পারে বুঝেই বাজেট পাশ করাতে সাহায্য করে। আর কংগ্রেস প্রমাণ করতে চাইছে অচলাবস্থার জন্য সরকারই দায়ী। তাদের বক্তব্য, যে প্রস্তাব সরকার দিয়েছিল, এখন সেই জে পি সি-র দাবি তারা মানছে না কেন? মানলে হুঁসা এত দূর গড়াত না। এই অবস্থায় স্পিকার বাসযোগী আজ প্রথমে সনিয়া গান্ধী ও পরে কেন্দ্রীয় সংসদবিষয়কমন্ত্রী প্রমোদ মহাজনের সঙ্গে বৈঠকেও বসেন। কিন্তু দু'পক্ষই জে পি সি নিয়ে তাদের অবস্থানে অনড় থাকায় সমাধানসূত্র পাওয়া যায়নি।

20 APR 2001

'Accord' on passing budgets

ND-1 20/4 By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, APRIL 19. The Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Mr. G.M. Balayogi, today took the initiative to bring some order to the chaos that has been Parliament by convening a meeting of the Business Advisory Committee and getting at least a timetable agreed upon for the passing of the all-important financial business before Parliament, including the Finance Bill, instead of bulldozing the budget through as suggested by the Government. The "agreement" in the BAC was limited to the business agenda for the next few days — the Railway Budget to be passed tomorrow (April 20), discussion on the Rural Development Ministry on April 23, discussion on Disinvestment on April 24 followed by applying the guillotine to the grants pertaining to all other ministries, and the Finance Bill to be discussed and passed on April 25. Thus at least a semblance of decorum has been maintained. But the possibility of all this happening peacefully and in an orderly fashion seems remote even though all parties across the political spectrum agreed that forcibly passing the budget through the Lok Sabha amid din and chaos would be a "black day" for Parliament and Indian democracy.

The agreement ended there. The Congress blamed the Government for not conceding a joint parliamentary committee into the Tehelka affair, a most reasonable demand, to create the right atmosphere for the proper functioning of Parliament, and the Government continued to take the position that the Congress alone would be responsible for any disorder during the passing of the budget, and that there was no question of agreeing to a JPC.

Earlier, the Speaker reportedly rejected the Gov-

ernment's suggestion that he himself finalise the business agenda and begin pushing through the urgent financial business from today. Instead, the Speaker made the effort to try and end the persisting deadlock in Parliament by first calling the Leader of the Opposition, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, for a 15-minute meeting around noon.

He then convened a BAC at 5 p.m. He also had a meeting with the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan. Ms. Gandhi is believed to have said that her party had been most reasonable in dropping all demands except a JPC, which the Government had itself offered earlier. And it was for the Government to accept it in the interests of democracy and the smooth functioning of Parliament.

However, it seems that the Government continued to be as unyielding on the Opposition demand for a JPC on Tehelka as the Congress was insistent, both saying that the responsibility for the peaceful passing of the budget lay with the other.

After the BAC drew up the "time-table" the Congress representative, Mr. Madhavrao Scindia, reportedly said that he hoped even at this late stage the Government would display "wisdom" and create the atmosphere in which the budget could be discussed meaningfully and passed peacefully. The Congress view was that the demand for a JPC could by no stretch of imagination be termed as unreasonable.

At the end of the day, Mr. Mahajan appealed to the Congress to "postpone" its JPC agitation for "just four or five days," help pass the important financial business, which was also a constitutional obligation, and go back to its agitation if it wants to. In short, he appealed to the Opposition party to "delink" the Budget from the Tehelka business.

20 APR 2001

Speaker faces tough task over adjourning House

CL MANOJ
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 19. — With the government and the main Opposition sticking to their demand of a JPC probe into the Tehelka expose, it's now up to the Speaker to decide on the question of adjourning the session sine die after passing the budget without discussions.

But many including former Lok Sabha Speakers and experts on Parliamentary proceedings feel the choice before the Speaker is not easy. It seems the Speaker's choice is bound to lead to another round of debate, if not controversy. They also sharply differ on the method of passing the railway and general budgets without a proper discussion. But for the

finance minister this front has the "potential" to score a rare "hat-trick".

Congress spokesman, Mr Jaipal Reddy, was not off the mark when he said never in the history of independent India has a Speaker used his discretionary powers on adjourning the session prematurely without arriving at a consensus across the board.

"The Congress is opposed to passing the budget without discussions and adjourning the session sine die. Without the support of the main Opposition there cannot be a consensus on the matter," he said.

The BJP's Prof Vijay Kumar Malhotra, however, strongly "suggests" the opposite since the Congress' "obstructive methods have left us with no other options".

When contacted the former non-Congress Lok Sabha speaker, Mr Rabi Ray, was emphatic in his opposition to both passing the budget without discussions and adjourning the session sine die.

"Though it's well within the discretionary powers of the Speaker to decide on the adjournment of session, it has to have the backing of an all-party consensus, and it is the convention. If a decision is taken without taking the main Opposition into confidence, it will be both a departure from tradition, setting a new precedent with far-reaching impact. In the given situation, the Speaker has to relentlessly pursue a consensus no matter how hazardous and hopeless the course may appear."

THE STATESMAN

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PM not allowed to make statement on GSLV in RS

NEW DELHI, APRIL 19. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today beat a hasty retreat on his decision to make a congratulatory statement on the GSLV launch in Rajya Sabha after the Congress said it would not allow him to speak after question hour. Soon after the House met, the Chairman, Mr. Krishan Kant, said he would make way for Mr. Vajpayee to make statement on the GSLV launch as the former had given notice for the same after question hour.

Interrupting, the Congress member, Mr. Suresh Pachauri, said it would be sufficient if Mr. Kant made the GSLV statement if Mr. Vajpayee was not permitted to do so during question time.

Sensing the mood, Mr. Vajpayee said Kant could make the statement as his voice was the voice of the entire House. "Aapke awaaz ham sab ki awaaz hai," the Prime Minister said.

Lauding the efforts of the Indian space scientists in making the GSLV launch successful, Mr. Kant said they had done the entire nation proud.

Mr. Vajpayee termed the launch as a "new land-

mark" in India's space achievements. "GSLV is the most technologically challenging mission undertaken so far by the ISRO," Vajpayee told the Lok Sabha amid thumping of desks.

He said the GSLV, once commissioned into regular service, would provide the country with the capability to launch INSAT-type of communication satellites into 36,000 km high orbit.

Lauding the efforts of ISRO, the Prime Minister said the successful accomplishment of GSLV mission was the culmination of a decade of efforts.

Leader of the opposition, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, said the successful launch of GSLV was the achievement of a comprehensive plan thrown up by previous governments, sparking mild protests from the treasury benches. She said it was during Indira Gandhi's time that the first satellite launch vehicle was put into operation which was followed by polar satellite launch vehicle. "This programme stands fulfilled," she said while congratulating scientists and technicians who made this possible. —PTI

THE HINDU

20 APR 2001

Impasse in Parliament

By Rajeev Dhavan

It is a disservice to democratic governance to bring Parliament to a grinding halt, paralyse its working and hold it to ransom unless demands, however justified, are met.

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27/9

HERE IS an impasse in Parliament. The Tehelka exposure revealed rampant corruption in defence deals. The trail spread in many different directions. Virtually everybody who was anybody was implicated. The Prime Minister's Office has spread its wings. Leaders of political parties behaved like *extra-constitutional authorities* — ready to corrupt even the most sensitive military deals for a price. Was the RSS running the country? As scandals go, it went beyond the arms deal scandal of 1987 in which the then Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, was alleged to be involved. The Tehelka crisis was certainly one over which the Government could legitimately be called upon to resign. A self-respecting Government would have volunteered to do so. Even the acceptance of Mr. George Fernandes' resignation was forced by Ms. Mamata Banerjee pulling out of the Government. Since survival in power is more important than constitutional dharma, the BJP and its allies had their backs to the wall. They knew they were protected by brute majorities. The ruling NDA coalition had 291 seats out of an effective strength of 541 and with a halfway mark of 271. Eyes were turned towards Mr. Chandrababu Naidu. His Telugu Desam Party (TDP) had 29 MPs. If Mr. Naidu held firm, the Government would win the vote but be faced with a monumental embarrassment. But, the politics of moral embarrassment has little or no place in India's politics. Shame has been put on the backburner. But this was a grand opportunity to bring the Government to its electoral knees.

It is at this point that the Opposition decided to paralyse the working of Parliament to raise the stakes of political embarrassment. The course of action was to paralyse Parliament's working altogether. On March 13, 2001, the Congress(I) raised the demand that the Government should quit. On that date there was a debate taking place on farmers in the Lok Sabha. Around 5.30 p.m., the Congress(I) and other Opposition members stormed into the House. The usual slanging match, which was unworthy of parliamentary proceedings, took place. The experienced Mr. Pandian who was in the Speaker's chair adjourned the House. In the days that followed, the working of Parliament was

wholly disrupted. The Government both bared its teeth and looked for an escape clause. The Opposition was challenged to table a non-confidence motion which, through Mr. Naidu's grace, the Government was bound to win. This challenge was declined by the Opposition. But an escape route was also evolved. On March 13, the BJP spokesperson declared its preparedness for debate. Without accepting the indictment of failure of governance,

action was promised. On March 15, Mr. Fernandes resigned. In an astute move, a Commission of Inquiry was ordered. But, the Opposition was relentless. The budget session came to a grinding halt.

By mid-April, the Congress(I) seemed to take the view that it would not call for the resignation of the Government during the second part of the budget session (which started on April 16). But, the impasse was not broken. Extensive meetings on April 16 did not resolve the issue. The Left parties decided to debate the issue in Parliament. Hoist on its own petard, the Congress(I) now insisted that it would allow peaceful functioning of Parliament provided (a) a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) probed the Tehelka issue and (b) action, presumably prosecutorial, was promised against the persons whose conduct had been revealed by the Tehelka tapes. The Government had little difficulty in ridiculing this demand of 'action first, debate later'. What was the function of Parliament if action was to precede debate under threat of disruption?

Is this really the way in which Parliament should function? Parliament occupies a special place in democratic governance? India's legislatures constantly operate under the threat of physical disruption. Vivid images of the failure of representative democracy were flashed throughout the world when the Uttar Pra-

desh legislature was physically torn apart amidst injuries to legislators. Microphones were used as weapons. In January 2001, the Governor of West Bengal walked home after Opposition legislators threw paper missiles and disrupted proceedings. No Parliament can function in this way. Debates in the Indian Parliament on statutes are of abysmally low quality even if the new committee system in Parliament continues to provide some scrutiny to Bills

LAW AND SOCIETY

sent to Committees. Parliamentary debates cannot become a spectator sport. In the BALCO crisis, the Rajya Sabha was legitimately forced on March 12, 2001, to accept amendments to the vote of thanks. Such a manoeuvre is a legitimate parliamentary procedure used in 1980 over the dissolution of the Assemblies and in 1989 over several matters.

There can be circumstances which countenance disruption where the Government may use brute majorities to deny debate, declare an Emergency or pass draconian laws without discussion. But, for the Opposition to threaten parliamentary paralysis unless its demands for resignation or for a JPC are met defies the very basis on which the parliamentary system works. The Opposition cannot rule by ransom. It can argue, threaten public disaffection, cajole, reason, embarrass, debate and inflict defeat on the Government in Parliament. But, it cannot stop Parliament's working. This trend has gone on too long, and has culminated in the present crisis. Nothing good will come out of it. The NDA Government's gameplan is to secure the passing of the budget by a voice vote on April 23 and curtail the rest of the session — no doubt also to ease political pressure in the coming elections in five States and turn round the moral advantage. But, where does all this take us? The simple answer is nowhere. Passing a budget by voice vote is a parliamentary travesty.

The substantive issues are important. The demand for the resignation of the Government cannot be made lightly. What would the alternative be? As long as Mr. Naidu and the rest of the allies support the Government, an alternative coalition is not possible. A minority Government would be more paralysed than this Government is in the present crisis. If the idea is to force a general election, the mood and the moment elude consensus and it will anger the electorate.

The demand for a JPC requires a debate. Before 1921, the British Parliament used to inquire into crises through Parliamentary Committees. But, after the Marconi scandal revealing political interference in such probes, the new style Commission of Inquiry procedure was created in England in 1921; and, perforce, in India, effectively since 1952. It is not impossible for both inquiries to take place at the same time. But, what would be the point? Would a JPC be more effective? It should not be overlooked that in the Bofors crisis, the Congress(I) preferred a politically manageable JPC to a Commission of Inquiry. Today, the report of the JPC on Bofors makes embarrassing reading in ways that undermine not just the credibility of that report, but also of using a JPC for investigating defence and corruption issues. This is not to suggest that only Commissions are effective and JPCs are passe. But, the reason for the request for a JPC is not to get an effective probe, but to continuously target the Government. Such a decision requires a debate.

A connected demand relates to demanding prosecutorial action against those allegedly exposed by the Tehelka tapes. But, no Opposition can dictate the terms of prosecution in this manner. Prosecution and trial by politics cannot obviate the rule of law.

The real reason for stalling Parliament is to enlarge and precipitate the continuance of the crisis. It is a disservice to democratic governance to bring Parliament to a grinding halt, paralyse its working and hold it to ransom unless demands, however justified, are met. If the institutions of democracy fail, democracy itself will fail. It is not enough to hold periodic elections. The institutions for which elections take place must work effectively.

THE HINDU

20 APR 2001

CONG. KEEPS UP 'JPC' CHANT; NO WAY, SAYS GOVT.

Speaker caught in crossfire

By Neena Vyas

J. Parliament

NEW DELHI, APRIL 18. As the war of nerves between the Congress and the Bharatiya Janata Party escalated today, there was no certainty about what may happen in Parliament tomorrow or the day after, or even whether Parliament would complete the rest of the budget session till May 11 or if the session's span would be cut short.

While the Congress stuck to its position that it would not budge from its "most reasonable demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee" going into the Tehelka scandal, the BJP virtually threatened to "push through" the Finance Bill forcibly on Friday, April 20 and then get the House adjourned *sine die* only to meet for the monsoon session in July. The Government has virtually withdrawn its earlier offer of "any type of inquiry the Opposition wanted".

After the Houses adjourned for the day, the Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi, made one more valiant effort to make the warring parties see sense. At a meeting of party leaders, he asked them to coolly reconsider what their obstinacy was leading to, and come back tomorrow. He is expected to wait at least until tomorrow to see if there is a change of stance before deciding on anything drastic.

It appears the Speaker is not enamoured of either option the BJP has placed before him. The Congress absolutely unavoidable, and may not



like to push through the budget tomorrow or the day after. The key problem has been created by the Government refusing to consider a JPC into the Tehelka disclosures — Mr. Pramod Mahajan, Parliamentary Affairs Minister, was reported to have said at the meeting that he "did not have an open mind" on this issue at all, provoking some other leaders to suggest that he learn to keep an open mind. Instead, he offered a JPC on the stock market scandal. He also said a JPC could not be considered on the Tehelka issue as a judicial commission had already been set up.

But the view of some Opposition parties was that the Government could always do it (presumably by winding up the judicial commission) or that the judicial commission and the JPC could work simultaneously, a view articulated by Mr. Madhavrao Scindia, who represented the Congress at the Speaker's meeting. Mr. Scindia was also critical of the "limited terms of reference" of the judicial commission, which could only mean a whitewash of

the entire sordid affair. Mr. Scindia emphasised that the Congress had "reconsidered" its earlier stand and shown "reasonableness" by demanding a JPC, which the Government had itself offered. This had been done "in the interest of smooth functioning of Parliament" and the onus was now on the Government. Previous Congress governments had conceded JPCs without a debate, as after the Harshad Mehta scam. (It was obvious that no JPC would ever be conceded if it was to be decided on the basis of consensus or majority view as all governments have a majority.)

The Congress found support in the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Indian Union Muslim League. The RJD pointed out that often the Government had meted out punishment first (Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav had been arrested and put jailed before being found guilty of any offence) before completing investigations.

BJP issues whip

At a briefing before the Speaker's meeting, the BJP spokesperson, Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra, lashed out at the Congress for obstructing the functioning of the House and said that there were only two options before the Government — suspend the Congress MPs and pass the budget in an orderly fashion, or push the budget through forcibly in the next few days and adjourn the House *sine die*. A two-line whip has been issued by the party to all MPs for April 19, 20 and 23 — suggesting that the party may like to push through the Finance Bill latest by Monday.

Although it was obvious that both suspending members and adjourning the House *sine die* were the Speaker's prerogatives, Mr. Malhotra did not shy away from presuming that the Speaker would go along. Another factor that has distracted from the main issue on hand is the impatience some parties have demonstrated with the budget session which is preventing them from paying attention to the campaign needs of the Assembly elections.

The Samajwadi Party and the Left want another recess till May 10, a suggestion already rejected by the Congress. And the Government view is that the House need not meet till July once the Finance Bill is through.

THE HINDU

Oppn snubs Cong, agrees to discuss Tehelka findings

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 17 APRIL

THE CONGRESS party's isolation from the Opposition ranks was complete on Tuesday, when the non-Congress Opposition broke ranks and agreed to a discussion on the Tehelka issue in Parliament. Almost every non-Congress Opposition party — including the Left parties, Samajwadi Party, Bahujan Samaj Party and even Congress ally RJD — spent the day assuring the nation of their determination to get back into legislative business. Political parties privately admitted that they were responding to a growing popular disenchantment with political antics in the House. They also said the government's response was inadequate.

The Congress, which was clearly on the defensive by the end of the day, blamed the government for the continued disruption of Parliament.

The government got support from unexpected quarters — the rest of the Opposition. They said parliamentary practise demanded a discussion and the decision on JPC can flow out of this debate.

An emboldened Prime

Minister charged the Congress with disrupting the normal functioning of the Parliament and charged the party with scant respect for democratic traditions. "All parties were in favour of smooth proceedings of Parliament except Congress, which continued to place demands and thus obstruct the functioning of the house. This was not parliamentary or proper," the PM said at a meeting of BJP MPs.

The Opposition also put on record their opposition to the Congress' position. Ms Mayawati, trying to steer a fresh path for her-

self and her party, said the BSP favoured a parliamentary debate on the Tehelka issue and would abide by the consensus decision regarding the outcome. "For the good of the nation, Parliament needs to function," she said on Tuesday.

The Opposition's message seemed loud and clear: They did not want to make Sonia's troubles the centrepiece of their political strategy. They would rather conserve their energies for tackling the government on the Tehelka issue. On Monday, the BAC meeting, convened to arrive at an

understanding regarding the running of the House, found itself deadlocked with the Congress completely focused on the alleged CBI investigation against Sonia Gandhi. G.M.C. Balayogi, clearly losing patience with the Congress, was heard saying: "How many days you want to disturb the House? We have already lost many

Cabinet clears Lokpal Bill

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 17 APRIL

IN AN attempt to take the sting out of the Opposition's campaign against the government, the Union Cabinet cleared the Lokpal Bill on Tuesday to check corruption in high places. The Bill brings the Prime Minister and members of Parliament within its ambit.

The Union Cabinet, which met on Tuesday evening, spent over an hour fine-tuning the Bill. Although a section of the Cabinet opposed the move to bring MPs under its ambit, the overwhelming opinion was that the law-makers should also be subject to the same law.

With demands for ensuring probity in public life ruling political discourse in the country, the government's move is aimed at securing a little bit of that platform, which the government lost so comprehensively during the tehelka scandal.

~~The Economic Times~~

The Economic Times

18 APR 2001

Tehelka tapes issue stalls session again

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: A sedate and encouraging hour's start, with a purposeful Question Hour, only to plunge into the familiar and ugly chaos of last month was the story in both Houses of Parliament on Tuesday.

It appears the opposition, particularly Sonia Gandhi's Congress, has decided to let Question Hour be as it should, but hold the rest of the agenda hostage to the government's agreeing to a probe into the Tehelka tapes scandal by a joint parliamentary committee (JPC) of both Houses, as well as one by the normal law and order machinery. The ruling coalition will have none of this prior to a general discussion, which it says it welcomes. The JPC was rejected by the opposition when offered as the scandal broke and three separate official inquiries are now on. To have a fourth probe makes no sense, the government held.

The Congress says a JPC was never offered in any seriousness and the three official inquiries — one by the Army, one by the defence ministry and one by a retired Supreme Court judge — are designed to achieve nothing substantial. In the Lok Sabha, deputy leader of the Congress Madhavrao Scindia stressed that the terms of reference of the judicial inquiry are very limited and even includes one on an investigation into the investigators.

The government stand was first made clear in the Rajya Sabha (where the government is in a minority, unlike in the Lok Sabha), by leader of the House Jaswant Singh, currently both the defence and external affairs minister. He made the point about the JPC and full discussion having been rejected when the

government first offered it, forcing it to go ahead with its three separate probes, which have already begun. Having a JPC at this juncture will achieve nothing; it may also mean a stymying of military armament purchases, Jaswant Singh said.

Nevertheless, he said, the government welcomed a proper debate on the matter. Let's have that and see what emerges. Parliament must go on with its business. And as for the three probes, the government promises action against anyone indicted by these.

His flock was far less courteous; they switched to answering the Congress, scream for scream and shout for shout. It ended in Rajya Sabha chairman Krishan Kant adjourning the House for the day after watching the verbal chaos for close to an hour.

In the Lok Sabha, parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan conveyed much the same message, but in a far more aggressive tone. He said: "This is the first time I've heard of prescribing treatment before making a diagnosis. The opposition should not think it can intimidate us." He was repeatedly interrupted by the opposition, with the Congress and the RJD rushing into the well of the House, shouting, "We want JPC, we want JPC."

In the end, the Lok Sabha's ordeal was longer. In the Rajya Sabha the shouting began from the ruling side, to which the opposition responded. In the Lok Sabha, the opposition members began shouting where they were, then moved out into the well of the House; the shouting was cut short by a pre-lunch adjournment for 90 minutes, only to be resumed on reconvening, to end in an adjournment for the day.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

9 APR 2001

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 18, 2001

119-12 ✓
STALLING PARLIAMENT 15/1 ✓

THE FLEETING HOPE that Parliament, which has been disrupted for days over the impasse relating to the Tehelka tapes expose, would recommence normal business has been abruptly dashed. A stonewalling Government, on the one side, and a filibustering Opposition, on the other, have contributed to this extended parliamentary paralysis where the deadlock during the last session threatens to continue into the post-budget session. The vehemence with which the Opposition forced the adjournment of both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday reflects a total lack of consensus between the Government and the Opposition on the minimum conditions for the resumption of the smooth functioning of Parliament. Unless there is a softening of the position adopted by either or both sides, the parliamentary deadlock — which has already stalled debate on crucial issues such as the budget — may well continue for a while longer. Some inkling of the strategy the Congress(I) and the rest of the Opposition propose to adopt will be evident when Parliament resumes sitting today.

The Congress(I), which had earlier insisted that the Vajpayee Government resign having lost the moral right to remain in office, has now narrowed down to two specific demands as a precondition for participation — the setting up of a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) to look into all aspects connected to the Tehelka expose and the initiation of action (read: filing of FIRs) against those incriminated by the tapes. Predictably, the Government has refused to accept either demand, but the summary manner in which the Opposition's concerns have been dismissed have been less than helpful towards resolving the issue. For instance, in connection with the JPC probe demand, the Union Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Jaswant Singh, attempted to turn the tables on the Opposition by suggesting that it had failed to respond to a previous Government offer for such an inquiry. His claim has

been contested but even if one were to assume for the sake of argument that this was true, it does not explain why this offer is not available now. As for the question of initiating criminal action against Mr. Bangaru Laxman, the Government's rejection of this demand would have caused less political heartburn if it was not accompanied by cynical and unconvincing declarations that the former BJP President was innocent and had committed no wrong.

If the BJP-led Government's feeble attempt to portray the Tehelka expose as a sinister conspiracy has legitimately raised political hackles, the Congress(I) should also not thrash it threadbare with the sole purpose of disrupting the functioning of Parliament indefinitely. The party's repeated declarations that its real desire is to see that Parliament begins to function have begun to sound empty and meaningless in the light of its recent behaviour. If its boycott of the all-party meeting called by the Prime Minister last week was ill-advised, its threat that its cooperation in Parliament hinges on the fate of certain complaints or allegations levelled against Ms. Sonia Gandhi seemed eminently self-serving. The Congress(I) and the Opposition must not lose the opportunity to discuss a number of critical issues that cry out for parliamentary debate. Apart from the Tehelka expose and the budget, there are a host of other issues that merit parliamentary attention such as the stock market price rigging scam and the telecom policy controversy. However grave the provocation, the Opposition would be failing in its duty if it did not make its views known on these and other matters on the floor of Parliament. It may be true that parliamentary proceedings are bound to get disrupted now and then in any vibrant democracy. It is quite another thing for political parties — whatever their differences — to thrust Parliament into a state of paralysis.

THE HINDU

18 APR 2001

CONG. SPIKES SUGGESTION FOR CURTAILED SESSION

Meetings fail to resolve parliamentary deadlock

410-1
17/9
By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, APRIL 16. There was no clear political sign today that Parliament would indeed run smoothly from tomorrow. As expected, Parliament was adjourned for the day after obituary references to Devi Lal, former Deputy Prime Minister.

An indignant and angry Congress made it clear that it was not impressed by the lack of any concrete Government action on the Tehelka issue and that the Government should not expect cooperation if it continued to intimidate and blackmail the Congress president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, on the basis of "totally frivolous charges" made by the Janata Party leader, Dr. Subramanian Swamy.

Two meetings — a meeting of party leaders called by the Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi, this morning, and the Business Advisory Committee meeting of the Lok Sabha this evening — failed to break the parliamentary deadlock. The only hope was that by tomorrow morning parties would respond to the "fervent appeal" made by Mr. Balayogi to allow Parliament to resume debate and discussion on all the important public issues before it. Mr. Balayogi made the appeal at the BAC meeting after it became clear that the prospect of "normal" functioning of Parliament was rather bleak.

An attempt was also made by some parties (reportedly with Government encouragement) to float the idea of curtailing the resumed budget session to the end of the month in view of the Assembly elections in five States. But this was rejected by the Congress. The session would be held as scheduled in the absence of consensus on a curtailed session, the Speaker said.



The Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr. G.M.C. Balayogi (right), meeting all-party leaders before the beginning of the Parliament session on Monday. — Photo: Anu Pushkarna

It seems it was Mr. Sharad Pawar (Nationalist Congress Party) who made the suggestion to end this session on April 30 at the party leaders' meeting.

Opposition parties privately said the Government wanted just time enough for the Finance Bill to be passed, and wanted minimum time for a debate on the stock market scam, the telecom policy bungling, the Tehelka issue, farmers' and weavers' suicides, the effect of the WTO regime and a host of other uncomfortable subjects.

At the party leaders' meeting in the morning, the Congress and the Left had said that the Government's failure to respond adequately to the Tehelka expose had resulted in the impasse in the last 10 days of the first part of the budget session. The Government

could not get away by blaming the Opposition alone. It was equally, if not more, responsible, for it was the job of the Opposition to raise issues of concern to the people.

At that time, since almost all party leaders said that they were against disruption of Parliament, it looked like it would be back to business as usual in Parliament. The BAC would meet in the evening to discuss details for discussion on various issues, including Tehelka, the stock scam, WTO, and weavers' suicides.

However, by evening, the Congress, represented by Mr. Madhavrao Scindia, took the stand that the Government must "further clarify" on the CBI inquiry against Ms. Gandhi, that the judicial inquiry into Tehelka and its terms of reference were "not acceptable", some concrete action

was needed on Tehelka like the inquiry into alleged underworld connections of film producer, Mr. Bharat Shah, and that the Government cannot expect cooperation from the Opposition when it was virtually intimidating the Congress president.

Mr. Roop Chand Pal (CPI-M) supported concrete Government action on the Tehelka exposures, but the Samajwadi Party representative said that the people wanted the House to function.

The "offer" by Mr. Pramod Mahajan, Parliamentary Affairs Minister, that the Congress could raise the Tehelka issue and CBI inquiry against Ms. Gandhi and the Prime Minister would respond to both, did not impress the Congress. The meeting ended with the Speaker's appeal for end of the session.

THE HINDU

Cong wants tehelka action before debate

HT Correspondent & PTI
New Delhi, April 16

THE CONGRESS wants the Government to order a JPC probe into the tehelka revelations before it allows a debate on the issue, a stance that indicates stormy days ahead in the second part of the Budget session of Parliament.

It also wants a parallel criminal investigation against those named in the tapes.

The party will also put pressure on Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to come out with the "truth" on Subramanian Swamy's letter containing "incredibly absurd" charges against Sonia Gandhi.

The meeting of the Lok Sabha's business advisory committee ended in a stalemate this evening with the Congress hardening its stand. It also shot down a demand, raised mainly by the Left, for curtailing of the Budget session in view of the Assembly elections.

At an all-party meeting convened by Speaker GMC Balayogi in the morning to ensure smooth functioning of the House, Government representatives had said that they were open to a discussion on any issue and under any rule. The Speaker appealed to MPs to let the House function, but the Congress was firm in its demand.

Congress spokesman Jaipal Reddy later told reporters, "We will continue to demand that action should precede debate on tehelka. We also want the Prime Minister to tell the truth about Swamy's letter as he and various other Government spokesmen are speaking in different voices on the issue."



He suggested that the ball really lay in the Government's court: "The Congress is interested in the smooth functioning of Parliament. But the onus for it shifts squarely on the Government. It must come clean on tehelka issue and on the way it handled Swamy's letter."

He said the Government would have to accept responsibility if Parliament did not function. "We have a huge vested interest in the smooth running of Parliament because we want to discuss tehelka, stock market scam, Customs-gate and telecom issues."

Earlier, the CPP's political affairs committee met for nearly three hours. Sonia Gandhi presided over the meeting held after Balayogi's all-party meeting.

Reddy dismissed suggestions that the Congress has dropped its demand for the Vajpayee Government's resignation. The issue, he said, still remains unresolved.

"We would like to tell the Prime Minister that the Congress cannot be either lured by his carrots or frightened by his sticks," he said, an apparent dig to counter the Prime Minister's recent statement on Bofors.

The judicial inquiry into the

tehelka tapes, he said, was a "whitewash" and "absolutely irrelevant". Referring to Swamy's letter, he said the Prime Minister had chosen to operate at the "same level of responsibility, maturity and sobriety" as that of the Janata Party president by passing the letter to the CBI.

"The Government cannot be allowed to get away with such naked vendetta. The letter makes many ridiculous charges, including the abominable and incredibly absurd one of Sonia Gandhi being involved in the murder of her own husband."

Split session proposal: The Government today indicated that it was not averse to the idea of splitting the second part of the Budget session in view of the Assembly elections. But the Congress would have none of it.

The CPI(M) and Nationalist Congress Party raised the proposal at the meeting convened by Balayogi. The matter also came up at the BAC meeting in the evening where the CPI, Samajwadi Party, DMK and some other smaller parties, which have a stake in the elections, came out in support of the proposal. These parties had suggested that the two Houses could either complete their legislative business by April-end or go into recess from April 28 and reassemble after the polls.

The Congress and Shiv Sena, however, were opposed to the idea. In the absence of a consensus, the Speaker said the original schedule stood.

Tribute to Devi Lal: Both Houses of Parliament were adjourned for the day after observing a few minutes' silence in the memory of departed Rajya Sabha member Devi Lal.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 APR 2001

98-6
11/9
Debate, don't disrupt

Parliament undermined

THE founding fathers enshrined universal adult franchise and the parliamentary system of democratic governance in the Constitution. The Supreme Court pronounced that the parliamentary system was an essential feature of the Constitution. The notification establishing the Constitutional Review Commission went to the extent of putting the parliamentary system beyond the pale of review. But, if the truth is to be told, it is the operational failure of the parliamentary system which requires reflection and reform, more than any other aspect of our polity.

The parliamentary system in India has so far shown remarkable resilience but it seems to be cracking up now, and can no longer be taken for granted. The political parties which constitute the core of the system have failed the system. The electoral system cries out for reform. Our parliamentary democracy has to be rescued from money power. Our democracy is imperilled not only by money power in the elections but also by rampant corruption, criminalisation, communalism and casteism at all levels. Bureaucracy thrives behind the cloak of democracy. Political posturing, both in and outside Parliament, have been on the ascendant and have nearly muted and eclipsed the democratic discourse of India.

The Tehelka tapes could, and should, have been a wake up call but the wake up call was drowned by the raucous noises from the two wells of our bicameral Parliament. The nation saw its Parliament being hamstrung by the Opposition whose duty it was to demand an explanation. Instead, the Opposition, in its wisdom or the lack of it, chose to miss the parliamentary bus and opted for a street-car named desire, the desire to grab power by extra-parliamentary and extra-constitutional means. The facile rationalisation for holding Parliament to ransom for the Vajpayee government's

resignation and a mid-term poll was that it was a moral and political issue: as if moral and political issues are outside the purview of parliamentary proceedings.

The Tehelka tapes have told us nothing that we did not know, but it could serve an important public purpose by alerting the system to the ubiquitous perils of public life. The malady of the political system is, however, much deeper. It is in the crisis of character, competence and credibility. Instead of addressing that crisis in all earnestness, the people and the chattering classes are being titillated and entertained by a kind of prurient political pornography while the Opposition is preventing Parliament and rejecting the judiciary from getting at the truth.

The total cost of the forced adjournments to the exchequer was huge and entirely unaffordable

investigate and make recommendations, does it want to take the issue to the streets? Even if they wanted to take the issue to the people, it was not necessary to bring Parliament to a grinding halt.

Parliament is an institution for the grand inquest of the nation. It not only legislates but provides a forum of accountability and a forum for ventilating public concerns and grievances. There is a certain sanctity about parliamentary proceedings in every democratic system.

That is why the armour of the law of privileges has been designed and evolved. Privileges are rights and immunities enjoyed by each House of Parliament and their committees collectively, and by members of each House individually. Breaches of privilege and contempt of the Houses of Parliament are punishable. The penal jurisdiction of each House

tion of the proceedings on television and saw their Parliament being deadlocked were not amused; they were shocked, dismayed and outraged.

Come April 16, when Parliament resumes after the recess, the people of India would expect a *modus vivendi*. If that does not happen, they would resign themselves to governance — without Parliament. After all, governance has to go on with or without Parliament, but obviously the Opposition would be entirely to blame if parliamentary supervision and accountability is brought to naught. It is the Indian National Congress which led the country during its freedom struggle and played an important role in establishing parliamentary democracy in India. It would be a sad irony if that party, in its present incarnation, should now contribute to deprive Parliament of the opportunity to debate, discuss, question, criticise and find reasonable solutions to the problems which our political system faces.

Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, our first prime minister, thoughtfully observed that "the parliamentary system requires not only stout opposition, not only forcible expression of opinions and views but an essential basis of cooperation between the opposition and the Government". That cooperation has to be based on a certain discipline, based on parliamentary ground norms. The government is obliged to listen and explain. The Opposition has a right to oppose but it is also obliged to listen. Nor can parliamentary governance be reduced to a mere mechanical counting of heads or hands.

The spirit of democracy requires freedom of discussion in a spirit of tolerance and of constructive and responsive cooperation between the government and the Opposition, so that Parliament may perform its vital role in governance.

The writer is a former high commissioner to the UK and Rajya Sabha MP



L.M. SINGHVI

Governance has to go on, with or without Parliament, but obviously the Opposition would be to blame if parliamentary accountability is brought to naught

for India. What is more, 36 important legislative Bills were shunted off, there was no question hour, no calling attention notices, no debate, no issues of public interest before Parliament, because it had been made operationally defunct. The Opposition succeeded in creating a deadlock in Parliament but we, the people, lost in that wildcat strike. Parliamentary democracy in India came down many notches in the esteem of the world. The question in the public mind was and continues to be: if the Opposition rejects both Parliament and the judiciary, and wants neither Parliament to debate and discuss the issues, nor the judiciary to in-

extends to its members, as well as everyone else and to offences committed within the House and beyond its walls.

Generally speaking, as explained by Kaul and Shaktiher in their magnum opus, *Practice and Procedure of Parliament* (fifth edition, 2001), "Disrespect to the House collectively is the original and fundamental form of breach of privilege, and almost all breaches can be reduced to it. Any misconduct in the presence of the House or a committee thereof, whether by members of Parliament or by members of the public... will constitute a contempt of the House". The people of India who saw the disrupt-

INDIAN EXPRESS

11 APR 2001

VAJPAYEE:

(continued from page 1)

"I can't be abusive," he said at the rally. "The abuses don't stick on me for I don't accept them...I will invite the Opposition for discussion tomorrow. The government is ready for it all along but the Opposition was harping on resignation," he said. Corruption has to be tackled by everyone. It is a national disease. There was a long list of corruption instances over the past 50 years.

Speakers at the rally defended Mr George Fernandes, the convener of the NDA. Mr Fernandes also spoke at the rally. Mrs Sonia Gandhi was under attack for the describing the NDA convener as a gaddar (traitor). Speakers included Union Ministers Mr Murli Manohar Joshi, Mr Ram Vilas Paswan, Mr Sharad Yadav, Ms Uma Bharti, Mr Vaiko and Mr Rajnath Singh.

Mr Fernandes said Mrs Gandhi had earlier tried become Prime Minister by making false claims before the President. "One *videshi* (foreigner) woman had tried to grab the *desh* through falsehood," he said.

"The Tehelka episode was not about corruption but to dislodge the government. It has demoralised the armed forces. After I resigned the matter should have ended but they want resignation of Mr Vajpayee," he said. Instead of publicising the tapes, they should have been placed before the Prime Minister and the President. "There are lies in them. Because of the tapes, many things about the defence preparedness of the country had to be made public even to the enemies," he said. "Tehelka was not against corruption and it has relationship with the Hindujas, arms dealers," he said. About ban on the Students Islami Movement of India, the Prime Minister said further investigations were being made and there were no differences of opinion on this with the UP government.

Swamy: In Chennai, Mr Subramanian Swamy threatened to move courts for a court-monitored inquiry against Mr Sonia Gandhi if the Centre failed to perform its "constitutional and statutory duties" on this issue.

THE STATESMAN

19 APR 2001

Cong may boycott meet to resolve tehelka impasse

Vinod Sharma
New Delhi, April 13

THE CONGRESS might stay away from tomorrow's the all-party meeting Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has convened to resolve the parliamentary impasse over the tehelka expose.

There were strong signals to this effect after a meeting today of senior party leaders with Sonia Gandhi. The Prime Minister had earlier spoken to the Congress president over the phone from Iran.

Well-placed AICC sources said the rising chorus in Congress circles to boycott the meet had its genesis in Vajpayee's reported decision to refer to the CBI, Janata Party leader Subramanian Swamy's "scandalous and baseless charges" against Sonia Gandhi and her son.

The question whether or not

Sonia Gandhi should respond to Vajpayee's invitation was reportedly discussed at some length at the senior leaders' meeting. Among those who participated in the discussions at 10, Janpath were Sonia Gandhi, Manmohan Singh, Madhavrao Scindia, Pranab Mukherjee, Priya Ranjan Das Munshi and Jaipal Reddy.

With AICC spokesman Anand Sharma stating that the party's formal position on the issue would be made known only tomorrow, there was no official confirmation of what actually transpired at the meeting. But sources disclosed that the senior leaders took note of "unprecedented resentment" among party cadres over the PM's bid to "legitimise" Swamy's charges.

They said the Congress leadership was astounded by Vajpayee's cavalier approach in the matter. On the one hand, he wanted the Leader of the Opposi-

tion to participate in a meeting called to forge a consensus on running Parliament. And on the other, he has referred to the CBI a set of "wild allegations" no person in his right state of mind would ever believe.

For these reasons, barring a last minute peace overture by the PM on the contentious CBI issue, there seemed little possibility of the main Opposition party responding to his invitation.

As for the other Opposition groupings, the CPI(M), the CPI, the Samajwadi Party and the RJD have decided to attend the meeting. While ruling out any compromise on their basic demand for action under the law against those exposed by the tehelka team, these parties weren't averse to allowing Parliament to function, given the serious financial business to be transacted in the second phase of the Budget session.

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

13 APR 2001

Opposition uncertain on session eve

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 15. The Opposition parties, especially the Congress, remain uncertain on how to carry on the confrontation with the Vajpayee Government on the Tehelka scam when Parliament resumes its Budget session tomorrow. The Congress, in addition, remains unmollified even after the Government's explanation that no CBI inquiry had been ordered against the party president, Ms. Sonia Gandhi.

In addition to the Prime Minister's clarification in the matter of CBI enquiry, the Government, in a conciliatory move, put out a formal statement stating the basic minimum facts about the alleged CBI inquiry. The statement notes that "Dr. Subramanian Swamy, president, Janata Party, had addressed a letter dated March 3, 2001 to Ms. Vasundhara Raje, Minister of State (Personnel), containing certain allegations against Ms. Sonia Gandhi and her family members. These allegations pertain to the period ranging from 1972 to 1993."

This communication from Dr. Swamy was

"routinely acknowledged" by the Minister who "forwarded" it to the "CBI for appropriate action". Further, the statement says that the CBI has now confirmed "that no formal or preliminary enquiry in the matter has been initiated by them". "Even in normal circumstances, such preliminary examination is undertaken by the CBI in respect of complaints received by it directly from any quarter."

Nonetheless, the Congress leadership remains perturbed. Senior Congress leader, Mr. Arjun Singh, issued a statement saying, "In true fascist style, the BJP has engineered a totally motivated, frivolous, false and unsubstantiated allegations against the Congress president." He termed it a "blatant and highly objectionable effort to undermine the reputation of the main opposition party in Parliament". Another leader, Mr. Madhavrao Scindia, termed the Prime Minister's explanation "unsatisfactory".

Its anger notwithstanding, the Congress remains uncertain on how to carry forward the Tehelka confrontation. Now that the Congress finds itself in a conflict situation with the Left

parties in West Bengal and Kerala, the unity of purpose among the Opposition parties is beginning to deplete. The Congress feels the Vajpayee Government is still to provide the Opposition with a face-saving formula that would enable the resolution of the stalemate over the Tehelka expose.

As Mr. Scindia pointed out, "On the one hand, frivolous charges against Ms. Sonia Gandhi are referred immediately to the CBI; on the other, no action or cognisance is taken by the Government or by the CBI against those who were shown in tapes taking money in defence deals."

The final decision whether to continue with the strategy of disruption would be taken only on Tuesday morning, as Parliament is expected to adjourn without doing any business on account of the death of the senior leader, Devi Lal. And on Tuesday, the newly formed People's Front is proposing to hold a rally in Uttar Pradesh; the senior leaders are likely to be away, leaving the parliamentary arena for the Congress, at the least for the day.

THE HINDU

16 APR 2001

Vajpayee tells Sonia to behave responsibly

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW, April 15. - The Prime Minister today assailed the role of the Opposition, especially the Congress, in blocking the Parliament's functioning over the Tehelka episode.

The Leader of the Opposition should behave more responsibly, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee said.

The Congress knows it can't be in power since it doesn't have a majority in the Lok Sabha but it has been harping on the resignation of the government and creating political instability.

Speaking at an NDA rally here, Mr Vajpayee said Congress's tactics were anti-democratic and could lead to chaos. To remove the government, a no-confidence vote has to be passed in the House.

(Mr Vajpayee said preliminary scrutiny of Mr Subramaniam Swamy's allegations Mrs Sonia Gandhi was being done at the ministry level, UNI adds.)

"The scrutiny would ascertain whether the allegations should be probed further or not," he told reporters at Raj Bhavan.

He said the Congress could be in the dock after the inquiry was completed in the Bofors guns deal.

The government today categorically said no formal or preliminary inquiry had been initiated by the Central Bureau of Investigation into the charges against Mrs Sonia Gandhi and her family members, a report from Delhi said.)

Mr Vajpayee said: "We want the help of the Opposition in resolving the issue (impasse over the Tehelka episode). The Opposition should resort to constructive criticism of the government."

The Prime Minister later told reporters that he would talk to Mrs Sonia Gandhi and try to convince her. "As the Leader of the Opposition, she should behave responsibly. I never did (obstructed Parliament's proceedings) when I was the Leader of Opposition," Mr Vajpayee said.

■ See VAJPAYEE: page 8

THE STATESMAN

Opp divided over House functioning

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 14. — The all-party meeting convened by the Prime Minister today to seek a consensus on allowing Parliament to function normally after the Tehelka expose revealed divisions in the Opposition.

Opposition parties, except the Congress, RJD and the AIADMK which boycotted today's meeting, agreed with the government that Parliament should be allowed to function normally from Monday.

With the Congress, which boycotted today's meeting, not promising a smooth functioning of Parliament, it appears there'll no floor coordination among the Opposition parties in the House on Monday.

The reason for boycotting the meeting, the Congress said was: "The government decision to refer to the CBI for investigating the baseless charges levelled by Dr Subramanian Swamy against the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi." The party accused the government of a witch-hunt and asked the Centre to call off the CBI probe against Mrs Gandhi.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, however, said at the meeting there's a misunderstanding that Mr Swamy's charges were referred to the CBI with his knowledge. It was passed to the department in a routine manner and no probe has been ordered.

Some leaders described the Congress boycott as a panic reaction. Even some Congress leaders were divided on the move. Some senior Congress leaders has requested Mrs Gandhi to attend the meeting while others had argued against it.

The latter group had said the decision of the Centre to refer Mr Swamy's charges to the CBI was a direct attempt to malign the Congress and its chief. Since it was the Prime Minister who referred the charges against Mrs Gandhi to the CBI, there was no question of the Congress cooperating with the government on the Tehelka issue, some senior party leaders said.

At today's meeting, the government said the Tehelka expose actually highlighted corruption and instead of maligning each other in public the matter should be discussed seriously in the House.

The RJD backed the Congress and went against their new-found allies, the People's Front. The RJD parliamentary party leader, Mr Raghuvansh Singh, said the main Opposition and the "real opposition" didn't attend the meeting, convened by a "corrupt" government.

Other Opposition parties didn't agree with their viewpoint. They were present in full strength. Mr Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M), Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav and Mr Amar Singh (Samajwadi Party), Miss Mayawati (BSP) Mr Sharad Pawar (NCP), Mr Ajay Chakraborty and Mr Gaya Singh (CPI), Mr Abani Roy (RSP), Mr GM Banatwala (Muslim League) and Mr Amar Roy Pradhan (Forward Block) were present. All NDA partners except the Biju Janata Dal attended.

Mr Chatterjee and Mr Pawar said Mr Vajpayee should have called the meeting when the Tehelka issue first rocked Parliament and tried to take the Opposition into confidence.

■ More reports on pages 10, 11

THE STATESMAN

15 APR 2001

India urges parliamentarians to work together

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 2. Dr. Najma Heptulla, president of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), has urged parliamentarians from the developed and less developed nations to work together to forge workable trading and financial systems in a globalising world.

In her presidential address at the 105th IPU conference at Havana, Cuba on Sunday, Dr. Heptulla, said that apart from global treaties it was technology which was bound to make the world more inter-dependent, according to a release issued by her office here.

Dr. Heptulla, who is also the Deputy Chairperson of the Rajya Sabha, urged member-parliamentarians to attend a meet that the IPU was organising in Geneva in June with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on the theme: "For a free, just and equitable multilateral trading system, providing a parliamentary dimension". She said the IPU looked forward to forging closer ties with the United Nations, the WTO, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

The five-day conference, was inaugurated by the Cuban President, Mr. Fidel Castro.

THE HINDU

3 APR 2001

3 APR 2001

By the people, not for the people

MOHAN SAHAY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

The elected representatives of the people did not serve the people who sent them to the Lok Sabha with their continued assault on the functioning of the House for all five working days last week in order to attract public attention while pressing for the resignation of the Vajpayee government over the Tehelka tapes expose.

That it was pre-determined to keep the House paralysed for the whole week was clear when the Opposition members on a selective basis allowed the Lok Sabha to pass supplementary grants and votes-on-account, which were necessary to keep the wheels of government moving.

By the continued adjournments, the Opposition has sent public money down the drain. For each day Parliament does not function, the exchequer loses an estimated Rs 1.60 crore. For Parlia-

ment not to have functioned for 8 working days the total loss would be 12.80 crore.

For a short period during which the House was allowed to discharge its constitutional obligation, the atmosphere was far from normal since the Congress led Opposition made the passage of the supplementary grants and votes on account a noisy affair. Hardly anything was audible in the din. One could not even distinguish whether the members said 'yes' in favour of the proposals of the finance minister and the railway minister, or they said something else in the form of slogans when the supplementary grants and vote on accounts were passed by voice vote.

The other occasion, when the Opposition made a concession to the House, was on Friday, the last working day. The Lok Sab-

ha was allowed to reassemble at noon after the first round of adjournment in the morning to pay homage to Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev, who were hanged seventy years ago by the British rulers. A two-minute silence was observed. Then, with renewed vigour, the Opposition raised their voices ending the serene atmosphere of the House. The Lok Sabha was adjourned till 16 April.

The debate on the Tehelka expose, which was not allowed to take place inside the House, was being conducted outside Parliament, on TV channels and in newspapers columns. It is difficult to buy the Opposition argument that by holding Parliament to ransom, it was able to send a message across the country on how serious the charges were against the government. And if a few crore were wasted

WEEK IN LOK SABHA

SANJAY SINGH
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

Balco and Tehelka were the two issues which rocked the House in the first half of the budget session which was adjourned for an over three-week recess on Friday.

An unrelenting Opposition did not allow any business to be transacted in the House this week. Daily adjournments have almost become a routine in Parliament.

The Chairman, nonetheless, asked the ministers and chairmen of different standing committees to lay papers on the table of the House.

Though nothing could be heard in the din, some parliamentary obligations were completed.

On the twin issues, Balco and Tehelka expose, the Opposition sensed blood. But there was a significant difference.

RAJYA SABHA REVIEW

On the controversial Balco deal, the Opposition settled for a full-fledged discussion in the House after stalling proceedings for two days.

The government and minister of disinvestment, Mr Arun Shourie, in particular replied to the Opposition's charges. But on the Tehelka issue both the Opposition and the government had taken a different attitude.

The Opposition only gave a momentary opportunity to the government to make its stand clear on 13 March, the day *tehelka.com* broke the story in front of the media.

But the members in the treasury benches perhaps did not understand the impact of the newsbreak that day. Since then the Opposition did not allow the government to make a statement or reply to the

Even this did not seem to satisfy them and they started resorting to slogan shouting where some former members, particularly those from the Congress, joined in.

The situation became so unruly that the Parliament security had to be called one day to separate them.

The Opposition argued that matters where a party president was seen taking money could not be discussed and put to vote for the benefit of the government.

But if the issue which has drawn maximum public attention in recent years could not be debated in the highest public forum then what other forum would be appropriate.

It is an irony that the vote on account and supplementary grants for the railway budget were passed in Parliament in the din without any discussion.

doubts raised on the issue.

The elected representatives came to the House at 11 a.m. when it assembled but did not allow any proceedings to take place.

The Opposition made it a habit to enter the well even before the Chairman could take his seat and announce commencement of business hour.

Without the presiding officer occupying his seat, it was a free for all. Members on both sides indulged in shouting slogans in unparliamentary language and forcing adjournments.

Though the members did not discuss the issue inside Parliament, they found another appropriate forum, the Parliament portico where television cameras and print journalists would mob them for their views.

THE STATESMAN

26 MAR 2001

Rajya Sabha passes vote-on-account

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 21

THE RAJYA Sabha today passed the vote-on-account and returned the money bills. But the logjam over the defencegate continued to rock both the Houses. The vote-on-account for the General and Railway Budgets will enable the Government to meet its expenditure beyond March 31.

It entitles the Government to draw from the consolidated fund for the payment of salaries or other expenditure incurred in the next three months. While Lok Sabha approved the vote-on-account yesterday amidst chaos, the Rajya Sabha, in sharp con-

MPs may get longer break

THE GOVERNMENT may extend the recess period of Parliament when the first phase of the ongoing Budget session draws to a close on Friday. If the proposal finds takers, the two Houses of would reassemble around May 7, instead of April 16.

A formal discussion on the proposal is yet to take place, but if the major parties mutually agree to it, the matter will be formalised at a meeting called by the Lok Sabha Speaker, GMC Bhalayogi. The idea of a six-week recess cropped up in view of the Assembly elections in five states, as the MPs would be busy with the polls. The extended break would give the Government a breather from the Opposition onslaught over the tehelka expose.

HTC, New Delhi

trast, passed the money bills smoothly. The Upper House also passed by voice vote the appro-

priation bills for the last batch of supplementary demands for grants for the current fiscal. But

the elders were on their feet as soon as the vote-on-account was passed. They demanded the resignation of the NDA Government and forced the House to adjourn.

In the Lok Sabha, pandemonium over the defencegate continued for the seventh day. Opposition members led by Congress stormed into the well and shouted slogans against the Government.

There was chaos in the House, with ruling party members countering the Opposition charge and calling the Congress corrupt. The Opposition charge this morning was led by its women members.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 MAR 2001

BJP, allies pick holes in 'expose'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 21. The BJP and its alliance partners today unveiled a strategy calculated to rubbish the teheika expose about the role of middlemen in defence deals. Rather than acknowledging the ethical dimension, the Samata and the BJP spokesmen sought to nip the details of "payments" at the Defence Minister's residence, and trying to call the expose part of larger "conspiracy".

On the other hand, the Opposition remained unrelenting in its demand that the Vajpayee Government should go and continued to protest both inside and outside Parliament. Both Houses of Parliament were adjourned amid uproarious scenes. In the Lok Sabha, members of the Opposition and the ruling coalition exercised their vocal chords to the full, raising slogans against each other.

The Opposition members led by the former Union Minister, Mr. Bura Singh, were in the well even before the House assembled, and as the Speaker made his way to his chair, the sloganeering started. "Yeh sarkar chor hai" (this government is corrupt) they cried, and the BJP benches accused the

Opposition of being corrupt, spicing the belligerent mood of the members the Speaker, Mr. G. M. C. Balayogi, adjourned the House for an hour.

Passions continued to run high after the House reassembled with much the same scenes being repeated. The Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, and the Leader of the Opposition, Ms. Sonia Gandhi, watched impassively as their party MPs tried to outdo each other in the sloganeering. Unable to persuade the members to allow

normal business to be transacted, the Speaker adjourned the House for the day. In a show of solidarity, the Union Ministers, Mr. Nitish Kumar, Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu and Mr. V. Sreenivasa Prasad, addressed a press conference at Mr. George Fernandes' residence charging that the Rs. 2 lakhs offered to then Samata Party president, Ms. Jaya Jaitly, by Tehelka which she directed to Mr. Prasad, never reached him.

Mr. Prasad said he was not approached by anyone from tehel-

ka.com nor was he in Delhi during the period mentioned in the tapes. He also distributed his official itinerary to show he was away from the capital between December 23 last and February 18 this year. This, the NDA leaders said, proved that the tapes were "concocted" and carried "wild allegations".

This along with the website's apology to Mr. Advani on allegations made by its staffer, led to doubts over the veracity of the tapes, said Mr. Naidu.

The BJP spokesman, Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra, offered a conspiracy theory and narrated three events that occurred in quick succession to weave a pattern — (1) the news of burning of a religious book in Delhi on March 5 and subsequent communal tensions at various places in the country, (2) the bear run in the stock market which had earlier responded well to the budget and (3) the Tehelka tapes.

Money bills cleared

The Rajya Sabha today returned the bills pertaining to the vote-on-account for the general and railway budgets, before being adjourned for the day, indicating Parliament's approval. The bills, approved by the Lok Sabha yesterday, were moved by the Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha, after which the Deputy Chairperson, Ms. Najma Heptulla, adjourned the House for the day. The Opposition was unrelenting when the House met earlier in the day and had to be adjourned till noon by the Chairman, Mr. Krishan Kant. The bills were passed after the Rajya Sabha re-assembled for 10 minutes.

More reports on Page 13

PM defends Brajesh

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, MARCH 21. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today said the Shiv Sena had not "conveyed to us" the demand for the resignation of his Principal Secretary, Mr. Brajesh Mishra. As for the demand for Mr. Mishra's resignation, he said: "He does not hold any public office".

Talking to reporters after the presentation of the Padma awards at the Rashtrapati Bhavan here this evening, Mr. Vajpayee said he had seen the Shiv Sena demand only in the media. Asked whether he thought Mr. Mishra should resign in the current political scenario, he said: "I am not saying that."

About the deadlock in Parliament, the Prime Minister said: "We would like to break the stalemate." On whether the Government would talk to different political parties to allow Parliament to function, he said: "We will consider your suggestion."

On the proposed NDA rally here on March 25, Mr. Vajpayee said: "Andar nahin bohne denge, to bahar bolenge (If we are not allowed to speak inside, we will do so outside.)" Further, the Opposition was not specific about its demands. "The crisis has been created by the Opposition. We are ready for discussion in Parliament."

Lok Sabha okays vote-on-account amidst turmoil

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Amidst the unrelenting opposition clamour for the government's resignation, the vote-on-account for the railway and general budgets, authorising interim spending pending the passage of the formal budgets, were hastily passed without any discussion by the Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

When the house met at 12 noon after the first adjournment, the Congress MPs were already in the well shouting slogans against the government. Members of some other opposition groups joined them, protesting against the government's perceived silence on the 'armsgate' revelations.

As the turmoil continued, speaker G.M.C. Balayogi, however, went ahead with the listed business for the day by calling the ministers to read statements and lay papers.

Although the list of business mentioned a "general discussion" on both the railway and general budgets, the ministers merely moved the bills and the vote-on-account was passed by a voice vote.

It was the same story in the Rajya Sabha, without anything being passed. The opposition began shouting, the minute the house convened in the morning and the chairman adjourned it until 4 p.m. By then, the Lok Sabha was expected to have passed the vote-on-account. When it reassembled, by prior agreement, the opposition kept quiet for the few minutes it took to do two things.

One, to convey the President's formal thanks for passage of the official resolution of agreement on his speech on opening the budget session. Two, to formally announce the passage of the vote-on-account in the Lok Sabha, with the certification of these being money bills. The Rajya Sabha can only delay it for a fortnight. Its approval is superfluous. That done, the shouting resumed and the chair, after a few minutes, adjourned for the day.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

21 MAR 2001

Opp to cooperate on vote-on-account

SFB 20/3
of news

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 19. - The Opposition parties will cooperate with government in "fulfilling the Constitutional requirement" of passing the vote-on-account, but without a discussion. They will, however, intensify their agitation in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

"We do not want to create a financial crisis and therefore will cooperate, if the government seeks our support, for ensuring the the passage of the vote-on-account. But we will do it in both Houses without any discussion," Mr Ram-

chandra Pillai, CPI-M leader in Rajya Sabha said today.

The non-Congress Opposition in the Lok Sabha met at the CPI-M leader, Mr Somnath Chatterjee's residence this morning to formulate their strategy. Besides the Left leaders, Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, Mr Raghuvansh Prasad of the RJD and the NCP chief, Mr Sharad Pawar, attended the meeting.

The Congress representative was not invited to the meeting but there is an informal understanding on floor-coordination on this issue. The Parliament goes into recess

this week-end. The Opposition obviously want to keep the fire on in both the Houses and then straight away hit the campaign trail for next month's Assembly elections in five states.

In the Rajya Sabha, leaders of the combined Opposition held a meeting at Dr Manmohan Singh's office. They decided to intensify their agitation in both the Houses demanding the resignation of the Vajpayee government.

"We do not accept the government response. The reinstatement of Mr George Fernandes as the NDA convenor

SUPPLEMENTARY DEMANDS

NEW DELHI, March 19. - The Congress today said it would allow the passage of the supplementary demands for grants for the general budget 2000-2001 as well as for railway budget which were laid in the Lok Sabha today.

Amidst slogan-shouting by the Congress members, the finance minister, Mr Yashwant Sinha, laid the papers seeking supplementary grants of Rs 37,640.71 crore for the financial current financial year ending 31 March covering various heads, including government expenditure. The minister of state for railways, Mr Digvijay Singh presented supplementary of Rs 136.14 crore for the railways. - SNS

and Mr LK Advani's statement that Mr Fernandes would return to the government after investigations, Pillai, said.

STATESMAN

20 MAR 2001

Issue rocks Parliament

By Javed M. Ansari

NEW DELHI, MARCH 13. Revelations of corruption in defence deals made by the website Tehalka.com rocked Parliament today as angry Opposition members demanded a detailed explanation from the Government.

Both Houses were adjourned ahead of schedule as Opposition MPs refused to allow proceedings till the Government came out with a statement.

They demanded a comprehensive clarification into the charges made earlier in the day against the BJP president, Mr. Bangaru Laxman, the Samata Party chief, Ms. Jaya Jaitely, and a host of senior Government functionaries. The website in a special video presentation had shown Mr. Laxman accepting money and Ms. Jaitely allegedly discussing ways of facilitating a defence deal and the tactic to be adopted in tackling the bureaucracy.

The main Opposition party, the Congress, lead the protests. Soon after the screening of the videotapes, angry Congress members rushed to both the Houses calling for an immediate statement as the matter pertained to

"national security". Interrupting the discussion on the farmers issue in the Lok Sabha, the Congress chief whip, Mr. Priyaranjan Dasgupta, demanded that the Government issue a comprehensive statement as senior Government functionaries were involved.

The Opposition, sensing an opportunity to nail down the Government, turned out in strength and soon the Lok Sabha witnessed angry exchanges between the Opposition and the treasury benches. Senior Congress leaders, Mr. Madhavrao Scindia, Mr. Dasgupta and Mr. Shivraj Patil, said the issue related to national security and, therefore, must be taken up immediately.

Though slow to react initially, the treasury benches too joined the fray and soon a slanging match ensued. The pleas of the AIADMK's Mr. P.H. Pandian, who was in the Chair, to cut out the bedlam and to allow the discussion on the farmers issue to go on had little effect.

The Congress chants of "gali gali me shor hai, yeh sarkar chor hai" were countered by the treasury benches with "gali gali mein shor hai Congress chor hai". Unable to persuade the members to resume their seats, and sens-

ing the angry mood, Mr. Pandian adjourned the proceedings for the day.

In the Rajya Sabha, the issue was raised by the Leader of the Opposition, Dr. Manmohan Singh, soon after the Finance Minister had finished his reply to a call attention motion on the stock market crisis. Dr. Singh told the House that the issue was very serious in nature as a film had been screened showing 'certain higher ups' in the Government indulging in corruption. The entire Opposition was on its feet demanding an immediate reaction from the Government.

The Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs, Mr. O. Rajgopal, made a feeble attempt to pacify the members saying he would bring the issue to the notice of the Ministers concerned. His interventions had little effect on the members who continued to protest.

The Left parties insisted that the Finance Minister, who was present in the House, make a statement on behalf of the Government. But with the Minister showing no inclination of responding and the Opposition unrelenting in its demand, the chair adjourned the House.

PM assures LS of non-interference in Ayodhya case

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 12. — The Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, assured the Lok Sabha today that his government would not interfere in the Babari Masjid demolition case, pending before the designated CBI judge in Lucknow, in which three of his Cabinet colleagues, Mr LK Advani, Dr Murli Manohar Joshi and Miss Uma Bharati are chargesheeted.

"The law will take its own course and there is no question of the government interfering," Mr Vajpayee said while responding to a point raised by Mrs Sonia Gandhi, Opposition leader, during the discussion on the motion of thanks to the President's address made to the joint sitting of Parliament on 19 February. The motion was later passed by voice vote.

All amendments to the motion moved by the Opposition were rejected by the House.

Mrs Sonia Gandhi raised the issue of the three Union ministers facing chargesheet in the Babari Masjid case and expressed fears that the government might delay the proceedings because of their involvement.

Mr Vajpayee made two points. First, the CBI was an independent agency and at no stage did the government interfere in

its functioning, the government had not even made any changes in the panel of the CBI prosecution counsel who were appointed by the Congress government. Second, in the opinion of the special designated judge of the CBI in Lucknow, cases against all the three ministers under reference were still maintainable despite the ruling of the Lucknow Bench of the Allahabad High Court.

"Since the matter is sub-judice I would not like to make any further comment on the matter," he told the House.

Mr Vajpayee took the opportunity to defend his government and his men in his office and residence who were charged with operating as an extra-constitutional power centre and were under the cloud of corruption.

Mr Somnath Chatterjee of the CPI-M had raised the matter last week quoting some reports alleging corrupt practices and dubious handling of sensitive government decisions by a coterie surrounding the Prime Minister.

Mr Vajpayee said that newspapers had their own "politics" and they played their own games by publishing what he called "baseless charges". He said, "Sometimes we fall prey to newspaper politics and sometimes you (Opposition) fall prey to this game"

THE STATESMAN

13 MAR 2001

Rajya Sabha censures govt. on BALCO deal

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: It was a mixed bag for the NDA government in parliament on Monday when the Lok Sabha passed the motion of thanks to the President's address by a voice vote but the Rajya Sabha censured the government on the BALCO deal, causing acute embarrassment.

The opposition pressed chairman Krishan Kant for a vote on the amendment moved by senior Congress member Pranab Mukherjee. The amendment said the President's address had failed to mention the government's decision to sell 51 per cent of BALCO equity to a private company whose track record was suspect.

Of the 167 members present in the House, 103 voted for the amendment and only 64 opposed it. An exultant opposition then demanded the resignation of Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee, who just smiled since a defeat in the Rajya Sabha does not entail the fall of the government.

Earlier, Mr Vajpayee defended his government dexterously and said it would soon hold talks with various groups in Jammu and Kashmir. "We want to hold talks

before the ceasefire extension ends in May," he told the House. He emphasised that the talks "will be transparent and will cover all aspects".

Mr Vajpayee spoke about the change in the international perspective on J&K. This, he said, was reflected in the statement by UN secretary-general Kofi Annan in Pakistan when he endorsed the Lahore peace initiative by India.

He said amendments to the civil procedure code to make it simpler and people-friendly would be brought in during the present session of parliament.

On the agriculture front, he said India was facing a problem of overproduction as there was a shortage of storage capacity. He said there were some problems because of India signing the World Trade Organisation (WTO) agreement. However, now that it had been signed, India would have to compete in the world market, he added.

In the Lok Sabha, Mr Vajpayee claimed credit for his government's Kashmir peace initiative and asserted that India was one of the top ten economies of the world.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

13 MAR 2001

Opp plans to nail govt over Balco

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CI MANOJ
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 10. — The last word on the Treasury-Opposition tug-of-war on the Balco issue may not have been said yet, if the Rajya Sabha Opposition sticks together to force an amendment to the President's address, criticising the Balco deal.

The Upper House is to take up the motion of thanks on the President's address on Monday. The same day the House will take up for discussion the amendment moved by the Congress and the Left.

If the amendment is carried, the government will have to cope up with the embarrassment of accepting a President's address critical of one of its most important recent policy decisions.

The Lok Sabha is sure to reject the amendment, but the Opposition-dominated Rajya Sabha can deliver a "moral defeat" on the government on the issue.

The amendment (No 377) has been moved by Mr Pranab Mukherjee and Mr Suresh Pachouri (Congress), Mr Nilotpal Basu, Mr Dipankar Mukherjee and Mr S Ramachandran Pillai (CPI-M) and Mr Balwant Singh Ramoowalia (Independent and a "confidant" of CPI-M general secretary Mr Harkishen Singh Surjeet). The amendment reads: "But regrets, that the address does not contain the government's decision to sell Balco, a cent per cent PSU having a track re-

cord of continuous profit-making and a huge cash reserves, to a private sector company with its track-record in aluminium manufacturing business not known and of doubtful nature."

The Congress and the Left have issued a three-line whip asking their members to be present and vote for the amendment when the House takes up the motion of thanks to the President's address for adoption on Monday evening, after the Prime Minister finishes his reply.

Congress and Left leaders have confirmed the move, as well as the fact that they had deliberately kept the issue low key. The Congress chief whip in Rajya Sabha, Mr Suresh Pachauri, said: "Moving an amendment is the right of the members. And since the President's address doesn't have a mention of the Balco deal, we've moved the amendment to have it incorporated."

The CPI-M House leader and politburo member, Mr S Ramachandran Pillai, said: "The amendment aims at expressing our dissatisfaction about the way Balco was sold and also against not mentioning it in the President's address."

Will the the Opposition press for a division? "We've already issued the whip and the decision on pressing for the division will be taken at the last minute, in a meeting of the Opposition leaders."

There are only two other recent

■ See BALCO: page 10

THE STATESMAN

11 MAR 2001

Opposition slams Govt. for moving S.C. on BALCO

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8. The Government came in for sharp criticism in Parliament today for approaching the Supreme Court on the BALCO issue on the basis of "false premises" to "thwart the strike" at the company's main plant in Korba.

The Opposition questioned the Government's propriety in moving the apex court on an issue concerning Centre-State relations without taking the State Government into confidence.

While the Opposition, mainly the Left, was unrelenting in the attack on the Government for approaching the apex court on behalf of a private company, the Disinvestment Minister, Mr. Arun Shourie, defended the action when the issue cropped up soon after question hour in the Upper House.

In the Lok Sabha, the CPI(M) leader, Mr. Somnath Chatterjee, said the Government was taking recourse to the judiciary to hustle through its disinvestment policy and destabilise the constitutional equilibrium.

In the Rajya Sabha, the Opposition's line of attack was encapsulated by the senior Congress leader, Mr. Arjun Singh, during a crisp intervention. While Mr. Shourie claimed that the BALCO plant was in danger, the workers had promised that no untoward incident would be allowed to take place, he said. "You don't deserve to be a Minister if you have gone to the Supreme Court on the basis of false premises," he told Mr. Shourie.

During the debate on the motion of thanks to the President's address on Wednesday, Mr. Singh had sought to know from the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, whether the spirit of the Constitution had been followed in the BALCO disinvestment. He asked whether the Government wished to amend Schedule 5 of the Constitution, which directs States to protect tribals against exploitation and preserve valuable endowments of their land since it was coming in the way of disinvestment.

Financial burden

During several interventions interrupted by

the Opposition today, Mr. Shourie said the Government petitioned the Supreme Court late yesterday on four counts. The Centre had received "alarming information about imminent danger to the BALCO plant"; no reply was received to the Centre's missive to the Chhatisgarh Chief Secretary about the law and order situation; the Government would also have to bear the financial implication of a loss due to sabotage as it still held 49 per cent of the equity; the striking workers had not submitted any charter of demands; and, some State political leaders had made inflammatory statements at the plant gate.

Mr. Shourie's arguments were contested by the CPI(M)'s Mr. Dipankar Mukherjee who assailed the Government for giving a non-factual reply. All BALCO unions had promised that the smelter would be kept operational with no worker claiming wages and that the strike would be peacefully conducted until the deal with Sterlite was cancelled.

Mr. Shourie was asked by the Rajya Sabha Chairman, Mr. Krishan Kant, to recant his charges against the Chhatisgarh Chief Minister, Mr. Ajit Jogi, as he had not given notice

before attacking the State Government. A short while later, Mr. Shourie was told not to read the apex court's order in the House and when he sought to reply to the CPI(M)'s Mr. Nilotpal Basu, who was the first to raise the issue, Mr. Pranab Mukherjee wanted to know whether the Minister's proclivity to reply to each observation would become a precedent.

Unfortunate: BJP

Meanwhile, the BJP criticised the Opposition charge saying, "it was unfortunate that they chose to question the apex court judgment while taking a contrary stand when some Sangh Parivar outfits claim that in matter of religion, the courts cannot decide." The party spokesman, Mr. Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said the issue had turned contentious due to the ongoing leadership tussle between Mr. Jogi and the Congress leader, Mr. V. C. Shukla.

Mr. Malhotra said moving the Supreme Court was one of the constitutional remedies the Centre had in mind, and warned that Mr. Jogi could be hauled for contempt of court in case he did not follow the apex court order.

Uproar in Assembly: Page 9

THE HINDU

29 MAR 2001

LS rejects motion opposing Balco deal

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
NEW DELHI, MAR 1

LOK Sabha tonight rejected the opposition motion against the privatisation of BALCO after allies came out in full support of the decision taken by the government while hitting out at the Congress for politicising the issue.

In the division, the motion was defeated with 119 votes in favour and 239 against. Three members abstained.

NDA allies TDP, which had vehemently attacked the government in the Rajya Sabha on the issue, Shiv Sena and Trinamool Congress backed the government in its divestment decision.

Intervening in a day-long debate on the government's decision to sell 51 per cent stake in BALCO to Sterlite Industries for Rs. 551.50 crore, Disinvestment Minister Arun Shourie firmly dismissed opposition allegations of kickbacks in the deal and the involvement of the Prime Minister's Office

(PMO) in it.

"At no stage did anybody from PMO ring me up or enquire about it (Balco deal)," Shourie said in a spirited hour-long reply while hitting out at the Congress for spreading "half truths."

Chhattisgarh rocked

■ **RAIPUR:** THE Centre's decision to disinvest its 51 per cent stake in Balco rocked Chhattisgarh assembly today with government bringing in an official resolution amidst an opposition walkout.

BJP members pressed for taking up the adjournment notice on the unprecedented drought in the state even as Speaker R P Shukla allowed the industries Minister Vidhan Mishra to table an official resolution on Balco.

There was no wrong doing in the process of bidding, selection or quantum of equity sale which was carried out in a totally transparent manner, he said

Lashing out at Chief Minister

of Chhattisgarh Ajit Jogi for making unfounded allegations and threatening to stop water and electricity to the Balco plant in case the Centre decided to go through with the deal, Shourie said governments of both Digvijay Singh (Madhya Pradesh) and Jogi were taken into confidence during the divestment process.

Attacking Congress for doublespeak, Shourie challenged the party to name the officials in the PMO, Disinvestment Ministry or state government who were allegedly the beneficiary of the kickbacks.

"Let Jogi name the officials without the immunity of legislature. Let him name them outside," he said asserting that government would then take suitable action.

If the Chief Minister, who claimed that BALCO shares were worth Rs. 5,000 crore, "brings a buyer for Rs 4,500 crore we will accept the offer and ask Sterlite to go back after giving them Rs. 500 crore," he said rebutting the allegations of underselling the government stake in the PSU.

NDIAN EXPRESS

- 2 MAR 2001

SHIV SENA, TDP DO A TURNAROUND OVER BALCO

Opposition loses vote in LS

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 1. The Opposition-sponsored motion disapproving of disinvestment in the Bharat Aluminium Company (BALCO), was defeated in the Lok Sabha tonight by 239 votes to 119 with three members abstaining. There were no surprises from the treasury benches as some of the allies who earlier objected to the deal recanted their positions.

The motion was put to vote, the first time in the ongoing Budget Session, after two voice divisions failed to satisfy the Opposition. Division was held up for 15 minutes as BSP Members led by Ms. Mayawati stormed the well-demanding reservations for SCs and STs in the private sector.

Replying to the debate, the Minister of State for Disinvestment, Mr. Arun Shourie, stoutly denied allegations of obfuscation in processing the BALCO-Sterlite proposal and said labour interests in the divested undertaking would be protected. There were adequate safeguards in the proposed MoU with the private company against asset stripping and the sale of equity to another company. Mr. Shourie also regretted that such public discussions were highlighting up good, transparent decisions

authed at modernising the industry.

The Opposition continued from where it had left off in the Rajya Sabha earlier this week. But it did not have two of the ruling party's allies on its side as was the case in the Upper House. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) as well as the Shiv Sena, both of whom appeared to differ on the BALCO-Sterlite deal till two days ago, quickly changed their stance.

The biggest turnaround was done by the TDP, which had sharply criticised the Government for "bulldozing" the nation into going along with the transaction. The Trinamool Congress also fell in line after it was assured that there would be no retrenchments in the soon-to-be-privatised state-run company.

Speakers fielded by the TDP and the Shiv Sena justified the agreement with Sterlite, and said the opposition to the deal was unjustified because the Government had given an assurance against retrenchment, and promised that the company's modernisation needs would be taken care of by the new management. The two allies felt that the Government had adequately demonstrated its commitment to transparency, offering to submit all the relevant papers to the CAG. The Shiv Sena mem-

ber, Mr. Ananth Geetha, acknowledged that the party had changed its stand last night following instructions from the party supremo, Mr. Bal Thackeray, who felt that the Government had maintained transparency in the deal and ensured job protection for the workforce. While his party differed with the BJP on certain issues, it would never align with the Opposition to destabilise the NDA Government, said Mr. Geetha. Arguments marshalled by the Opposition ran on expected lines — the methodology adopted to evaluate the company's worth was questionable, Sterlite was not known for good governance practices and that money had allegedly changed hands.

While the Opposition benches derived amusement from the reversal of the TDP's stand, the Law Minister, Mr. Arun Jaitley, first speaker fielded by the BJP, wondered why the Chhattisgarh Chief Minister, Mr. Ajit Jogi, had changed his position. "Officials of Chhattisgarh have fully cooperated in the transaction. Why has he then somersaulted. Was it because he wanted to signal to future investors that they could do no business with Chhattisgarh except on his terms?"

BALCO deal in due course: Page 13

Balco share transfer after House debate

9 Particular
+ K-9
29/2

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 26

THE GOVERNMENT today committed itself to holding back any transfer of Balco shares till March 1 to enable Parliament to discuss the disinvestment deal.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan intervened in the Rajya Sabha in the midst of Opposition criticism of the deal to rebut the charge that Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee had committed an act of impropriety by speaking on the issue outside the House while it was in session and to assure that the transfer of Government stakes into private hands would not occur before the matter was discussed.

Pointing out that right from the moment the issue was raised, the Government had shown its readiness to discuss it.

He asserted that it had done nothing wrong and that there was nothing to hide.

As for the propriety or otherwise of Prime Minister Vajpayee's remarks to reporters outside Parliament, he said it was not a statement.

The decision to disinvest in Balco was taken by the Cabinet, which was presided over by the Prime Minister.

If the Press had asked the Prime Minister a question, there was nothing objectionable in his defence of the decision. "The Prime Minister has committed no impropriety."



ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE

The matter was raised during zero hour by Pranab Mukherjee, who inquired from chairman Krishan Kant the rule under which the discussion on the Balco deal would take place.

He pointed out that Opposition members had given notices under Rules 169, 176 and 180 for a discussion on the issue.

Charging the Prime Minister with an act of impropriety by speaking outside Parliament, he said that this should not have happened.

Orissa to hold back lease

HT Correspondent
Bhubaneswar, February 26

THE ORISSA Government will not proceed on its agreement with the Centre to grant mining leases to Balco, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said here on Monday.

The alumina major must fulfill its commitment to set up an alumina-processing unit in the State first, he said.

The Centre had requested the State Government to grant 40 sq km in the Saubohumali and Pasangamati areas of Rayagada district for mining purposes to Balco. Though discussions had been going on for around a year, the Union Mines Minister wrote a letter to the State only in January 2001, Patnaik said.

"As other applicants didn't have the experience of producing alumina, the State Government decided to extend leases to Balco on condition that it set up an alumina processing plant in the State," he said.

The agreement is so far only verbal and the leases will be granted only after a written agreement is signed.

Refuting charges that the State Government has played a shady role in the proposed privatisation of Balco, Chief Secretary D.P. Bagchi said privatisation of Balco was decided by the Central Government and the State had absolutely no role to play in it. Bagchi held discussions on the issue with the Union mines secretary over telephone on Monday.

"We are only interested in the value addition of aluminium deposits in the State.

"The Centre need not take the consent of the State Government to reserve any area for public sector undertakings," he said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 FEB 2001

Parliament uproar over Balco deal

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 22

THE GOVERNMENT'S decision to disinvest in Balco today rocked Parliament and Rajya Sabha had to be adjourned hours ahead of schedule.

(There may be trouble again tomorrow as the Congress spokesman announced at his press briefing that the party would "raise" the issue in both Houses of Parliament and expect the Government to come back with a "proper reply.")

The issue was raised in the Upper House by Kapil Sibal (Congress) and Dipankar Mukherjee (CPM) during Zero Hour, who alleged the deal was a sell-out. C. Ramachandraiah, a member of the NDA ally Telugu Desam, charged there was lack of transparency and the matter was settled in seven days.

In the Lok Sabha, deputy leader of the Congress Madhav Rao Scindia raised the issue accusing the Government of showing scant respect for parliamentary conventions. Demand-

ing a white paper on the Government's disinvestment policy, he said, "We got to know of cash-rich companies like Balco being sold out through the media and it is shocking."

Rajya Sabha Vice-Chairman Suresh Pachouri told agitated Elders the matter could be taken up at tomorrow's meeting of the business advisory committee. Leader of the House Jaswant Singh, who was prevented from presenting his Kashmir ceasefire extension statement, said the Government was not averse to

discuss anything, but the discussions must take place as per the rules of the House.

In spite of this assurance, several Opposition members, including the CPI(M)'s Jibon Roy and those from the RJD, were not satisfied and moved towards the Vice-Chairman to adjourn the House for 15 minutes. When the House reassembled at 12.40 pm, the Opposition kept up its attack. Nitopal Basu (CPI-M) said the Government must assure that before the House discussed the

issue, the disinvestment should not be formalised. Arjun Singh (Congress) said he was entitled to speak on the issue because the aluminium firm belonged to his State, Madhya Pradesh. Within five minutes, the House was adjourned till 2 pm.

Disinvestment Minister Arun Shourie tried to calm the members by saying the Government was ready for a discussion. The whole deal was above board and transparent and the highest bid had been accepted, he said.

Related report on Page 9

TUS UNITE AGAINST SALE

Cutting across party affiliations, TUs have come out strongly against the sale of Balco. Even the BJP-sponsored Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh has criticised the deal. Six labour unions came under the banner of 'Balco Bachao Sangharsh Samiti' and decided to launch a joint struggle against the disinvestment move.

HTC, Korba

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

23 FEB 2001

Stormy Budget session likely

New Delhi, February 16

9 Parliament 21-13
THE CONGRESS today gave enough indications that the Budget session of Parliament would be a stormy affair with the party planning to raise the Gujarat tragedy and other contentious issues including Ayodhya, handling of the Kashmir situation following ceasefire and plight of farmers.

Deputy leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha Madhavrao Scindia said that the main Opposition party would ask the government to come out with its position in view of the VHP's plans to go ahead with construction of the Ram Temple within a year.

In an apparent move to bring fissures in the NDA to the fore, the Congress would seek clarifications from the alliance constituents on the issue as there is a "lot of confusion" on the score, he said. At the outset, the party would give priority for a discussion on the quake and suggest ways to tackle the situation.

Among the number of "burning" issues that have not been handled properly is the question of law and



Madhavrao Scindia

order in Northeast, he said, adding that there was "grave suspicion" that the government was fomenting instability in several Northeastern states for its own partisan ends. Scindia said his party expected that the "spirit of unity" which prevailed among the various Opposition parties on basic issues during the last session would continue in the coming session. "We will make every effort to ensure that spirit prevails."

The session, which has an added significance in view of the coming Assembly elections in the five states, would be used by the Congress to focus on the alleged failure of the government to resolve the problems faced by farmers in the backdrop of the impending lifting of quantitative restrictions. The Congress has also organised a rally in the Capital on February 25 to highlight the plight of farmers. Scindia said that the opening up of imports and fall in prices of agricultural commodities has hit hard the farmers and the FCI has also given a "raw deal" to farmers in several states in the matter of procurement. (PTI)

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 FEB 2001

President to stress govt stand on Pak at House joint session

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 14 FEBRUARY

PRESIDENT K.R. Narayanan, in his address to the joint session of Parliament on February 19, will reiterate the stand of the government — that talks with Pakistan can be possible only if the neighbour puts a full stop to sponsoring cross-border terrorism.

Although this is the stated position of the government, this assertion will assume larger significance in view of the fact that the third extension to the ceasefire will end on February 26. The address is expected to drive home the point to Pakistan that it was yet to reciprocate to New Delhi's peace gesture.

The speech, as part of this, will draw pointed attention to the positive endorsement from key western governments to India's efforts to promote peace by initiating the ceasefire exercise at the border.

The three-hour long vetting exercise indulged in by the Union Cabinet was significant for a variety of reasons. With a view to ensuring that the two arms of the State are seen in perfect consonance on key issues, the draft refrained from referring to issues that have soured the relationship between the President and the government.



Narayanan: Repetitive

It may be recalled that both in the Republic Day message and on the occasion of the Election Commission's anniversary, President Narayanan had expressed his disgruntlement with the decision of the ruling regime to set up the panel for reviewing the Constitution. Another contentious subject, that of enforcing the Family Planning programme through provision of incentives and disincentives, has also been avoided completely in the draft presidential address in a bid to avoid any difference in viewpoint.

The fact that the recently coined Population Policy has failed to make any references to these, has come in handy for the government to defend its decision to drop any mention of incentives and disincentives to implement the Family Planning programme. By decisively skirting any reference to these potentially contentious issues, the government has aimed at ensuring that the presidential address remains a flawless reflection of its own stated position on crucial issues. That the government was keen to avoid any pinpricks was evident when the Cabinet reworked several paragraphs of the address. The Prime Minister has refused to be drawn into any controversy with the President.

The Economic Times

15 FEB 2001

Parliament to give priority to 36 Bills in Budget session

1302
Our Delhi Bureau
NEW DELHI 12 FEBRUARY

65-2
THE BUDGET session of Parliament, commencing on February 19, will give top priority to 36 legislative Bills, including the Electricity Bill, 2001; Protection of Plant Varieties and Farmers' Rights Bill, 1999; Central Vigilance Commission Bill, 1999; Finance Bill, 2001; Cigarettes & other Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement & Regulation of Trade and Commerce, Project Supply & Distribution) Bill, 2000; Agricultural & Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2001; the Foreign Trade (Development & Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2001; the General Insurance

Business (Amendment) Bill, 2001; The Hyderabad Export (Validation) Bill, 2001; the Finance Bill, 2001; Taxation Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2001; Control of National Highways (Land & Traffic) Bill, 2001; etc.

Union minister for parliamentary affairs Pramod Mahajan, who met secretaries and senior officials of various government departments to discuss and identify government business, said the Communications Convergence Bill was likely to be introduced and referred to the Standing Committee of Parliament thereafter. He hoped it would be taken up for discussions during the winter session of Parliament.

However, being the Budget

session, prime importance will be accorded to the rail and general Budget which are to be presented on February 26 and 28, respectively. According to an official press release here, other important Bills likely to be included in government business are the Aquaculture Authority Bill, 2000; the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2001; the Passport (Amendment) Bill, 2001; and the Central Sales Tax (Amendment) Bill, 2001.

Monday's meetings also took stock of some Bills that have been referred to the Standing Committees of Parliament, including the Airports Authority of India Amendment Bill, 2000 and the Aircraft (exemption from taxes and duties on fuel and lubricants) Bill, 2000.

The Economic Times

13 FEB 2001