

Sound of Kargil snore rises from the east

FROM CHANDAN NANDY

Northeast desk in IB.

New Delhi, April 29: The "capture" of Pyrdivah in Meghalaya by the Bangladesh Rifles was no less an intelligence failure on the part of the Research and Analysis Wing and the Intelligence Bureau than the blunder in Kargil.

For four days — April 15 to 18 — neither RAW nor IB sent a report to the Centre. The only message came from Meghalaya chief minister E.K. Mawlong's office to the Union home minister on April 17.

Even at the IB headquarters here, senior officials might have been at fault and there is now the hint of a cover-up. The only IB report on the incident reached the home ministry and the Prime Minister's Office on April 18. By then, Pyrdivah had been "captured" and on that night 16 BSF jawans were brutally tortured and killed.

The report merely says in two paragraphs: "According to a report, exchange of fire between the Border Security Force (BSF) and Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) took place (0430 hrs, April 18, 2001) near Kakripara Border Out Post (BOP) under P.S. Mancachar, district Dhubri, Assam. Two residents of village Kakripara sustained bullet injuries..."

"This is the second incident of firing by BDR during the current week. It may be mentioned that earlier, on the intervening night of April 15/16, 2001, BDR resorted to firing on BSF's BOP Pyrdivah..." (DIB UO No. 10/BD/2001(2)-553 dated 18.4.2001 refers)."

The officer under whose signature the report was sent works in the NGO (not to go to office) section, which handles top-secret matters and is directly and exclusively under the IB director's control. The April 18 reports should have routinely been sent from the

But what has come as a shock is that an IB report sent from the agency's Shillong bureau on April 16 has now "disappeared". The seniormost officer of the IB's subsidiary intelligence bureau in the Meghalaya capital did send a report to its headquarters on April 16. But that report is now untraceable or is being suppressed.

The first RAW report was despatched to the government as late as April 21. It didn't mention how the capture took place.

It spoke only of the BDR chief, Major Gen. A.L.M. Fazlur Rehman. The report said: "He is known for his strong anti-India, anti-BSF sentiments... He is a rabid fundamentalist..."

Reports in the Bangladesh media, however, say he is close to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The RAW report appears to have been tailored to suit the "line" followed by the foreign ministry vis-a-vis Hasina. Rehman has been made to appear anti-Hasina to buttress the belief in Delhi that the BDR committed "local adventurism".

Sources said the home ministry sent a number of messages to RAW officials here and the Indian High Commission in Dhaka between April 16 and 20 to be greeted by silence. This has raised the question whether it was simply another intelligence failure or if there was more to it. In other words, was there a deliberate attempt to blackout information because a critical operation was being given shape to at Pyrdivah? Was that operation intended to help India's friends in Bangladesh?

Bangla protest

Opposition parties in Bangladesh today held nationwide rallies and burnt A.B. Vajpayee's effigies. They sought Vajpayee's apology for the BSF's "intrusion".

THE TELEGRAPH

30 APR 2001

Fire in ammunition dump near Pathankot

By Sarabjit Pandher

CHANDIGARH, APRIL 29. A huge fire broke out in the ammunition dump of the Army's Mamoon Cantonment near Pathankot in Gurdaspur district late tonight. Major panic has been reported in the border township.

The incident comes almost exactly a year after the fire at the Army's Bharatpur ammunition depot in Rajasthan.

Though officials from the Army, police and district administration have rushed to the spot, it could not be confirmed whether there was any casualty.

The police control room in Pathankot, which is about five kilometres from the spot, while confirming the huge fire expressed inability to identify the cause of the fire. However, it was confirmed that

the area had been cordoned off and sealed. Fire-tenders from Gurdaspur and Hoshiarpur have been requisitioned.

(According to a UNI report from Gurdaspur, at least 400 hundred explosions were heard near the dump site on Mission Road on the outskirts of the town.

(The Deputy Commissioner, Mr. B. Vikaran, has left for Pathankot town. Huge flames have been raging at the dump site. Army sources in New Delhi told PTI that the fire broke out at around 10 p.m. at the depot which stores ammunition for mechanised vehicles.)

According to witnesses from Pathankot, who talked to *The Hindu* over phone, the fire was noticed late in the evening when explosions were heard. Soon, panic gripped the area as civilians residing in

nearby localities began to flee when live ammunition went off.

One witness said he saw up to 15-metre-high flames and heard loud explosions. "First we thought that war had broken out with Pakistan or some fierce encounter was on between the security forces and the terrorists near the town. But then we saw people rushing from the cantonment side towards Pathankot."

A senior officer of the State Government, confirmed the fire but did not rule out sabotage as Pathankot was strategically placed near the International Border with Pakistan. Pathankot also provides the land passage to the violence-ravaged Jammu and Kashmir. Security forces there are provided ammunition from the Mamoon dump.

BDR action was planned and unprovoked, claims BSF chief

NEW DELHI: The Border Security Force (BSF) said on Sunday that the "totally unprovoked" action by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) was a "planned" venture in which its chief was involved.

The BSF also rejected charges that the construction of a road along the border had led to the skirmishes in which 16 of its men had lost their lives and denied having obtained prior information from any agency about the BDR action in the Pyrdiwah area under Indian possession.

BSF director general, Gurbachan Jagat, said that the claim by Bangladesh that the BDR action was prompted by the construction of a path in the Pyrdiwah area was baseless. "There was no construction on the border. A path is being built at Lynkhat, about 4.5 km inside the border," he said.

Regarding reports that the action taken by BDR troops was purely at the instance of a local commander, Mr Jagat said "it was a planned operation. BDR director general, Maj Gen A.L.M. Fazlur Rahman was involved in it. Three battalions of the BDR could not have moved without his knowledge."

Terming the BDR action in Pyrdiwah as "totally unprovoked," he said the Indian Border Outpost (BOP) in the area was surrounded by about 300 BDR personnel and hundreds of civilians. "They (BDR personnel) repeatedly said that they had orders from Dhaka," he added. Asked whether it could be the political leadership in Dhaka,

he said "I can't say".

For the first three days after encircling the Indian BOP on April 15, the BDR personnel "just insisted that we vacate the area, an adverse position. But we told them that it had to be decided by the political leadership and not the forces." Mr Jagat said.

"The issue of path was added on April 18," he added.

Referring to the Boraibari incident, Mr Jagat denied that the BSF had retaliated against the BDR action in Pyrdiwah, saying that "had it been so, we would have taken measures and moved with more troops."

Detailing the events in Mankachar-Boraibari, Mr Jagat said after the BDR action in the Pyrdiwah area, the BSF was alerted and patrolling was ordered in other sectors to prevent a similar incident.

"On the night of April 18, a BSF patrol was fired at and it was construed as a precursor to an attack by the BDR," he said, adding in a bid to pre-empt any such plan, the BSF commandant decided to enter the Boraibari area to gain a "tactical advantage".

The BDR brought civilians forward as a defence shield due to which the BSF commandant B.R. Mondal decided not to fire. "This resulted in their capture and killing," Mr Jagat said.

The BSF chief said that in view of this month's incidents, redeployment of troops had been carried out and patrolling on the Indo-Bangla border was being strengthened.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

30 APR 2001

Centre declares ceasefire with NSCN(K)

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 28. — The Centre today declared a cease-fire with the Khaplang faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland with immediate effect for a year in a bid to usher in peace in the insurgency-stricken North-eastern state.

It was jointly agreed between the Centre and the NSCN (Khaplang) to announce a formal declaration of cease-fire in the whole of Nagaland, according to a senior official of the Home ministry.

The home minister, Mr LK Advani's formal declaration of the

sources said.

Besides the Khaplang faction of the NSCN, the government had entered into a formal cease-fire with the other faction, Isak-Muivah, with effect from 1 August 1997, which is coming to an end on 31 July 2001. There have been persistent demands from civilians, NGOs, church leaders and the state government to enter into a formal cease-fire with other militant groups.

During the visit of Mr Advani to Nagaland last February, a formal request was received from the Khaplang faction.

With the help of defence ministry

officials and others, the cease-fire ground rules have been agreed upon between the government and the faction. The truce is to be applicable to the whole of Nagaland.

For a mechanism to monitor the truce, a Ceasefire Supervisory Board having five members from the Central and state governments and five members from the NSCN (K) would be set up. The chairman of the group would be nominated by the Centre.

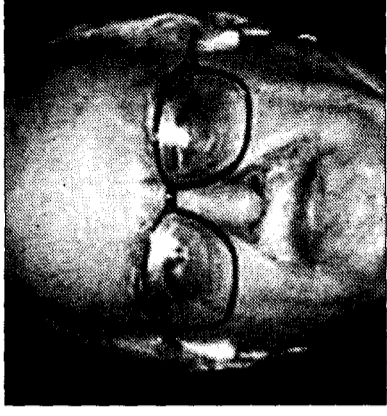
The Khaplang faction has agreed that it would refrain from killing security forces and civilians. It would not harbour other militant groups either. Similarly, it has

been agreed that the Centre would reciprocate on similar lines.

It has further been agreed to confine itself to designated camps which are yet to be finalised.

The strength of the Khaplang group is about 2,200 as against the Isak-Muivah faction's 3,500. The third faction is the Naga Nationalist Group having marginal backing compared to the other two factions.

While the Khaplang faction has political leanings with the Myanmarese falling on the Nagaland side and has sizeable influence in the state itself, the Isak-Muivah faction has strong influence in Manipur.



Mr LK Advani

The bloated BSF leadership just does not care for the brave jawans at the border

Lonely vigil

BY MANVENDRA SINGH

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HF-8

27/4

MISSING PATROL' and 'mutilated bodies' has a sinister ring to it. Eerily similar to an event almost two years ago when a young army officer with his patrol of less than a section strength went missing in the heights and snows of Kargil. They returned to India more than a month later in a grossly mutilated state.

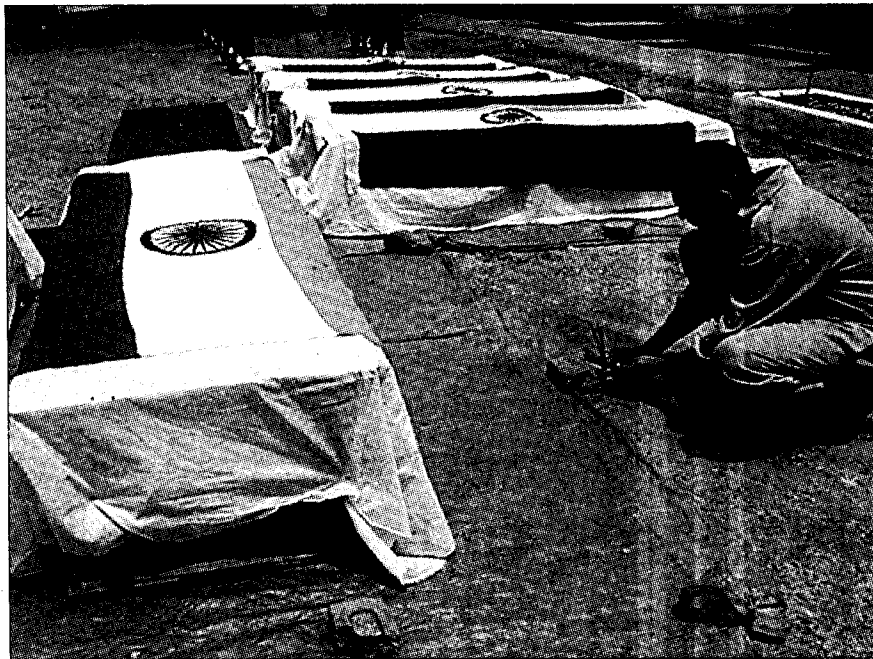
That 4 Jat patrol went to probe an intrusion into Indian territory, but the latest 'missing patrol' was doing nothing of the sort. In fact, it was not even in India. The fact that a Border Security Force patrol underwent torture and mutilation much like the 4 Jat soldiers is the subject of an altogether different discourse; what is of relevance here is the conduct of the affected organisation.

Pyrdiwah in Meghalaya is miles away from Mankachar in Assam. And that long distance becomes even longer when sifting fact from fiction. For in that process a yet unfathomable distance, between officers and the men of the BSF, crops up, thus making the enquiry doubly disturbing.

From the sequence of events, and the little that the BSF is currently willing to disclose, it is apparent that what happened at Pyrdiwah along the Meghalaya-Bangladesh border by the Bangladesh Rifles was sought to be corrected by a unilateral BSF action in Boraibari inside Bangladesh. In the process, 16 brave BSF men fell victim to a mindset that was in evidence two years ago in the snows of Kargil. More of that later, but what is of greater concern is that they were also the victims of a deep-rooted malaise within the BSF. And this raises the fundamental question as to what is the role and what are the tasks devolving on the BSF.

This question, however, cannot be answered unless there is an understanding of the key problem afflicting a potentially outstanding organisation. The BSF is currently tasked to perform duties ranging from guarding the borders, for which it was raised, to counter-insurgency operations in Jammu & Kashmir, for which it was not raised, and even an attempt at catching Veerappan, which its founders certainly did not visualise.

The BSF is expected to perform all of these roles simply because those that decide on deployment matters for these brave men have never manned a post, let alone undertake a patrol in a life-threatening environment. They have never sat through an ambush in adverse weather, and to top it all, the fact that they have never faced bullets fired in anger or



SCAPEGOATS OF THE SYSTEM: Coffins of the slain BSF men

hate while sending their troops to do the same really takes the moral authority from them.

At the end of the day, the simple fact is that the tasking of the BSF does not fit into the profile of its leadership. And it is this dichotomy between the leaders and the led that needs to be first understood within the country before passing judgments on the crooked and the criminal of the Bangladesh Rifles.

The leadership within the BSF is of three different types, operates at three different levels, and rarely has less than three different opinions on any given operational situation. At the basic level are those who gain promotion by making their way up the ranks, from the constable level. These are the over-age assistant commandants and sometimes deputy commandants who make the news after they are unable to ever read it. At an age when their children are well into adulthood, these workhorses of the BSF are expected to undertake operational patrols, on the Barmer border or even in Baramullah. That most outside observers regard these officers as the best among the BSF leadership should not be in the least bit surprising.

After this lot come those who are

directly selected as assistant commandants through a process that cannot determine their efficacy in combat, which is what they are expected to undertake in service. They are trained at a training establishment that seeks to replicate a military environment without the ability to inculcate any of the additional responsibilities that come along with command.

This is the most resentful section of the BSF leadership. They resent the lack of respect shown to them by the promoted, on account of the vastness of experience that the latter has, and they also resent the blocking of top posts by those that come from outside of the service. And those are the ones who take operational decisions.

The cream of the BSF appointments are taken by those whose only qualification to the job is that they have been able policemen. BSF HQ is suffused with various military types ranks on the shoulders and stars on car plates, but with little to show in terms of experience at the company or battalion level in adverse circumstances.

And this is amply reflected by the manner in which BSF units are flung from one corner of the country to another,

er, all in an effort to imitate a military move from peace to field which neither its training nor its leadership can sustain.

The manner in which personnel are retained or posted for years together in comfort or in combat, simply at the whim of one of 'generals' at the HQ is another uncomfortable matter. Which then makes it amply clear as to why BSF troops manning posts, in Srinagar or in Sriganganagar, frequently complain about not having seen their officers for weeks on end. And those they see are the over-age type.

It is a frightening scenario, but factual, that able troops of an organisation such as those of the BSF can survive for so long without operational direction from their officers.

Little wonder then that those who live along the frontiers of India refer to the border posts as the 'BSF Highway'. For that is how life continues on the border, sans leadership, sans motivation. That is pretty much how it must have gone on around Pyrdiwah until the roguish Bangladesh Rifles decided to settle an old score.

A semblance of leadership on the ground would have sensed a troop build-up, let alone the sight of trenches after they have already been dug. Nothing of the sort happened, for there was no leadership. Common sense would determine that if there was an intelligence failure then it was that of the BSF leadership holding that stretch of the border. And if ever there was an example of intelligence having failed, it was the decision to send a retribution patrol to Boraibari after the Pyrdiwah incident.

Clearly taken at a higher level than that of a battalion, this smacks of complete ignorance as to the desirability of settling scores with guns and bullets. But then that is only to be expected from a leadership that has never used these ultimate instruments of coercion in a combat situation.

An understanding of this fundamental handicap is essential to remake and revamp the BSF command structure if India is to restore a sense of purpose to its vigil on the border. After this exercise is over and done, Indians can begin to ask themselves another tricky, and fundamental, question — as to whether it was in national interest to aid in the process of making East Pakistan into Bangladesh. Quite clearly, many there see themselves in the mould of West Pakistan.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

27 APR 2001

Indian troops on alert after Bangla build-up

REUTERS
AGARTALA, APRIL 24

INDIAN troops have been put on maximum alert along the border with Bangladesh following a build-up of forces on the other side, a senior Indian military official said on Tuesday.

"They not only increased strength but also dug trenches and took positions with sophisticated weapons," Border Security Force (BSF) Deputy Inspector General S Basumatari said in Agartala. "Their movements are now visible on several border points along Tripura."

Indian border forces had also been put on maximum alert in Mizoram and in one district of Assam, he said.

However in Bangladesh, Major Mahbub ul-Alam, general staff officer of the Bangladesh Rifles operations wing, denied there was any increase of troops and said tension along the border was unwinding after clashes there last week.

"We don't know what's really been going on on the Indian side

20,000 more guards recruited for BDR

DHAKA: THE Bangladesh government is recruiting 20,000 new border guards into the Bangladesh Rifles to safeguard its frontiers with India and to curb smuggling, a top government official said on Tuesday. The decision comes after last week's border clashes between BDR and BSF that left 16 Indian and three Bangladeshi guards dead. The new recruits would increase BDR strength to 58,000 for patrolling the 4,000 km frontier with India, said the official, who spoke on condition of anonymity. The plan had already been approved by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government, he said.

but there has been no particular build-up of troops on this side. We are just keeping a tight vigil though the tension is subsiding," he said in Dhaka.

Skirmishes to the West of Tripura along the 4,000-km (2,500-mile) border between the usually

friendly neighbours last week claimed the lives of 16 Indian and three Bangladeshi troops.

The confrontation was sparked off by the occupation of a narrow strip of land by Bangladeshi forces on the southern fringe of Meghalaya.

Two days later, there was an outbreak of cross-border firing 200 km (125 miles) to the west on the corner of Assam.

The face-off appeared to have fizzled out by Friday after New Delhi and Dhaka agreed that their troops would return to their previous positions along the ill-defined and long-disputed frontier.

However, BSF's Basumatari said an attempt by Bangladeshi troops to attack an Indian border post in Assam was repulsed on Sunday night.

"Our personnel opened fire when they saw some Bangladeshi troops were advancing towards the outpost," he said.

He said the Indian forces had protested to the sector commander of the Bangladesh Rifles over the incident.

INDIAN EXPRESS

25 APR 2001

Usability of GSAT-1 in doubt

By N. Gopal Raj 2574

BANGALORE, APRIL 24. With all its liquid propellant gone in coping with an unexpected contingency, the usability of the GSAT-1, put into orbit on the first launch of the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV), is in doubt.

There had been a deficiency in one of the GSAT-1's orbit parameters because of a shortfall of 0.6 per cent in the overall velocity given to the satellite. This minor deficiency was correctable and was, in fact, corrected during subsequent manoeuvres, said Dr. K. Kasturirangan, Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation, at a press conference here this evening. He complimented the ISRO engineers for evolving a novel strategy to conserve propellant while making these corrections.

But an unexpected contingency which required extra propellant for correcting the satellite's orientation had led to all the propellant onboard being depleted. As a result, the satellite was at present in a "drift orbit" where it would circle the earth once every 23 hours, instead of being in a geostationary orbit matching the earth's rotation.

The satellite was stable and in "excellent condition"; its antennas, solar array and solar sail had all been successfully deployed. The ISRO Chairman believes some experimental communications might be possible, but these were still being worked out.

According to Dr. Kasturirangan, the problem arose because fuel was drawn unequally from the two tanks in which it was stored. The resulting imbalance made the spacecraft tilt and extra propellant had to be used to correct the tilt.

Two old propellant tanks, one German-made and the other Indian, which were readily available had been used since the GSAT-1's primary purpose to validate the GSLV mission. A scheme for drawing fuel at different rates from the two tanks had been worked out taking into account the differences in their design. But there were still some small imbalances which added to the problems when additional propellant was already needed to correct the orbit.

The next launch of the GSLV, when it would be upgraded to carry a satellite weighing 1,750 to 1,800 kg., was scheduled for the third or fourth quarter of 2002.

THE HINDU

APR 25 2001

Minister to BSF: ^{3/1} Be on alert

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA 26/4

MANCACHAR, April 25. — The Union minister of state for home affairs reviewed the situation on the Indo-Bangla border today and instructed the BSF to be on "maximum alert" to prevent BDR attacks.

Mr ID Swami who reached Mancachar in Assam, bordering Bangladesh, for an on-the-spot assessment of the situation interacted with BSF jawans posted on the frontiers.

He directed higher authorities to monitor the situation and keep a strict vigil. Accompanied by the joint secretary in charge of North-east, Mr GK Pillai, Mr Swami was received at Mancachar by the inspector general of BSF headquarters in Shillong, Mr VK Gaur.

He left for Shillong where he is scheduled to hold meetings with BSF officials and the Meghalaya chief minister. Mr Swami will visit Pyrdiwah in Khasi hills district of Meghalaya and Lathitill in Assam tomorrow.

Firing: Mr PK Mahanta today said sporadic firing was reported from the border in Karimganj sector. Asked about the situation in a sector after the abortive bid by BDR to capture Latitilla-Dumabari border outpost, Mr Mahanta said: "There's sporadic firing..."

■ Another report on page 8

THE STATESMAN

26 APR 2001

26 APR 2001

Bangla border showdown raises national security alarm

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 22 APRIL

THE TROUBLES on the Bangladesh border has brought national security issues to the fore and with it questions about the Vajpayee government's responses.

With the Sonia Gandhi-led Congress preoccupied with the imagined as well as real troubles facing their leader, the offshoots of the Sangh brotherhood and the alliance partners have upped their ante and demanded stern action from the Indian side.

The groupings within the ruling alliance, which do not appreciate the diplomatic tightrope walking, could raise the temperature and make things difficult for the government in the coming days. It is certain that the issue will become a potent campaign theme in election-bound West Bengal and Assam where infiltration from across the border have always remained a potent theme.

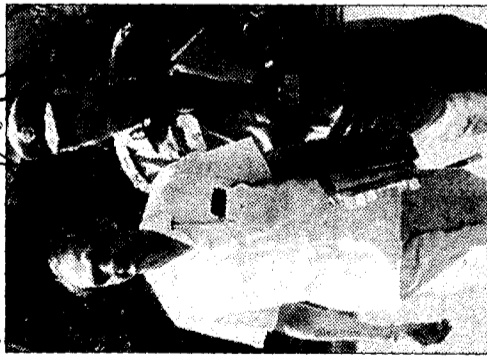
The latest crisis offers an opportunity for the Congress and the rest of the Opposition to target

intelligence failure as the 800-strong intelligence group failed to get any wind of it. It may be recalled that the lapses of the intelligence set up was one of the key findings of the Subrahmanyam panel which went into the Kargil conflict.

That the government's reflexes were far from satisfactory was being admitted by government leaders themselves.

The Prime Minister's high-powered Cabinet Committee on Security and the security apparatus within the Prime Minister's office can at best be rated as post-mortem groups.

For the Prime Minister, who came to power over the "patroism" and "national security" slogans, the development do not augur well. Although there is agreement that the government should do nothing that could lead to a full-blown crisis and help in maturing contradictions within the Bangladeshi establishment, there is anger over Vajpayee government's failure to pre-empt troubles and take precautionary steps.



GRIM TRUTHS: Home secretary Kamal Pandey (left) and BSF chief Gurbachan Jagat after a meeting with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on the Bangladesh border impasse in New Delhi on Sunday. — PTI

the government over security-related issues. In any case, there is clear evidence to suggest a major

New Delhi

22 APRIL

INDIA SAID on Sunday that at least eight of its 16 border troops who died during a clash on the frontier with Bangladesh last week were "brutally murdered."

New Delhi stopped short of criticising Dhaka, saying that it had "been given to understand" that the incident on the southwestern corner of the state of Assam was caused by unilateral action taken by Bangladeshi border troops.

Home (interior) secretary Kamal Pandey told reporters after a meeting with the Prime Minister and other senior officials that Indian doctors had examined the 15 bodies handed over at the border on Friday.

"It is quite clear that eight of these bodies have point-blank range bullet wounds. They have also been mutilated and one case of strangulation is there," he said.

"It is very evident that these injuries and these bullet wounds could not have been obtained in firing. They were done as a brutal act of murder at close range."

He said the Bangladesh Rifles border force would, later in the day, hand over the body of another Border Security Force (BSF) trooper. Two injured soldiers will also be returned. Bangladesh, on Saturday, denied having knowledge of any mutilation of the bodies, but promised that it would investigate the Indian complaints.

The two usually friendly neighbours had last week agreed to end the clashes between their border troops after 18 personnel — 16 Indian and two Bangladeshi — were killed on April 18 in fighting over a disputed patch of land.

Earlier on Sunday, Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee discussed the conflict at an hour-long meeting with home

minister L.K. Advani, foreign and defence minister Jaswant Singh, BSF director-general Gurbachan Jagat and other top officials.

The Indian home secretary said the officials had discussed a preliminary report submitted by the BSF director-general on the fighting. Mr Pandey said more details about the killing would become known after the return of the two injured personnel.

The home secretary denied that there had been an intelligence failure on India's part in anticipating a conflict with Bangladesh. He added that a final report would shed more light on the matter.

Analysts have said that India's response to the conflict was very muted as it believed the border offensive had been triggered by political jostling in Bangladesh ahead of the forthcoming elections. — Reuters

Murder signs on 8 jawan corpses

BSF knew about Bangla army presence along the border

P P Singh

MANCACHAR 22 APRIL

BSF OFFICIALS on Sunday admitted they had information of Bangladesh Army being deployed on the international border. They had, however, felt that the BSF was capable enough to handle them stated I.J. Singh, Commander of Guwahati Sector, while briefing the Assam chief minister P. K. Mahanta who had gone to review the situation at the border town.

Mr Singh also informed it was the Bangla army which had fired the mortars and not the BDR. This goes to prove it was a joint operation by the Bangla army and the BDR and not a sole BDR offensive as has been reported till date.

He also informed the chief minister that according to reports received from intelligence agencies like RAW, they were able to inflict heavy casualties on 33rd Battalion of BDR, killing 21 of their men. BSF reports however said they killed 7 to 8 men of the BDR, injuring another ten or twelve.

What Mr Singh could not explain was how the ill-fated patrolling party landed into the trap of the waiting mob if they had prior information that the army was deployed from the other side. The mob most surely had the moral and military backing of some organisation which was clear by the way the bodies of the dead looked. Whether this was a tip-off from someone within the organisation or due to intelligence failure he could not give any clear indication.

Dhubri SP A.J Baruah while talking to ET informed that even under normal circumstances, it was always felt that the number of men deployed



EYES WIDE OPEN: Assam chief minister Prafulla Mahanta at the Mancachar sector of the Indo-Bangladesh border on Sunday. — Caroline Singh

along the international border was not sufficient. They had asked for more troops, even offering some land for setting up a Battalion Headquarter there.

Assam chief minister P.K Mahanta also said the Assam government has been asking for more paramilitary force in that area. He regretted that one Battalion was given, but it was shifted to Meghalaya neglecting the need of the region.

Mr Mahanta said after the recent clashes, it was felt that the strength of the troops should be increased immediately and there should not be a question of Assam or Meghalaya while positioning them. It should be need based.

Mr Mahanta however ruled out the need for an independent enquiry into the incident.

The Economic Times

23 APR 2001

Another Kargil on the Bangla border

21/4
For those like myself who were present at the creation, the irony is bitterest of all: our Border Security Force *jawans* murdered and mutilated by the armed forces of a country we played no small part in liberating.

I have twice been to the Dawki checkpoint, adjacent to the Khasi village of Pyrdiwah which the Bangladesh Rifles captured: once, in the first year of liberation, when we were working towards restoring limestone supplies by aerial ropeway from Cherrapunji on our side of the border to the cement factory at Chatak in Bangladesh, and next on the 25th anniversary of liberation when I returned on a mission of reportage to the Bangladesh I had known so well in the year of its birth. Next to the Bangladesh checkpoint opposite Dawki is a memorial to the Bangla martyrs who were mown down by the Pakistanis with the same brutality and inhumanity which the Bangladesh Rifles have now inflicted on our soldiers. How have we come to such a pass?

The fault lies in ourselves. More specifically, in our bungling, incompetent government. The Subrahmanyam committee lists no less than 17 separate elements of evidence that the government of India had been alerted to the hostile build-up across the line of control in Kargil. It wilfully did nothing about this intelligence because it was so blinded by the prospective dividends of Atal Bihari Vajpayee's bus *yatra* to Lahore that it did not want to hear the bad news. That the government has learned no lessons from Kargil is now nakedly on display on the India-Bangladesh border. Intelligence reports have been filed away, unread or at any rate not acted upon. No pre-emptive action has been taken militarily, diplomatically or politically to forestall the disaster. Reports from our high commission in Dhaka have been ignored. The government has been caught napping — and a score of our *jawans* caught dead.

The root cause of this unforgivable smugness in matters of national security is Pokhran-II. In the immediate aftermath of our becoming a nuclear weapon power, the former defence minister, George Fernandes, in his foreword to the 1999 edition of D.R. Mankekar's *The Guilty Men of 1962*, wrote that Pokhran-II had exposed "the myth" of any danger from Pakistan! The Pakistanis killed 500 of our bravest and best to show Fernandes how criminal was his complacency.

The sacking of George Fernandes has done nothing to wake up his successor, Jaswant Singh, who combines responsibility for defence with responsibility for diplomacy, under the personal patronage of the prime minister. Never before in the half-century that India has been independent has one person merged under his control national security with foreign affairs, not even Krishna Menon. Jaswant is the first. He has fallen on his face, both as external affairs minister and as *raksha mantri*, in the very first month of this dubious double stewardship. He must be called to account. So must the prime minister — who stumbles from crisis to crisis, no less metaphorically than he does literally.

One needs no access to secret information to have known that a crisis was in the offing. The answer to the crisis lay neither in the James Bonds of the research and analysis wing nor the Mir Jaffery of Arunachal. Common sense alone would have

MANI TALK

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR



That the government learned no lessons from Kargil is now nakedly on display on the India-Bangladesh border. Intelligence reports have been filed away, unread or at any rate not acted upon. No pre-emptive action has been taken militarily, diplomatically or politically to forestall the disaster. Reports from our high commission in Dhaka have been ignored. The government has been caught napping — and a score of our *jawans* caught dead

shown that the situation inside Bangladesh was explosive. And would have its ferocious repercussions on India. For consider: the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman is coming to the end of her turbulent term as prime minister. Elections are in the offing. They will determine whether those who killed her father and family will return to power. Or whether she will be given the opportunity of finally bringing to justice the murderous subalterns who massacred her kith and kin and ruled for two decades thereafter.

It was inevitable and entirely predictable that India would be dragged into the blast-furnace of such an internecine war. Moreover, it was inevitable and entirely predictable that it would be the companions and comrades-in-arms of the mutinous murderers who would do the dragging. Above all, it was inevitable and entirely predictable that the instrument of dragging us in would be the director-general of Bangladesh Rifles, Major General Fazlur Rahman, a Bonapartist in the mould of Zia-ur-Rahman and Zia-ul-Haq, whose antecedents, character and political preferences are better known in Dhaka than the taste of *hilsa* or the fineness of Dhaka muslin.

This should have alerted even the average newspaper reader to the danger on the border, but not our *videsh-cum-raksha* mantri. Not a single alarm bell was rung. Nothing was done to instruct our border forces to the danger signals to watch out for. The home ministry took no special steps. The defence ministry remained mired in its lethargy. The foreign office was paralysed. The prime minister tended his knees. So lax was our vigilance, so cavalier the approach to national security, that when on the evening of April 15 the villagers of Pyrdiwah rushed to the BSF post with news of the imminent violation of our sovereignty, no one cared to even inform the Neros who run the government of India. The invasion was launched a few hours later, in the dead of the night. Even then, Vajpayee and his minions slept. Not even a fax message next day from the chief minister of Meghalaya woke our Kumbhakarnas from their oblivion. Inevitably and entirely predictably, the ants who had humbled the elephant went on their killing spree.

What has happened on the India-Bangladesh border is Kargil-II. Instead of being put on high alert, the BSF was put in deep slumber. Instead of RAW being revved up, their reports were junked. Military intelligence was unavailable, unasked for, not acted on. The high commission's alarms and excursions were filed away as routine. The external affairs minister did nothing to warn his Bangladesh counterpart of the consequences. The defence minister too did nothing — for like Natha Singh and Prem Singh, the two are one and the same thing — to intimidate the Fazlur Rahmans of Bangladesh. The prime minister did not bestir himself to hammer things home to Hasina.

Pokhran-II has proved more soporific than the bomb. Our nuclear weapons have no more served us than they did the Americans in Vietnam or the Soviets in Afghanistan. We are thus today where Neville Chamberlain was when Leo Amery urged him, "In the name of God — go!" We say to our Chamberlain "In the name of Ram — run!"

The structure of defence administration needs fundamental changes. But why the tearing hurry?

HR 8
22/1

The plot quickens

BY ANAND K. SAHAY

THE DEBATE on whether the country should create the position of Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) has not quite begun. Yet, on account of the positive recommendation of the group of ministers which looked into the matter, the impression has quickly spread that the all-critical official nod will materialise soon enough, altering the landscape totally.

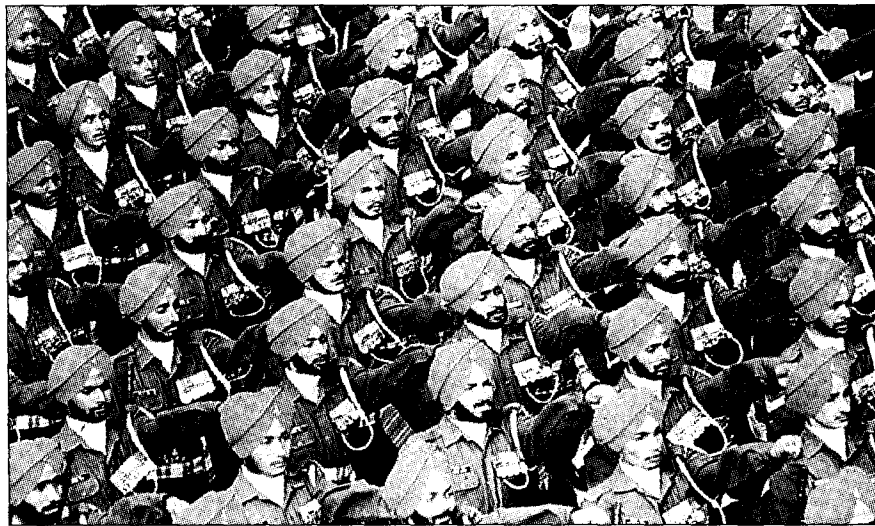
A government clarification to quell the impact of media reports to this effect has failed to efface doubts because the reports themselves were based on high-level off-the-record briefings. It is, indeed, thought that but for last-minute personnel-related doubts raised by the air force, the question may well have been settled by now.

The issue itself is of considerable significance. The proposed CDS has been posited as a leader selected from the armed forces who will be the government's single source of advice on military matters, besides being the commander of all nuclear assets, and also the chief of the Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) which is sought to be established, replacing the existing intelligence gathering systems of the three services. In short, putting the CDS in place portends radical changes in the defence structure and in the civilian-military interface.

It would hardly do, therefore, to go through with such far-reaching changes by means of an executive decision, bypassing national consultation altogether. Let us be quite clear: the changes amount to an overhaul of structure and are necessarily of a long-term nature, and cannot be undone through routine tinkering.

Quite apart from technical and personnel-related questions that arise, it is well worth asking if so many vital and varied functions pertaining to national defence should be vested in a single office or person. Is that sustainable even from the point of view of security?

Besides, how high will the CDS be ranked in the edifice of government? If he is truly to preside over all the authority that is being envisaged, can he merely be another three-star general (in the same category as the service chiefs) — albeit the first among equals — as visu-



Stealing a march over the real issues

alised? Or, given the vast financial and military resources which he will necessarily preside over in view of the proposed mandate, will the CDS not emerge as being more powerful than many cabinet ministers, though he will not be a member of Parliament?

It may well be that in the proposed scheme, the CDS may come to undercut even the defence minister in practice — considering the enormous access to the Prime Minister that he will automatically enjoy. Institutionally, will he be a member of the Cabinet committee on security?

It is far from clear if these issues have been considered in any detail. But on the face of it, the overhaul being contemplated does faintly smell of undue militarisation of a process which does not square well with the running of a democracy. In pre-democratic times, the commander-in-chief was a proper minister of the court, on par with any other. But this ceased to be the case even when India was a colony (and not a democracy). In those times the Governor-General invariably prevailed over the military chief, as the Curzon-Kitchener bitterness bore eloquent witness.

However, regardless of which way the discussion goes, a case for some degree of reorganisation of the armed forces — and correcting distortions in their interface with the civilian authority — suggests itself in the light of recent developments.

First, the forces have been feeling for some time that their voice counts for little. This includes matters of technical decision-making, assessing requirements of men and materials, and spending allocated budgets — not to mention the equally critical areas of assessment of threat perceptions and the formulation of medium and long-term defence parameters.

A related matter is the equation between the civilian bureaucracy which operates the ministry of defence and the armed forces themselves. In sum, something akin to the sense that each of the three services has come to be treated as no more than a public-sector undertaking by senior MoD civilians has come to prevail. This is a matter that certainly deserves to be looked into.

The second important reason for effecting changes in the set-up of the armed forces is the creation of India's nuclear

force and the means of its delivery. These are spread across the three services, and it does make some sense to place them collectively under a single tri-services command in order to optimise and coordinate their strike capability, though the nuclear button will obviously be in the hands of the political leadership. The issue, nevertheless, calls for an in-depth discussion.

The link between the conventional and the nuclear forces will also need to be reflected upon. Another question of vital concern in this context is the command, control and communications (C3) in respect of nuclear weapons since this has a bearing on deployment. Clearly, without a carefully devised C3 system, nuclear weapons can be both pointless and dangerous. And there are no blueprints that can be usefully copied.

The C3 in the US and the former Soviet Union, for instance, evolved even as the Cold War evolved. Besides, one country was a presidential-style democracy and the other a politburo-controlled communist State, with fundamentally different institutional and politico-cultural characteristics. Though a Westminster-style democracy, India cannot imitate or modify the British experience either. After all, the British nuclear force was dovetailed into the overall western structure in which the US played the hegemonic role.

India, thus, needs to develop a unique C3 system of its own, in the context of its political ethos, the overall post-Cold War international security architecture, and in line with its unique 'no first strike' commitment (with all its political and military implications). The gamut of nuclear-related issues can hardly be delinked from the question of creating a separate nuclear command.

These, and all other matters pertaining to a re-look at the structure of defence administration, must not be rushed through before Parliament — possibly via a select committee — has had the opportunity to consider them. In the US, for instance, the issue of military advice to the President, and joint command over military operations, was strengthened by the Edwards-Nichols Defense Reorganisation Act of 1986.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

24 APR 1986

Mahanta fires at Centre on border clash

289A
FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Mancachar, April 22: Arriving at the site of death and destruction after everything is over, Assam chief minister Prafulla Kumar Mahanta today indirectly blamed the Centre for failing to prevent the border flare-up.

Mahanta, who was accompanied by minister of state for forests, Aminul Islam, during his whirlwind tour, said that despite repeated requests the Centre did not post a Border Security Force battalion at Mancachar.

To justify his claims, the chief minister said that the state had already allotted 1,000 acres near Mancachar town for a BSF station. "But the battalion was posted in Meghalaya instead of Mancachar," he said.

Mahanta said local people were demanding a BSF headquarters here for a long time and "this demand deserved consideration by the government of India".

The Centre must take immediate steps to strengthen the security along the Indo-Bangla border in Assam, he said. The state government will submit its views over the incident to the Centre soon.

The chief minister went to the Baraibari village, the root of the border conflict.

Mahanta reviewed the situation in the Mancachar sector in a meeting with the home commissioner, commissioner, Lower Assam division, deputy commissioner and superintendent of police, Dhubri district, at the PWD rest house here.

He met the local people and urged them not to panic. Mahanta described the unwarranted flare-up between the BSF and Bangladesh Rifles as "unfortunate".

BSF DIG I.J. Singh, who was also touring the area with the chief minister, explained to him how the BDR resorted to the "unprovoked" attack on the jawans. Seven BDR personnel were killed in the clash, he said. However, unofficial sources put



Mahanta in Mancachar on Sunday. Picture by Utpal Baruah

the figure at 21, he said.

About 15,000 villagers on the Indian side were affected by the incident, Singh added.

He did not rule out the involvement of the Bangladesh army with the BDR in the unprovoked attack on the Indian side.

Bangladeshi villagers were also involved, Singh said.

People today started returning to their homes in Mancachar as the situation in the border areas limped backed towards normal.

THE TELEGRAPH

23 APR 2011

Centre told to hasten critical arms purchases

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The Centre on Thursday



Jaswant Singh

said there were no further slippages in the induction schedule of the Akash and Trishul missile systems even as the parliamentary standing committee on defence asked it to speed up critical arms purchases like the Airborne Early Warning Systems (AWACs) and weapon-locating radars for the defence services.

The PAC, in its latest report tabled in Parliament, said the government should ensure that projects like AWACs for the IAF and weapon-locating radars for the army did not get entangled in legal hassles and delays. The committee said these state-of-the-art equipments were "badly needed in the present circumstances" and a delay in their acquisition could have an "enormous impact on the deterrence level" of Indian forces, especially when the neighbours were acquiring hi-tech arms.

Stressing the need to speed up the process of establishing the Defence Procurement Board to promote transparency, the committee said it should be ensured that the price negotiating committee and the proposed board were different. Besides, the panel stated that all the members, before and after their tenures on the board, should be vetted by the vigilance department.

Speaking about Akash and Trishul, the government said both these indigenous surface-to-air missile systems were expected to be ready for induction by 2002 after the user trials. "Both have entered guided flight trial phase," said defence minister Jaswant Singh.

On the Light Combat Aircraft, the minister said the Kaveri engine, with its flight rating standard, was likely to be offered for integration with the indigenous LCA project by end-2002. The government had allocated Rs 150 crore this year for the development of the engine which has already undergone 960 hours of ground-testing in India and 45 hours of testing on simulated altitude test facilities abroad.

Speaking about the Advanced Jet Trainer, the government said British Aerospace's Hawk AJT had been shortlisted after due evaluation spread over several years.

"Negotiations have not yet been concluded," said Mr Singh. Discounting fears that protracted negotiations could lead to Hawk's technology becoming outdated, he remarked, "Certain airframe designs, especially that of the trainer aircraft variety, do not get outdated for considerable periods, besides lending themselves to periodical upgrades to retain their effectiveness."

On reports of the U.S. and British Royal Navy warships snooping in Indian waters, the minister said an American naval survey vessel, USNS Bowditch, had been detected in the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone last November, while a Royal Navy vessel, HMS Scott, had been spotted twice — in December 2000 and January this year. Giving his view on the matter, he said, "The government regards the operations by the U.S. and British naval vessels within the Indian EEZ as violation of the UN Convention on the Laws of the Sea and protests have been lodged with Washington and London."

Mr Singh also stated that the Centre was actively considering a proposal to set up a Far Eastern Naval Command by upgrading the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Fortress Command.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

21 APR 2001

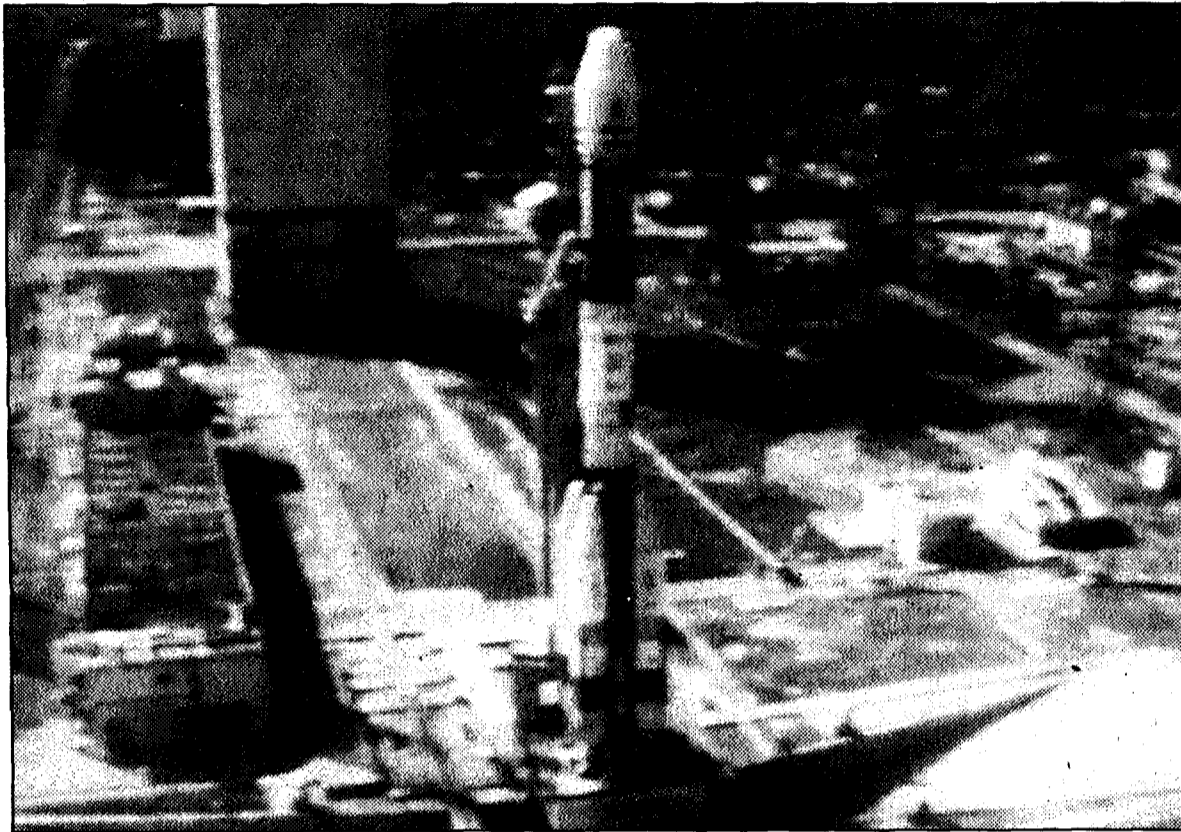
GSLV LAUNCH WHY IT IS A BIG ACHIEVEMENT FOR THE ISRO

Pallava Bagla looks at how ISRO succeeded in making India the first developing country to launch a geo-synchronous satellite

AT 3.43 p.m. on Thursday as soon as the mission control countdown said .5,4,3,2, 1, NOW and once India's second generation rocket lifted upwards into the sky, India became the first developing country to have mastered this complex space technology of launching communications satellites. An ecstatic Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Chairman Dr. K. Kasturirangan described it as an 'exceptional mission since the satellite has been placed in its intended orbit', certainly no mean achievement for it was the very first developmental launch of a complex vehicle. This opens a new chapter in India's quest for a swadeshi stamp on key strategic technologies. As the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), Chairman Dr. K. Kasturirangan says 'it is this quest for developing indigenous capability and the philosophy of self reliance that is behind GSLV'. This launch puts India in the sixth place behind the US, Russia, China, Japan and the European Union, off the space faring nations that have the capability to put the much sought after communications satellites in orbit.

The successful launch took place under tremendous odds and ISRO literally had one of its hands tied behind its back simply because the India's premier space organisation has always been on the so called 'entity list' of America putting it under severe sanctions. Now, did someone say the road to self-reliance is a tough one? India would perhaps know best and this launch should put in perspective to America that no amount of sanctions

At last, it's there



can deter a determined nation from achieving its objectives. Working uphill against US sanctions and roadblocks in its cooperation with Russia, India today launched its first Geo-synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) from the southeastern island of Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh on its first developmental flight. Standing 49 meters tall and weighing 401 tonnes, the GSLV put into geo-synchronous transfer orbit a communications satellite (G-SAT) that weighs 1,540 kg. This is a major advance for India's space science, for the GSLV's predecessor, the Polar Satellite

Launch Vehicle (PSLV) could place a mere 1,050 kg satellite that too in a polar orbit 820 km above the Earth. The entire GSLV project has cost Rs 1400 crores with each launch vehicle costing about Rs 150 crores.

On March 28 the first attempt to launch GSLV was 'aborted' at the very last second and subsequently the problem was identified to a minor 'plumbing' fault in one of the strap on rockets which resulted in an improper thrust being developed in the giant rocket. It is remarkable that ISRO has been able to identify the problem so quickly and with renewed confidence it had been

able to re-schedule the launch within three weeks.

This being the first developmental flight of the GSLV, it was being closely watched since now India may no longer need external support to launch its INSAT communications satellites. This would happen once the vehicle is declared operational but there could be quite a time lag for that to happen since the vehicle can be declared operational only after another two consecutive successes. The GSLV is a three-stage vehicle with a core stage powered by 125 tonnes of solid propellants and a second stage with 37.5

tonnes of liquid propellants. The third is the upper cryogenic stage with 12.5 tonnes of liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen. The GSLV uses a Russian cryogenic stage, imported from Russia under an agreement signed between ISRO and Glavkosmos, a Russian space company in 1991 for Rs 500 crores, which provides the capability to inject heavier satellites into a communications orbit. Kasturirangan says four cryogenic stages are already in India while another 3 are expected soon. But there is much pride at ISRO because the electronic, control and guidance systems to go along with the cryogenic stage were created at ISRO. The Indian cryogenic stage is likely to be ready in another 3 years. Equipped with five transponders, the G-SAT an experimental satellite will augment digital audio and television, and Internet services.

ISRO officials claim it has been a decade of hard work to build up the huge and complex infrastructure that is now supporting this mission. At Mahendragiri, ground facilities to store liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen and transfer them to the launcher's cryogenic stage were all part of this big mission. The Mobile Service Tower, originally built for the PSLV, was reconfigured to a new height 5 m more than the original, to enable the stacking of the GSLV's stages. So, Indian scientists are proud enough that although the Russians supplied the cryogenic equipment, it's been a challenge for ISRO to install, test and commission them.

But there are worrying questions that still remain on whether the GSLV can really be competitive in its commercial pricing since as Kasturirangan himself acknowledges 'GSLV is competitive only with medium range payloads but not with the heavier class of satellites' the ones that are in vogue today. More importantly, the turn around time between consecutive launches will have to be reduced to months from years if India can even think of stepping into the select club of nations and corporations that offer reliable commercial satellite launch services.

INDIAN EXPRESS

21 APR 2001

ISRO hopes to overcome orbit shortfall

By N. Gopal Raj *RD-1*

BANGALORE, APRIL 19 There appears to have been some under-performance in the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) launched on Wednesday. Nevertheless, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) believes that it can ensure that the GSAT-1 satellite meets its design life of three years.

The orbit figures released by ISRO show that the GSAT-1's farthest distance from the earth (apogee) after the launch was 32,051 km, compared to the 35,975 km which should have been achieved.

The shortfall of 3,900 km in apogee is well beyond the launch vehicle's permissible orbital dispersion. In addition, the orbital inclination — the angle at which the satellite's orbit is inclined to the equator — is 19.2 degrees, compared to the 19 degrees planned for.

Additional propellant would therefore be needed to correct these shortfalls. The amount of propellant left when the satellite reaches its final position in orbit is a major determinant of its life since fine orbit trimming oper-

20/4
ations have to be regularly carried out throughout its lifetime.

Calculations show that the satellite would have had about 100-120 kg available to it for such corrections at the beginning of life, if it had been injected into the planned orbit. Calculations suggest that the additional propellant required by the GSAT-1 to compensate for the shortfalls of its orbit could be as much as 50 kg. One would, therefore, have expected the life of the satellite to be considerably reduced.

But ISRO appears confident that the satellite can be made to serve its design life of three years.

According to one source, to allow for contingency situations, the satellite had been loaded with more propellant than was strictly necessary for three years of life. But this additional propellant alone will not suffice and ISRO will be looking to two other measures as well.

One is to minimise the propellant consumed in moving the satellite from its initial orbit to its destination in the geostationary orbit, some 36,000 km above the equator. Today morning, the first firing of the GSAT-1's onboard

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liquid-fuelled rocket engine went on for just 20 minutes, half that originally planned.

The idea is to carefully check the satellite's orbit accurately before making further corrections. The onboard motor will be fired four or five times altogether, instead of the three firings originally planned. The other path for eking out the propellant would be to reduce the periodic corrections carried out after the satellite reaches its destination. This was done both in the case of Insat-2A and Insat-2B satellites when a problem in their tank design reduced the propellant available for corrections.

But there is no word yet on what caused the under-performance of the GSLV. Two systems could be the prime suspects. One is the imported Russian cryogenic engine which has only been ground-tested and has never before flown on any launch vehicle. The other is the rocket's guidance and navigation system. This system has been successfully flown four times on the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). But that was for polar launch missions. This is its first debut for an equatorial launch.

20 APR 2001

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FURTHER INTO SPACE

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INDIA'S QUEST FOR self-reliance in space technology has now been met in substantive measure with the launch of the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) from Sriharikota. The majestic Indian triumph marks the fruition of a dream dared four decades ago by a few visionary nation-builders, especially Vikram Sarabhai: to create a full-fledged space programme for the nation. What makes the latest lift-off an occasion to mark in India's chequered space history is the ability of the nation's scientists to handle complex systems. That the launch took place exactly three weeks after the March 28 last-second abort reflects not just the mastery of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) over launch vehicle techniques. It is also a testimony in space to the ability of the organisation that it can quickly and accurately identify its mistakes and correct them. With its success, the ISRO has proved yet again that it can deliver what it promises to do, despite initial setbacks. In its immediate recovery from the aborted launch, the standing of ISRO as a 'cando' organisation has been established by becoming the sixth in the world to develop the capability to launch satellites into the highly challenging geosynchronous transfer orbit, which calls for mastery over launch vehicle and guidance systems.

While there is no doubt that Indian space capability has gained a remarkable boost with the GSLV, it would also be necessary to place the latest achievement in perspective. The most important factor to be weighed while evaluating the significance of the launch is that the very crucial cryogenic stage of the launch vehicle is imported. The ability of the GSLV to launch heavier communication satellites presently in vogue would also come under question, especially given the rapid advances made by other agencies. Nonetheless, the success should give the Indian space establishment the confidence to proceed with its own developments in cryo-

genic technology. Moreover, the latest Indian success has come against some odds. Some of which, especially the difficulties faced on account of restrictions in transfer of cryogenic technology, could have been averted if India had unhesitatingly chosen to go indigenous in this core area. The immediate need is to intensify the efforts to make up for the lost time. The placing of the satellite in geosynchronous transfer orbit puts to test the Indian ability to handle complex satellites. In the years ahead, ISRO should take its aggressive efforts at indigenisation further, now that it has the confidence of a successful developmental launch. The nation's space organisation should also embark upon a programme to popularise its efforts to draw upon the wider support and enthusiasm that prevails in the country for advances in science and technology.

G. D. S. N. Srinivasan

The long saga of the GSLV has also provided a much-required avenue of expression for the latent pool of scientific talent available in the nation. The involvement of over 150 organisations — including industries in the private sector and leading academic institutions — in this success story only proves the need for a convergence of the available domestic capabilities for furthering scientific advances. With appropriate adaptations, the success of the ISRO's linkages with industry and academia could be replicated in other crucial areas. To build on the successful launch of the GSLV, there should be adequate support from Parliament as well as the Government, especially at a time when the Tenth Plan allocations are under way. The thrust of the future of ISRO should be to make the required quantum leap to take the nation closer to the rapid developments that are taking place in the select group of nations involved in space technology. India should not be happy with merely remaining in the space club. It is important that it does not remain a laggard.

THE HINDU

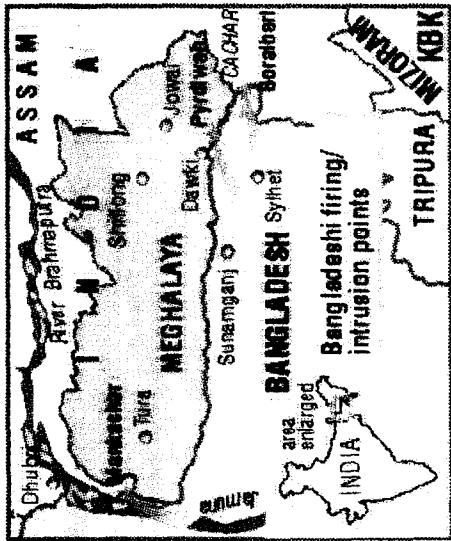
20 APR 2001

Pak angle in border skirmish needs probing

By K. Subrahmanyam
 The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI: There may well be more to the unprovoked firing by the Bangladesh Rifles (BDR) that led to casualties among Border Security Force (BSF) personnel than simply a case of the jitters, miscalculation or miscommunication.
 At 5 p.m. on Wednesday, the BDR director-general denied on Indian TV that there was any firing.

NEWS ANALYSIS

And yet, Indian TV reports confirmed the occupation of an Indian enclave by army personnel deputied to the BDR. These circumstances suggest that an investigation is in order on whether a purely local incident could have led to exchange of fire of this intensity, including the use of mortars, significant casualties on the Indian side and bland denials by the DG, BDR. Indeed, there are reasons to believe



that something is seriously amiss here. Elections are due in Bangladesh in the next few months. As some Bangladeshis would say, Sheikh Hasina Wajid is fighting a third liberation war against parities and forces which are avowedly pro-Pakistan and anti-Indian. The Bangladeshi army, BDR and intelligence agencies are highly politicised. At the time of the last elections, senior army and foreign service officers were accused of acting in a partisan manner. The Bangladeshi armed forces and intelligence services have always had rogue elements which have collaborated with the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) in allowing Bangladesh to be used as a base for the activities of insurgents in the north-east. They have also helped Bangladesh act as a conduit for slipping in Pakistani terrorists and intelligence agents into this country. It seems a reasonable guess, then, that the border incidents are an attempt to whip up strong anti-India feelings before the elections.

Parliament adjourned over defence scam

HT-9
19/9

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 18

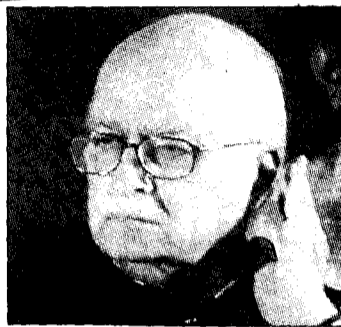
PARLIAMENT CONTINUED to be rocked by the tehelka controversy today as both Houses had to be adjourned, with a vociferous Congress-RJD combine continuing to press for a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe.

Agitated Congress and RJD MPs were on their feet as soon as Question Hour ended and rushed to the Well of the House to raise slogans in support of their demand. Those on the Treasury Benches launched a counter-offensive by waving copies of a newspaper report carrying Subramanian Swamy's allegations against Sonia Gandhi. Amid slogans, the Speaker adjourned the House till tomorrow as Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan's attempts to persuade NDA members to resume their seats proved futile.

Similar scenes were witnessed in the Rajya Sabha right after the Question Hour. Opposition Elders went a step further and demanded the resignation of the Vajpayee Government.

Chairman Krishan Kant adjourned the House till 2 pm. As Congress and RJD members refused to relent after the House reassembled, it was adjourned for the day. Congress-RJD MPs and NDA members continued to fight outside the two Houses as well, jostling with each other before the battery of cameras stationed in Parliament House.

The two groups were seen snatching placards and photocopies of reports against Sonia from each other and tearing them into pieces.



Objectionable book won't be banned

THE GOVERNMENT had found two books on Ramakrishna Paramahansa, recommended for additional reading by *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, objectionable, but would not ban them. Home Minister L K Advani told the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday.

The first proposal to ban the books was made in 1997, he said, but the Government, after weighing the pros and cons, had decided against proscribing them. It considered all aspects after the HRD Ministry had urged a look at it. The External Affairs Ministry too had been consulted. Banning the books, it had been decided, would give them undue publicity, he said. As the Chennai branch of the Ramakrishna Mission had approached *Encyclopaedia Britannica* to delete the two references, the Centre would await the outcome, Advani added.

HTC, New Delhi

Court orders separate trial for hijack accused

New Delhi, April 18

CBI HAS secured court permission for separate trial of three accused in the IC-814 hijacking case as the agency was unable to secure the arrest of five hijackers and two of their accomplices from Pakistan, agency sources said here today.

Sources said the agency had moved the designated court in Patiala, which had agreed to hold trial of three others — Abdul Latif alias Patel, Bhupalmar Damai alias Yusuff Nepali and Dilip Kumar Bhujel — already arrested by the agency.

The CBI has also secured a "red corner" notice against the five hijackers — Ibrahim Athar, Sunny Ahmed Qazi, Zahoor Ibrahim, Shahid Akhter Sayed and Shakir — and two accomplices Yusuf Azhar and Abdul Rauf from the Interpol.

Yusuf Azhar and Abdul Rauf are believed to be key conspirators behind the hijacking of the plane from Kathmandu to Kandahar in southern Afghanistan on December 24. The designated court has also declared the seven absconding accused in the case as proclaimed offenders.

19/4
The sessions judge S N Aggarwal had directed CBI to proceed with the trial against the three accused already arrested in connection with IC-814 hijacking case. The CBI on June 21 filed a chargesheet against 10 people in the hijacking case.

The CBI, through ministry of external affairs, had also made a formal request to the Pakistan Government for extradition of five hijackers and two of their accomplices responsible for hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane. The requests were made under the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation and the Hague Agreements under which Pakistan is obliged to extradite them. However, Pakistan continued to maintain silence over the issue, the sources said.

The sources also expressed fears that there was a little hope to nab the seven accused until Pakistan provided help. The agency had also provided the addresses of the seven accused to Pakistan. The United State's Central Intelligence agency has also filed a case in the hijacking of the Indian Airlines plane as one American national was also onboard the ill-fated plane. **PTI**

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 5 APR 2001

GSLV launch successful, satellite placed in orbit

19/4

By R.K. Radhakrishnan 410-1

SRIHARIKOTA, APRIL 18. India today bridged a technological gulf when its biggest rocket, a Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV), placed a satellite in a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO), just past 4 p.m.

"The launch vehicle took off majestically at the appointed time, 3.43 p.m. and all its stages functioned nominally to inject the satellite into orbit," said Dr. Kasturirangan, Chairman, Indian Space Research Organisation. This is the first time ISRO has attempted a Due East mission.

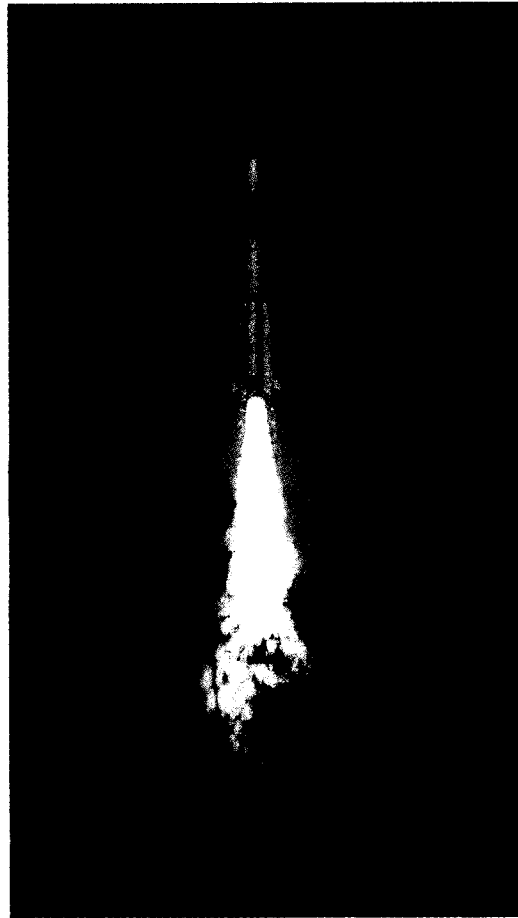
Explaining the use of the term "nominal", the ISRO chief said: "The perigee achieved was 181 km. as against the 182 km. originally intended; the inclination was 19.2 degrees as against 19 degrees in the satellite. We are confident that the exact orbit can be achieved."

The ISRO chairman telephoned the Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, about the success of the mission. The Prime Minister's voice was "choked with emotion" when he congratulated the ISRO team. "He told us the nation is proud of us," Dr. Kasturirangan said. He also informed the Minister in charge, Ms. Vasundhara Raje, who expressed similar sentiments.

The clear skies on a hot and humid summer day at Sriharikota range (SHAR) provided the setting for a near-perfect take-off for the 49-metre, 401-tonne launch vehicle. When the GSLV, with its 1,540 kg payload GSAT-1 "obeyed" instructions to inject the satellite in a GTO, east of Indonesia, it elevated India to a select club of nations capable of handling cryogenic stages and launching heavier satellites. The GTO has a perigee of 185 km. and an apogee of 36,000 km. The satellite's orbit will be circularised by firing its propulsion systems into an orbit of 36,000 km by 36,000 km.

Celebrations begin

Seventeen minutes after lift-off, the grim but formal atmosphere inside the mission control centre at the SHAR came down crashing; the pin-drop silence punctured occasionally by anxious radio-crackles gave way to joyous shrieks as scientists, technicians and engineers greeted each other with bear-hugs, handshakes and back-slappings. Everyone around was celebrating



The GSLV-D lifting off from the Sriharikota range at 3.43 p.m. on Wednesday. — Photo: Vino John

as SHAR nearly realised Vikram Sarabhai's dream of making the Indian space programme totally self-reliant.

Uncorking champagne bottles to signal the 'real' celebrations will have to wait a little longer — till a second consecutive successful GSLV flight — but that does not seem to be in anyone's minds at Sriharikota right now.

Indigenous technology: Page 13

Bloodshed on border with friend



A Bangladeshi soldier guards two captured BSF jawans on a Dhaka-bound air force plane. (AFP)

16 jawans killed in Bangla clash

FROM BIJOY KUMAR SHARMA
IN DHUBRI AND FARID
HOSSAIN IN DHAKA

April 18: A dawn-to-dusk battle shattered the peace on India's eventless eastern border with 16 jawans of the Border Security Force being killed in a fierce clash with Bangladeshi troops.

Two members of the Bangladesh Rifles were also killed in the battle as the two sides blamed each other for the flare-up on the sensitive trijunction of the Meghalaya-Assam-Bangladesh borders.

Bangladesh said its border guards repulsed an attack by the BSF on its northern Rowmari border. But at Assam's Mancachar, local MLA K.C. Boro said: "The Bangladeshis started shelling the area from 4 am and the fighting was continuing till 7.30 in the evening."

Not very far from the Bengal-Bangladesh border, the battlefield lies east of Pyrdiwah village in Meghalaya where 19 BSF jawans are locked in a standoff with Bangladeshi troops for the third day today. BDR forces took possession of the village on Sunday night.

Reports about casualties were conflicting with the Indians saying two BSF jawans were injured while Dhaka disclosed that three soldiers had been flown to the Bangladesh capital. The bodies of the dead Indian jawans are in the BDR's possession.

"We have repulsed a military assault launched by the Indians early Wednesday," Maj. Gen. Fazlur Rahman, director-general of BDR, said.

Calling it an incursion by India, Rahman said about 300 BSF jawans launched the attack to capture the Baroibari border obser-

vation post at Rowmari, about 40 kilometres from the frontier district town of Kurigram. The BDR retaliated with machine-gun fire as the BSF used heavy artillery and mortar during the attack.

Bangladesh officials see the attack as a backlash to the BDR's retaking of Padua (Pyrdiwah in Meghalaya) village. Bangladesh claimed that the Indians had been in illegal control of the village since Bangladesh's 1971 independence war against Pakistan.

On the Indian side, the inspector-general of the BSF, V.K. Gaur, said he failed to fathom why Bangladesh had made such an unprovoked attack in the sector. "There is no dispute as Mancachar is a well-demarcated area. The only possible reason for this sort of aggression could be diversionary tactic so that our concentration is diverted from Pyrdiwah."

"We are baffled by the action of Bangladesh Rifles," an Indian diplomat in Dhaka said. The Indian high commissioner in Dhaka, Manilal Tripathi, was summoned to the foreign office to be handed a strong note of protest against the "unprovoked attack". The ritual was repeated in Delhi.

Thousands of villagers fled in panic as the battle raged. The first of the shells fell in Shahpur in Assam, BSF sources said. Local reports said civilians from two Meghalaya villages — Kakupara and Thakurainbari — fled their homes to take shelter in neighbouring areas.

Local people said they heard the boom of guns first at 2 am, which they believed to be shelling from across the border. Heavy exchange of fire followed during which the BSF took the fight to the BDR camp in Boroibari village, but could not hold on to it.

Delhi pushes but is shy of shove

FROM PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, April 18: India today cautioned Dhaka that the "unwarranted action was unacceptable" and the Sheikh Hasina government should take immediate steps to restore peace and normality along the border.

Foreign secretary Chokila Iyer called Bangladesh high commissioner Mostafa Faroque Mohammed to South Block twice during the day to express concern. The second time was in the evening — after news of 16 casualties reached Delhi — when Iyer issued a sterner message to Dhaka to show restraint.

India is keen to prevent the

border shootouts from escalating into a larger crisis. South Block fears that if the security forces retaliate, it would sour ties with a "friendly" neighbour and push Dhaka to the Delhi-haters' club of South Asia.

With elections round the corner in Bangladesh, the Hasina government will have little choice but to adopt a tough anti-India posture if violence escalates.

This has put India on slippery diplomatic terrain, forcing it to do a balancing act. While getting across a firm message, Delhi has to take care not to alienate Bangladesh, the country India helped create.

Foreign ministry spokesman

R.S. Jassal said: "The high commissioner was apprised of the government's serious concern over the unwarranted action of the Bangladesh Rifles."

Observers said Jassal was careful to avoid the phrase "summoned to South Block" — used often when the Pakistan high commissioner is called — and chose the milder "apprised" instead.

He added that Faroque was asked to tell Dhaka to advise the local authorities on the border to avoid use of force in the interest of "close and friendly ties between the two countries". He emphasised that the need of the hour was "restoration of status quo ante" and utmost restraint to de-

fuse tension along the border.

The foreign secretaries of the two sides had met last December and agreed to set up a joint working group to demarcate the border and expedite exchange of several enclaves between the two countries.

India and Bangladesh share nearly 400 km of border, of which about 7 km is disputed. Most of the disputed territories are in the Northeast sector.

The two sides have a framework which allows them to settle disputes at the sector commander's level. But two such meetings — held on Sunday and today — remained "inconclusive".

■ More reports on Page 9

THE TELEGRAPH

19 APR 2001

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Cong. firm on JPC probe 1874

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 17. The signs are ominous and the two sides are yet again eyeball to eyeball in Parliament. This time over the setting up of a JPC to probe the Tehelka expose. Despite being isolated on the issue inside Parliament, the Congress today made it clear that it would not go back on its demand for a JPC probe and the initiation of a criminal probe against those found culpable on the evidence of the tapes. The Congress spokesman, Mr. Jaipal Reddy told newsmen that the party had made a climbdown yesterday only to pave the way for the resumption of Parliament. "But it was not prepared to go any further". He also laid the blame for the continuing impasse on the government and accused it of being "adamant and obdurate in its attitude".

The Congress today sought to deflect criticism for being obstructive by trying to appear reasonable in its formulations and its positioning. "As the main Opposition party we went out of our way, hoping that the government would respond positively but it is the government which does not want Parliament to resume functioning" Mr. Reddy charged. He said the ball

was now in the government's court. Seeking to turn the tables on the government, he maintained that the party was keen to get Parliament going as it was on putting the government on the mat on several issues like the defence scam, the stock market scandal and the plight of the farmers. "The government not only wants to avoid such a situation, it is also indulging in a massive cover-up" he said. Rubbishing the government's contention that a discussion must precede any kind of action, he said such an argument does not hold water. He recalled that in 1992 the government had agreed to set up a JPC on the stock market scam, even before a debate in Parliament. He alleged that out of pique the government was going back on the offer it had made three weeks ago. "Mr. Mahajan had insisted that his government was ready for a JPC, now they are going back on it" he said.

He derided the government for setting up a judicial inquiry with terms of reference which suffered from both "under exclusion on certain aspects and over exclusion on other aspects" and alleged that the inquiry was to avoid having to set up a JPC probe.

THE HINDU

18 APR 2001

598 JPC: 1879 ✓
(Continued from page 1)

the government was not ordering a probe against those named on Tehelka tapes when the Central Bureau of Investigation could initiate action against Bharat Shah and on cricket match-fixing on the basis of audio tapes.

Mr Jaipal Reddy, Congress spokesman, rejected the parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan's suggestion to have a discussion on Tehelka first and then seek a JPC probe.

The Congress spokesman said: "There is no hard and fast rule in the matter since Dr Manmohan Singh as finance minister in the Narasimha Rao government had first announced the appointment of a JPC and then a discussion was held on the Harshad Mehta security scam. Why should the government insist on a discussion first and then consider the demand for a Joint Parliamentary Committee probe into the Tehelka expose?"

National Democratic Alliance managers said the government might concede if the Congress formally asked that a JPC probe replace the judicial one.

The government cannot order the replacement. Neither can two inquiries go on simultaneously, they said.

The National Democratic Alliance is keen on a debate because it wants to corner the Congress on matters like the Central Bureau of Investigation's case against Mrs Sonia Gandhi's private secretary Vincent George and the "false affidavit" given by the Chhattisgarh chief minister to secure allotment of a petrol station.

Army chief, Govt get more power to punish officers

Syed Liaquat Ali
New Delhi, April 16

IN A significant ruling, the Supreme Court has armed the Chief of Army Staff and the Centre with powers to punish delinquent army officers even if their offence was three years old to gain immunity under the Army Act, 1950.

Widening the scope of the provisions dealing with termination of service of errant army officials, a Bench comprising Chief Justice A S Anand, Justice R C Lahoti and Justice Brijesh Kumar rejected the argument that the authorities could not take action against them on the ground that the court martial proceedings have become time-barred.

The Bench said, "We are of the opinion that the expiry of limitation under section 122 (period of limitation for trial) of the Act does not ipso facto take away the exercise of power under section 19 (termination of service by the Central Government) read with rule 14 (termination of service by the Central Government on account of misconduct)."

The ruling came on two appeals by the Centre against the judgements of the Delhi High Court and the Allahabad High Court quashing termination orders against two captains on the ground that the offences enjoyed immunity under the Army Act.

In 1978, a General Court Martial (GCM) had denied promotion and pay to Harjeet Singh Sandhu for three years for resorting to third degree methods to extract

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confession of a defence employee. As a result, the employee, who was charged with theft, died. In 1982, the Chief of Army Staff had issued a notice to him to show cause why his service should not be terminated.

Similarly, in 1979, captain Har-minder Kumar was charged with discrepancies in respect of stocks of Fuel Petroleum Depot, Leh. In 1984, the Chief of Army Staff had issued a show notice to him as to why his service should not be terminated.

Representing the Army, additional Solicitor General Altaf Ahmad contended that the defence services under the law were treated separately. He said a cautious approach should be taken for interpreting legal provisions in view of the country's security.

The additional Solicitor General further pleaded that the provision of period of limitation for trial would not come in the way of Central Government or the Chief of Army Staff for taking action against the army officials, even after the trial by a Court Martial.

Dismissing the High Courts' judgements, the apex court said the authorities' powers to terminate army officials on charges of misconduct were open to judicial review, when they were based on extraneous grounds.

The Bench said: "Even if some of the material, on which the action is taken, is found to be irrelevant, the court would still not interfere so long as there is some relevant material available on which action can be sustained."

Defence ministry plans media offensive

SRINJOY CHOUDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

GLASNOST IN THE TIME OF TEHELKA?

NEW DELHI, April 9. — A committee is re-examining the possibility of more interaction between defence ministry and Services officials with journalists, about 15 years after the Bofors scandal broke out, following which reporters were virtually banned from entering the defence wing.

A committee, headed by an additional secretary to the defence ministry and including two major-generals, a rear admiral and an air vice-marshal, have held two meetings to discuss the issue, the second last week.

The decision was taken after the Subrahmanyam committee report on the Kargil conflict

called for better interaction between the ministry and the media. It said the defence ministry's media management had to improve.

The initial proposal had come from the then defence minister, Mr George Fernandes, who invited the former defence ministry principal information officer and director (public relations), Mr I Ramamohan Rao, to be part of the committee. The official in charge of the ministry's public relations too is in the team.

The "ban" on reporters not being allowed to meet ministry bureaucrats and Services officers assumed ridiculous proportions after the Tehelka

sting operation that showed how easy it was to meet people, including top Army officers.

Ministry officials said no decision on a "glasnost" had yet been taken. Nor could anyone be sure of openness in the near future after Mr Jaswant Singh took over the portfolio and brought in the former Union minister, Mr Arun Singh, as advisor and journalist, BG Verghese, to deal with the media.

As part of the "openness" programme, two long meetings with the press were recently organised, largely to counter the charges made in the Tehelka tapes. The first dealt with the Army's acquisition process of military hardware

with particular focus on the T-90 tank and the purchase of specialised ammunition deals.

The first went off well for the ministry to have a similar meeting on Barak with top Navy officers.

Officials conceded the second press meeting was a disaster for media managers.

For, reporters asked tough questions and officials' admission of lack of transparency in Russia was a public relations setback.

"We've realised that the meetings can't be structured and people will ask questions. And some defence personnel may not be used to such meetings," one official said. It's not known whether any decision to discontinue the meetings has been taken.

THE STATESMAN

10 APR 2001

Andamans may have tri-service command

SRINJOY CHOUDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 8. — A strengthened tri-service command in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, to be directly overseen by a chief of defence staff, is under serious consideration by the Centre.

At present, a FORTRAN — a sort of Fortress Andamans — exists but the Indian Air Force unofficially pulled out of it four years ago. The IAF now oversees the area from its Southern Command in the mainland.

The new command, which will be headed by a commander-in-chief of lieutenant-general rank or its equivalent in rotation by all three services, may come up very soon. When that happens, the IAF will form a part of this command, sources said. The commander-in-chief

will report to the CDS.

Unconfirmed reports say the first CDS is likely to be Admiral Sushil Kumar, the present Navy chief. Admiral Kumar, the senior-most of the three chiefs, has long been considered the likely choice. In Port Blair at the moment, he was unavailable for comment.

"We are thinking of a tri-service command in the Andamans to counter the low-grade problems including poaching, piracy, drugs and arms smuggling in the area. The Army and the Navy are already there and the IAF, which has a few helicopters there, will come back," a senior official said. The Coast Guard could also come under the new command. This is the first step towards a unified command. If successful, it would lead to more integration. Though no final decision has

been made, a senior vice-admiral of the Navy could be the first commander-in-chief of the joint Far Eastern Command, if it's finally called that. Army sources agreed the first chief could be a vice-admiral as "the Navy has the maximum assets there."

The first discussions on a Far Eastern Naval Command came up about five years ago when Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat was the Navy chief. It was expected to be a "surveillance command" and keep an eye on the activities of the Chinese navy in Myanmar. Mr George Fernandes, then defence minister, had officially announced that the command would be set up.

But the FORTRAN, headed by a vice-admiral even now, was not upgraded into a naval command.

There was a fear that the Na-

vy did not have enough ships and submarines to have a third operational command. More importantly, there were protests from some South-east Asian countries that felt threatened.

The tri-service command idea came up again after the Kargil war. One recommendation to the government was the formation of a tri-service command under a chief of defence staff. The Group of Ministers, headed by the home minister, Mr LK Advani, recommended the appointment of a CDS to oversee nuclear forces and surveillance assets. A Cabinet clearance, considering the composition of the GOM — the home, external affairs, defence and finance ministers — and the seriousness with which they dealt with the project — is considered very likely.

THE STATESMAN

- 9 APR 2001

GSLV slated for April 18 relaunch

Bangalore, April 7

INDIA'S GEO-SYNCHRONOUS Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV-D1) would be re-launched on April 18, three weeks after its first test flight was aborted at Sriharikota.

Announcing the revised schedule, Indian Space Research Organisation (Isro) said the window for the launch would extend upto April 25. The first launch attempt on March 28 was aborted just a second before lift-off after it was detected that one of the strap-on boosters did not develop the required thrust.

The vehicle was safely disarmed immediately after the mission was aborted, as worked out in advance in such contingencies and the systems were brought into action to protect it.

It has now been found that defective plumbing in the oxidiser flow line of the engine resulted in the strap-on booster not

developing the required thrust, an Isro release said. This had escaped detection during testing and resulted in reduced flow of oxidiser to the engine, it added.

Isro said the anomalous engine is being replaced with a standby engine but added that all other systems of the vehicle were found to be healthy. Isro said, it carried out a detailed analysis of the data obtained during the five seconds' operation of the four strap-on motors during the countdown sequence, examination of the records of engines, tear down analysis of the disassembled engine and the extensive simulations.

Based on the review of video pictures and other data, the release concluded that the fire spreading over one of the strap-on boosters was only due to the burning of foam insulation pads and was incidental and has caused no damage to the vehicle.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

18 APR 2001

Navy arguments on spares offend the Defence Ministry

GAURAV C. SAWANT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 6

96-5 7/4

A WAR of words seems to have broken out in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) with some officials taking offence at the Navy's defence of spares purchases.

"The Navy says it never knew if the spares being bought were new or vintage. There is a Directorate General of Quality Assurance (DGQA) whose task is to check if the quality of purchases meets the norms. The Navy has its own inspection wing too. What were they doing?" an official said.

"Secondly, every contract, including those for spares, has a 12-month warranty clause. Within 12 months from the date of shipment, the wares could be returned if quality is not up to the mark. This clause was never invoked even after the Soviet Union collapsed."

The DGQA has a separate section of Naval officers who check if qualitative requirements have been met before clearing the shipment for use. A former Rear Admiral said if officers are unable to work, then the wing should be disbanded.

According to sources, the Russian Presidential decree did not prohibit purchase of non-lethal spares.

"The decree anyway came into existence only in 1995. It channelled the sale of sensitive armament, weapon system and ammunition.

There was never a ban on purchase of spares

from the original equipment manufacturers (OEMs)," sources said.

The Navy did send three logistics delegations (Logdels) to Russia in 1994, '95 and '97 — led by a joint secretary and with an additional finance advisor as member — to conclude deals.

"Were these high-ranking officers leading delegations for garage sales? In these years, around 200 contracts worth Rs 300 crore were concluded and most with OEMs," the official said.

In fact, Naval officers concede that after the collapse, the MoD did not show foresight and procure plenty of spares that were available in bulk, at throw-away prices.

"At that time, spares were available in bulk and even offered cheaply. But we missed the boat," sources said.

While senior Naval headquarters officials agree with Vice Admiral Arun Prakash, chief of personnel (CoP), when he says the Navy was offered the same spares for \$15 and \$3,000, an official asked how Rear Admiral Suhas Purohit put comparative prices in his petition and the Navy failed to calculate it?

"Obviously, there is somebody who is turning Nelson's eye to the problem," the official said. Purohit, in his petition, has mentioned that on February 3, 1995, a spare part — HP air manual throttle — was bought for Rs 36,704. Within 10 days, two more of the same were ordered for Rs 3,67,004.

INDIAN EXPRESS

27 APR 2001

'No decision yet on CDS appointment'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 12. The Government today said it had not taken a decision on appointment of the Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sushil Kumar, as the country's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS).

Reacting to reports in a section of the press, a Defence Ministry statement today clarified that "no such decision has been taken."

"The recommendations of the Group of Ministers (GoM) for creation of the post of CDS as well as other recommendations are being processed for approval of the Government", it added.

"Further action" would be taken only after the Government approved the formation of the post of CDS, the statement said.

While internal meetings in the Defence Ministry suggested that Admiral Sushil Kumar was the front-runner for the post, a final decision and announcement for the appointment of the CDS could be expected only later in the month, Government sources said. More internal consultations

especially among the services, including the Indian Air Force (IAF) may be required before the Government makes its announcement.

Meanwhile, preparatory work relating to the creation of the post of the CDS and associated structures, prior to the final approval of the Government, is in full swing.

The CDS is expected to be assisted by the tri-service Vice-Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS) who will head the in-house think tank which will analyse threat perceptions and chart out defence plans accordingly.

The GoM is understood to have suggested the creation of two posts of the rank of Deputy Chiefs of Defence Staff. A tri-service Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) is also expected to be formed to assist the CDS.

The appointment of the CDS will address the services' long-term demand for integration in the Government's top decision-making hierarchy on national security.

THE HINDU

13 APR 2011

Admiral Sushil Kumar to be first CDS

By Atul Aneja

J. D. S. N. S. S. S.
NEW DELHI, APRIL 11. The Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sushil Kumar, will become India's first Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and will head the country's nuclear forces.

Highly-placed defence sources said that the decision to name Adm. Sushil Kumar as the CDS was taken on Monday. As CDS, he will become a single-point military adviser to the Government and command the country's nuclear assets.

Three considerations went in his favour. First, Adm. Sushil Kumar is the seniormost in the tri-service hierarchy. Since the CDS is designated as the "first among equals" when compared to the three service chiefs who are also four-star Generals, it is only natural that the seniormost among them would be appointed to the coveted post.

Second, by appointing Adm. Sushil Kumar who retires in December as the CDS, the Govern-



ment has ensured that it does not displease either of the three services. In fact, the present Chief of Army Staff, Gen. S. Padmanabhan, who will be the seniormost tri-service officer at the time of Adm. Sushil Kumar's retirement, is likely to hold the country's nu-

clear reins for a longer duration.

By this appointment, the Government has also signalled to the officers of the "smaller services"—the Navy and the Indian Air Force—that they are on a par with the Army in the race for the CDS post.

This is expected to promote the principle of "fairness" and improve inter-services coordination. In the debate which preceded the decision, all three services agreed that the Vice-Chief of Defence (VCDS), who will be the right-hand man of the CDS, should have an assured tenure and should not be "disturbed" for other tasks.

The VCDS will be a key adviser of the CDS and will head a tri-service "think-tank", which will analyse the short and long-term threats to national security.

Heading the tri-service defence planning wing, he will work in tandem with the chief of a newly-created Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA).

HINDU

12 APR 2001

Barak missile

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI: After the Army, it's the Navy's turn to defend some procurement decisions which attracted controversy in wake of the 'armsgate' expose. It says the acquisition process for the Israeli Barak anti-missile defence systems "was above-board and in tune with strategic requirements".

"The fitment of all the seven Barak systems (on major warships) will be over by end-2002," said Vice-Admiral Arun Prakash, chief of personnel, on Wednesday.

The Navy is also keeping the option for induction of the indigenous Trishul system open. "By present reckoning, it is expected to be available by 2004-05 if all outstanding trials are completed successfully by DRDO," he added.

Much like the Army's defense of its deals regarding the Russian T-90S tanks and the TGM-Krasnopol laser-guided 155mm artillery shells, the Navy made a presentation about the Barak systems on Wednesday.

"The Navy had a long-standing requirement for an anti-missile defence (AMD) system. In 1988, we proposed the Trishul surface-to-air system being developed by DRDO for the Army and the IAF be adapted for ship-borne use by the Navy," said Vice-Admiral Prakash.

deal was clean, says navy

But the strategic environment in the Indian Ocean changed in 1992, with Pakistan acquiring air and submarine-launched sea-skimming anti-ship missiles. "We had no defence against these, and there had been slippages in the Trishul programme," said the officer.

The Navy then asked for the "urgent induction" of an AMD system from abroad. Finally, in 1994, the Barak system, which met "staff requirements completely", was short-listed. The next year saw a joint Navy-DRDO team witnessing successful Barak trials in the Mediterranean.

In 1996, the then defence minister accorded approval for induction of seven Barak systems. The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) subsequently approved installation of one system on the aircraft carrier INS Viraat.

The mid-1999 Kargil conflict "compelled" the Navy to press for installation of the remaining six systems on other warships. This was approved by the CCS in March 2000, said Vice-Admiral Prakash.

Rear Admiral S.V. Gopalachari, assistant chief of Naval Staff (policy and plans), in turn, talked about how the Navy's New Management Strategy (NMS) and the computerised Integrated Logistics Management System had led to overall improvement.

"Apart from ensuring improved operational availability of ships, submarines and aircraft, NMS has created substantial savings for utilisation in Navy's modernisation," he said.

Move to streamline import of defence spares

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Top defence officials say New Delhi has taken up with Moscow at the "political level" the need to streamline the supply of defence spares by eliminating agents.

This is important because of India's continuing dependence on Russia for spares and armaments. "We are trying to tell Russia that we want to buy directly from arms manufacturers," said Vice-Admiral Arun Prakash.

Both the senior naval officer and B.G. Verghese, information consultant to the defence minister, said that since the break-up of the erstwhile Soviet Union, all the three services were facing problems in acquisition of spares and armaments. Under the new Russian system, India was forced under presidential decree to deal with designated arms agents.

MEA, LS panel disposes, MoD proposes defence deal

■ Parliamentary panel asks for probe into radar deal with Ukraine

GAURAV C. SAWANT
NEW DELHI, APRIL 4

DESPITE objections from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and a Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) last week decided to acquire Weapon Locating Radars (WLRs) from Ukraine. While the MEA's principal objection to the deal stems from Ukraine's dealings with Pakistan — it sold 300 T-80 tanks to Pakistan three years ago — the defence committee has asked the government to probe allegations of the involvement of agents in the deal.

It's a piquant situation for Jaswant Singh, who heads both the ministries. The Ministry of Defence is still negotiat-

ing the prices for the transfer of technology for the WLRs to be manufactured in India.

Technical discussions between M/s BEL and the Ukrainian firm have been completed, and supplementary commercial offer is being obtained for the supply of semi knocked down (SKD) and complete knocked down (CKD) kits, sources said.

The Indian army has been on the lookout for WLRs since 1989. Their absence was perhaps never more conclusively demonstrated than during the Kargil conflict, where Pakistani artillery adroitly used their WLRs to track down Indian artillery guns.

In fact, the defence committee indicted the MoD for "not showing seriousness" in acquiring the WLRs.

"Neither the infantry dominated army top brass nor the bureaucracy in MoD showed seriousness when a proposal was floated to acquire the Weapon Locating Radars.

"These are highly sophisticated



radars which give the location of the enemy gun position when the guns fire.

"And within minutes we can retaliate," highly placed army sources said.

"During the Kargil conflict Pakistan had these radars. So they knew the location of our gun positions. We had to send our artillery observation post (OP) officer as far as we could close to the line of control (LoC) to try and locate their positions," he added.

Immediately after Kargil, the army renewed efforts to procure the critical equipment.

However, points out the defence committee, the MoD's price negotiation committee (PNC) decided to resume negotia-

tions with a Ukrainian firm even before the technical delegation which was sent to France to evaluate its Cobra Weapon Locating Radars system could file its report.

"The initial offer to supply the radars was received from M/s Iskra but the Ukrainian government insisted that the Indian government should negotiate with M/s Ukrspectexport as they had withdrawn direct export licence from the Iskra firm.

"There were allegations regarding the involvement of agents. Yet the MoD went in for the Ukrainian WLRs," sources said.

The Parliamentary committee too has urged the government to probe allegations of corruption.

However, an MoD spokesperson refused comment. "It is a committee that comprises Parliamentarians. They have raised certain questions or doubts. The Ministry of Defence will reply to them in Parliament during the committee meeting itself," he said.

INDIAN EXPRESS

We have right to build defences in J&K: India

HD-1
1/1
By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 3. Citing sponsorship of cross-border terrorism by Pakistan, India today asserted its right to construct "defensive structures" in Jammu and Kashmir as and when required.

Rejecting Pakistan's objections on the construction of defences by India on what it described as a "working boundary", a Foreign Office spokesman said decisions on military defences in the State were purely dictated by security considerations. He also dismissed as incorrect the Pakistani description of a section of the International Boundary as a "working boundary".

Official sources pointed out that the entire Indo-Pak. border along Gujarat, Rajasthan, Punjab and including a 210-km. segment in Jammu and Kashmir was

"settled" and internationally recognised as the IB. The alignment running for around 740 km. in the rest of Jammu and Kashmir from the point where the IB terminates is called the Line of Control. This alignment though jointly surveyed by Indian and Pakistani experts is yet to be mutually agreed by the two Governments.

The LoC ends at a location called Pt.NJ 9842, and the stretch from there to the Indira Col, a pass on the Siachen Glacier, is the Actual Ground Position Line. Pakistan, according to sources, describes only the 210-km. Kashmir segment of the IB as the working boundary as it does not recognise the State a part of India. It has, therefore, not intervened in the positioning of Indian defences including the construction of a border fence along the IB in Punjab and Rajasthan.

Rejecting the Pakistani description, the spokesman said the term "working boundary" could not be applied to "any part of the India-Pakistan boundary, including the stretch in Jammu and Kashmir."

He emphasised that the construction of defensive structures along the IB in Jammu and Kashmir and in other sectors was undertaken from time to time. Citing cross-border infiltrations by Pakistan, he said "our forces will continue to construct such defensive structures as are needed."

The spokesman also dismissed Pakistan's allegations of "unprovoked firing" by Indian security forces along the IB segment in Jammu and Kashmir.

The Pakistani allegations were "false and baseless", he said adding "our security forces are acting with great responsibility and displaying exemplary restraint."

Navy defends Barak deal

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 4

HT-9

THE NAVY has defended the acquisition of the Barak anti-missile defence system, saying it had been approved after evaluation of competitive bids from several countries including France, Britain and the USA.

A joint delegation of the DRDO and Navy had witnessed successful trials of the system in the Mediterranean Sea in 1995 and the then Defence Minister, Sharad Pawar, had approved its induction. S. D. S. N. S. N. S. N.

The Barak system had been installed aboard the aircraft carrier INS Viraat in 1997, Vice-Admiral Arun Prakash, chief of personnel at Naval Headquarters, told a press conference. Six more such systems were acquired in the post-Kargil period after approval by the Cabinet Committee on Security in March 2000.

The Naval officer parried questions on the legal aspects of the deal and delved in the operational parts. "The inquiry committee set up by the Government under the retired Supreme Court judge will look into every aspect of the matter. We consider the matter sub-judice," he said.

The new information consultant to the Defence Minister, BG Verghese,

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said the Ministry will examine the Central Vigilance Commission's report on the major defence deals of the last 10 years submitted to Jaswant Singh last Saturday. "Action on it would be outlined in due course," he said.

Officials said the Barak systems had been acquired after the Navy had projected way back in 1988 for the adoption of the Trishul surface-to-air shipborne missile systems. In 1992, the need for it was felt acutely after reports that Pakistan had acquired similar systems and slippage was detected in the Trishul programme.

Verghese said New Delhi had taken up with Moscow at a 'political level' the question of streamlining the supply of defence spares by eliminating agents. Under the existing system, India was forced under Presidential decree to deal with designated arms agents but efforts were on to establish direct supply chains from manufacturers.

On allegations made by former Navy chief, Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat, and Rear Admiral, SV Purohit, on Russian spares being bought at exorbitant prices, Vice-Admiral Prakash said: "The Navy hardly had the means to judge whether the spares offered were of genuine quality and if the price was right".

Chief of Defence Staff

By V. R. Raghavan

A Chief of Defence Staff can set the trend in obtaining a better balance between the strategic objectives of the Cabinet and the operational needs of the three services.

190-12
S 24

HERE ARE indications that a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) would be nominated by the Government. This would probably be the most dramatic outcome of the deliberations of the Group of Ministers who effectively form the National Security Council.

The Task Forces which had been appointed consequent to the Kargil Inquiry Report have completed their work. The Group of Ministers has discussed them at some length. Not unexpectedly, recommendations now available with the Government have shown the extent of change which needs to be brought about in the country's security management apparatus.

The first response of any bureaucracy to the prospect of change would be to resist it. The Cabinet would have to choose between spending time and energy changing the security structures in the face of organisational resistance, and finding an easy way out. Apparently, the Government views the CDS as an easy and dramatic enough step to claim credit on a meaningful security initiative.

As the Kargil report and a host of others before it have concluded, existing arrangements do not correspond to the range of security challenges India is facing. The task forces appointed to examine the defence, internal security, border management and intelligence apparatus have by all accounts recommended substantial changes in structures, processes and accountability. Going by past experience, it would be anticipating the impossible to expect any government, including the security-conscious BJP-led one, to implement even half of the changes which are needed. The inherent inertia in governing structures, and comfort levels of major players with existing hierarchical arrangements are obstacles which even the Cabinet Committee for Security finds difficult to overcome. The political and financial costs involved in bringing about major structural changes will also challenge the already stretched skills of the Finance Minister.

The Government is under pressure to demonstrate action on the changes required after the Kargil experience. It is also unable to bring itself to fully implement the recommendations of the Task Forces

it had appointed. Caught between the parliamentary questioning which would hopefully follow on the subject and the limited choices available to it, the Government will most likely take the easiest way out.

The easiest route would be to initiate measures which least disturb the existing arrangements. That is where the CDS would come in. The appointment will keep undisturbed the separate operational hierarchy of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force. It will not bring about the overdue integration of the Ministry of Defence with the three services. It may even facilitate a further raise in the status of the Defence Secretary in the hierarchy of secretaries. It will, however, create a major new appointment in whose purpose the media in India and abroad would read many deep insights. The CDS will convey different meanings to many interested elements. It can become another example of constructive ambiguity on which Indian governments have prided themselves. As in the case of the Indian nuclear doctrine, the CDS will be visible without the need to be credible.

The appointment of the CDS is not as important as the authority which would be invested in him. If the appointment is to obtain for the Government a high value advice on defence matters, the CDS needs to be invested with the appropriate authority over the defence services. It would involve having the Army, Navy and Air Force headquarters reporting to him and allowing the CDS to present to the Cabinet an integrated tri-service view on defence issues. This is the essential nature of advice which the Cabinet needs in the years ahead. It is the accepted norm in all modern armed forces. Such an arrangement is, however, a major departure from the command and control structure in India. The Chiefs of the three services are not going to be amenable to this arrangement. They have good reasons to object to the change, since it leaves the Ministry of De-

fence out of the required restructuring.

They would justifiably want to see the Ministry integrated with officers from the three services placed in it. That is by all logic needed, but by all accounts not going to happen. Without it, the three services are unlikely to be willing to restructure themselves to suit the CDS initiative. The idea of integrated theatre commands is also not going to be accepted on the same grounds.

It appears that the Government wishes to appoint a CDS but does not find itself in a position to integrate the Ministry of Defence or reorganise the command and control of the defence services. The CDS will therefore be no more than a symbolic change. It would merely signify a desire to upgrade the hierarchical arrangements. The CDS without effective control over the defence services can hardly advise the Cabinet on tri-service plans and requirements. If he does, and the advice is unacceptable to one or more of the service chiefs, the Cabinet would be faced with an invidious situation. The record of managing a much smaller difference of opinion in the past has not been encouraging, as witnessed in the dismissal of the last Chief of the Navy. The Cabinet cannot therefore hope to task the CDS and expect him to initiate and implement any long-term changes in defence matters.

If the CDS is nominated despite the limitations listed above, some gains can still be had from creating the appointment. The CDS arrangement has been worked in many countries and there is no single and perfect model for it. The Indian experiment can be allowed to evolve in a deliberate and planned manner. If the CDS is allowed the necessary stature and responsibility the experiment can produce very worthwhile results. The CDS in India can therefore be entrusted with meaningful responsibility, even if he is not given the direct chain of command of the defence services. There are a number of issues related to the nuclear deterrent which still require clarity and cohesion. The linkage

between the politico-strategic nature of the deterrent and the operational plans of the defence services is one area which can be entrusted to the CDS. The command, control, communication and intelligence aspects of the nuclear deterrent can be developed through the CDS. He would be best suited to advise the Government on the defence services' point of view, a critical input if the need for applying the nuclear deterrent ever arises. The Joint Services Command envisaged for the island territories of the country can be put into effect by the CDS. He can assist in greatly improving the joint operations aspects of the three services.

The major restructuring involved in the recommendations of the Task Forces is best undertaken in a phased manner spread over some years. The CDS will provide the needed continuity in bringing about the changes. He can set the trend in obtaining a better balance between the strategic objectives of the Cabinet and the operational needs of the three services.

As for the person to be chosen to become the first CDS, the Government is fortunate in the conjunction of personalities available at the moment. The current Chief of the Navy is the senior amongst the three defence chiefs and is therefore also the Chairman of the Chief of Staff Committee. He would be best suited to finalise and set into place the Theatre Command visualised for the island territories of Andaman & Nicobar. He was at one time the force commander on the islands. He is not far from retiring and his elevation as CDS, with a two year tenure for the CDS, will set the appropriate norm for selecting future incumbents for the task. In the Indian context, experience as a Chief of the service should be an essential criteria for being appointed the CDS. If the CDS is to succeed, it would be wiser to ensure that one amongst the serving chiefs is usually chosen for the appointment. It would be wiser still to evolve a role for him in consultation with the chiefs of the defence services. The Government can do no better than to put its weight behind making the CDS concept a success. That will require strengthening civil military equations, by involving the CDS in the security related deliberations of the Cabinet on a permanent basis.

Air vice-chief in Israel to clinch deal

SRINJOY CHOWDHURY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, April 2. - India is negotiating with Israel to purchase hi-tech weapons for the Indian Air Force, including the Phalcon airborne early warning system, air-to-air refuelling equipment and also unmanned aerial vehicles.

An IAF delegation headed by the Vice-Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Vinod Patney, left for Tel-Aviv last Saturday for a week-long visit, sources said. It is the first trip to Israel by a senior Air Force official since the visit by Air Chief Marshal SK Sareen, then Air Force chief, five years ago. The talks are likely to be very significant as the IAF has been looking for an airborne-warning system for nearly a decade. The DRDO was preparing one on an Avro but it crashed during a demonstration flight.

Following sanctions imposed on India after Pokhran II, Israel - and the Phalcon - was one of the few options. Israel has already sold the Phalcon to China and talks have been going on about a possible purchase for a while. An airborne warning system is important as it will allow the IAF more time to detect enemy aircraft and direct interceptors or missiles towards them. During a recent visit, Mr Shimon Peres, top Israeli official, had denied there was any American (or other) pressure on Israel over the sale of the Phalcon to India.

The IAF has been looking for air-to-air refuelling equipment. The Air Force has the plane - the Russian-made IL-76 - but the equipment, a great force-multiplier, has been on the wish-list for a while. The air-to-air refuelling capacity will ensure IAF planes have a longer reach. It could ensure the nuclear-capable Sukhoi-30 aircraft has the potential to strike deeper into enemy territory than it actually can. The extra reach could be useful as a deterrent against China, experts say.

Israel has already supplied UAVs to the Indian Army in recent times. The IAF is also looking for such equipment. The UAV, actually tiny pilotless planes, are useful for surveillance. The Heron, a UAV, is a possibility.

THE STATESMAN

APR 2001

Tapes reveal weakness in system: Advani

AGENCIES

KOCHI, April 1. - Union home minister, Mr L K Advani, today said the Tehelka tapes revealed a "weakness" in the system and its "vulnerability" at various points.

Addressing a joint press conference with former defence minister, Mr George Fernandes, here, he said that for the first time, the government had accepted that the tapes "revealed a weakness in the system and its vulnerability at various points."

Even the Prime Minister, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, had said the episode was a 'wake up call', he said.

Advani said unlike previous governments, the BJP-led NDA government had initiated prompt action after the expose and ordered a judicial enquiry.

Asked if Tehelka tapes could be written off totally as "rubbish talk by some under the

influence of liquor," Mr Fernandes said a lot of things which were said may not have been under the influence of liquor.

The commission of inquiry would go into it, he added.

Later addressing an NDA rally here tonight, Mr Advani said the Chief Vigilance Commissioner's report on purchase of weapons since 1989 will be an "eye opener" for the country when it is presented in the Parliament.

The Union home minister said the report had already been submitted to the defence minister, Mr Jaswant Singh in Delhi yesterday.

He said although the Tehelka tapes did not raise scandal on defence purchases or accused any minister in the Union Cabinet of accepting bribes in defence deals, it had revealed the existence of a "faulty system" at the Centre.

"We inherited the system

from the Congress, which had ruled the country for 45 years and we cannot change it in three years," he added.

The government has treated the Tehelka tapes as a "wake-up call" even though it was "fictitious" and responded immediately by taking corrective measures, he pointed out.

Mr Advani said the Congress, which demanded the resignation of the NDA government on the Tehelka issue, had not cared to order any fruitful inquiry into scores of scandals involving crores of rupees when it was in power.

Such a party was now trying to paint the armed forces, the government and even democracy with a black brush on the issue.

The home minister called upon the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, to apologise to Mr Vajpayee for calling him a "traitor".

THE STATESMAN

2 APR 2001

Prithvi testfired successfully

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

BALASORE, March 31. - India's medium range surface-to-surface missile, *Prithvi*, was successfully test fired from the interim test range at Chandipur-on-Sea, about 15 km from here today.

Mounted on a mobile 8x8 tatra transporter erector launcher, the indigenously developed 8.56 metre high and one metre thick sleek missile was blasted off at about 11.30 a.m., ITR sources said.

The main objective of today's flight mission was to gauge the propulsion parameters of the missile, which for the first time was put to trial on a solid instead of a liquid fuel system.

The ITR sources described today's test flight as a routine work of the Defence Research and Development Organisation for India's integrated guided missile development programme.

The mission objective of the trial would be fully known after analysing various datas, they added.

Today's flight trial of *Prithvi* was tracked by a network of radar, optical tracking telescope, three telemetry stations and a naval ship located in the Bay of Bengal closer to the impact point.

Powered by liquid propellant, with latest on-board computer and an advanced inertia navigation system, *Prithvi* can be fired on targets located at a minimum distance of 40 km and take just 300 seconds to reach its target at a distance of 150 km.

It had a launch weight of 4.6 tonnes which included one tonne pay load.

However, if the pay load is halved, it can hit the target up to 250 km range, the sources said.

The DRDO has conducted 14 flight trials of the army version of the missile before carrying out two user trials on 4 and 6 June 1994 from the ITR.

The first flight trial was carried out on 22 February 1988 at Sriharikota in Andhra Pradesh.

THE STATESMAN

1 APR 2001

'Board will hasten defence deal'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

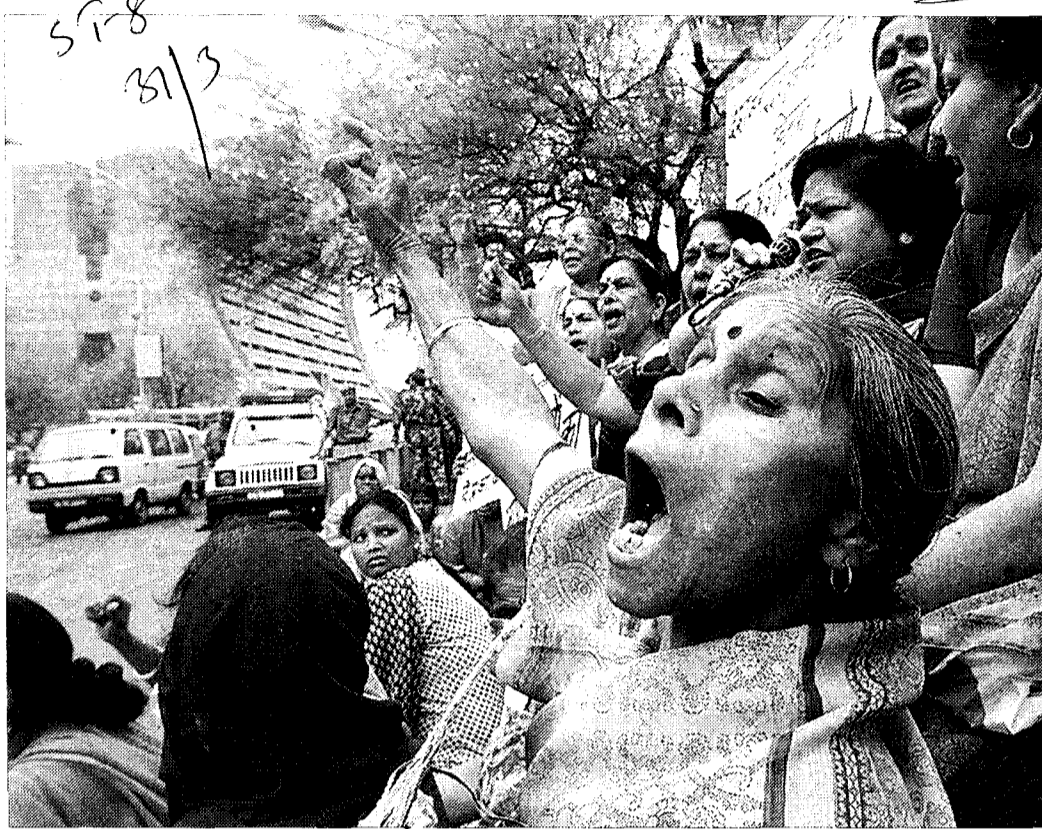
NEW DELHI, March 30. — The creation of procurement board, announced by the defence ministry recently, will help reduce the time taken to buy major weapons systems, the Army deputy chief of staff, Lt-Gen SS Mehta, said today.

He said the interaction on expensive but important purchases at the board level would reduce "time delays." The board could also help reduce costs, even military costs. He said the creation of the board would hasten decision-making.

Lt-Gen Mehta today headed a detailed and elaborate effort to explain the process of discussions and decision-making by the Army and the ministry of defence before a major weapon-system is purchased. It appeared to be the beginning of a news-management exercise to reduce the negative impact of the Tehelka expose which suggested that senior Army and defence ministry officials would purchase arms even if these aren't good enough or necessary. So far, the Army has suspended one Major-General and instituted a court of inquiry against several others. The defence ministry has also taken action against some officials.

The ministry's newly-appointed consultant, Mr BG Verghese (journalist), participated in the briefing. The Army explained how normal purchases are made and made specific reference to the acquisition of the T-90 tank from Russia and a laser-guided shell for the artillery. When it was pointed out that major cuts were taken on small purchases of stores and not, more 'glamorous' deals, officers said it was the subject for another discussion. Ministry officials could not clarify whether 64 middlemen were blacklisted after the Bofors scam and said deals did not involve middlemen.

Explaining the procurement system, Lt-Gen Mehta said reasons to look for a certain weapon depended on threat assess-



Delhi Congress woman members demonstrate in front of the Parliament on Friday demanding the Prime Minister's resignation. — AP/PTI

ments, force ratio, prevailing security scenario, availability of funds and the current state of research and development.

Purchases, he said, were part of the five-year modernisation plan, annual plan and the decision to buy equipment is usually approved at the chief's level after discussions. Such decisions are flexible, he said, because change in priorities, new additions, obsolescence, enemy plans, availability of funds and changes in threat perception.

The changes can take place because of events like the Kargil war— because of which certain kind of mountain-warfare equipment was necessary.

The general said 80 per cent of equipment imported by the Army was bought from Russia, with the equipment performing to specifications. After the post-

Pokhran sanctions, "options have narrowed further," he said.

He explained that requirements were usually suggested by the general staff and the joint staff. Deciding what equipment could be sent for trial was a complicated affair because various departments, including military operations and quality assurance, are involved. Eventually, the clearance for trials come from the highest level.

Procurement is an issue when the Defence Research and Development Organisation does not or cannot develop a system and there is an urgent operational need. The weapon can be identified in different ways and the factors involved in selecting the weapon are its operational characteristics, and issues related to technology, inventory, maintainability, induction

schedule and costs.

Once the Army HQ approaches the ministry, vendors are shortlisted and trials, usually at no cost-no commitment, begin. The trials are held at different terrains and all representatives are present. After the trials, separate reports reach Army HQ. Sometimes, retrials are necessary as the equipment is necessary and at times, a waiver of certain requirements is recommended. After approval, the deputy chief forwards the demand to the defence ministry which along with its financial wing, evaluate the system and begin price-negotiations.

The presentation appeared to suggest that one or two rogues cannot affect the purchase of a major weapon system and there were too many checks and balances to ensure there would be no short-circuits.

Deal with Russian firm approved

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 30. — The defence minister today approved the proposal to buy sophisticated artillery ammunition from KBP Tula, a Russian firm. Mr Jaswant Singh granted the approval on the advice of top military officers even though the trials were partly successful, Army sources said.

This was one of the controversial defence deals the Army spoke about today, the other being the T-90 tank deal.

Top Army officers said the ammunition, already acquired by Pakistan, was very accurate as it is guided by laser beams. Only two companies, Martin Marietta of the USA and KBP Tula, make the shells. It was very successful during a trial at Pokhran in 1999 but trials in Kargil just before the war showed they were unsuitable for high-altitude warfare (shells were found to move in a different direction at that height).

The Russian firm then asked the Centre to give them some time to carry out modifications. While the war was still continuing, the Cabinet approved the purchase of a large number of shells and laser designators but the approval was conditional of success in trials.

The 1999 October trial were partly successful but the range was considered too small. The trials were more successful in Ladakh and officers at the division, corps and command level called for selective induction of the ammunition. The directorate of artillery also cleared the induction.

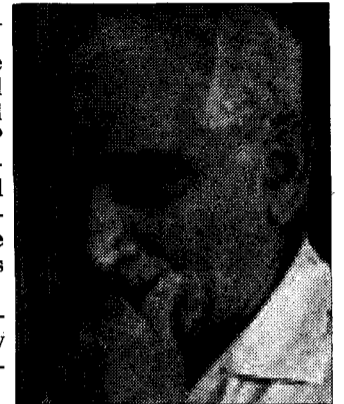
It was then that Mr George Fernandes cleared the deal and the equipment was purchased. This, Army officers said, happened in only three or four cases.

About the T-90 deal, officers said the tanks was considered after Pakistan upgraded their T-59 tanks and purchased the T-85 from China.

Pakistan was also buying tanks from Ukraine and developing the Khalid with Chinese help. Meanwhile, DRDO's tank, Arjun, was delayed.

It was evaluated in Russia and later trials were conducted in the Thar desert in the summer of 1999. After a series of exhaustive and apparently fool-proof trials there were recommendations from brigade, division, corps that the tank be purchased. The director-general, mechanised forces, also agreed as did the directorate-general of quality assurance and the electrical and mechanical engineers.

The T-90 was possibly discussed today as Mr HD Deve Gowda had cautioned against its purchase without proper trials. He had also spoken of buying the cheaper T-72S instead of the T-90.



Mr Jaswant Singh

THE STATESMAN

3 1 200 200

'Fernandes okayed Krasnopol deal'

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, MARCH 30. The former Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, used his discretion to clear the deal for the Russian laser-guided Krasnopol shells, even after shortcomings were discovered during high-altitude trials.

At a press conference, a panel headed by the Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Planning and Systems), Lt. Gen. S.S. Mehta, said Mr. Fernandes exercised his "waiver" authority to facilitate the deal on the recommendations of the Northern Command. The controversial deal featured prominently in the Tehelka tapes, which alleged that it was pushed through by a middleman.

While acknowledging some limitations of the shells, meant for the Bofors howitzers, the Northern Command, in February 2000, felt their acquisition, when considered in "totality", would be beneficial. A final order for the shells, meant for use in the plains and high-altitude areas, was placed on August 21, 2000. The Army had earlier stipulated that procurement was possible only if the shells performed satisfactorily both in the plains as well as in the mountains.

Elaborating on the negotiations, the panel said the requirement of such shells was felt around 1998. Since India was facing post-Pokhran sanctions, the

only rival to the Krasnopol shells, manufactured by Martin-Marietta of the U.S., was not in the reckoning. The Krasnopol trials were consequently held in Pokhran in February 1999. Three rounds were fired and all of them secured direct hits on a dummy tank and a bunker.

While they were successful in the plains, difficulties were encountered during high-altitude trials, which began in the Karbuthang range in Ladakh in February-March, 1999. The trial was a failure as the rounds, fired at an altitude of 3,700 m, missed their targets.

Since they were never fired at high altitudes abroad, the manufacturers sought time to fine-tune their system. Besides, they suggested that to enhance accuracy in the mountains, the firing procedures be suitably altered.

The next round of trials took place in October 1999. Of the four rounds fired, two missed their targets. In the light of this partial success, it was decided that a new venue be selected as the Karbuthang range was too small. The much-larger Mahe range was then used for the next round of trials in November 1999, which was successful.

While it was acknowledged that the shells might not be successful in the mountains under all conditions, the Northern Army Com-

mander, Commander of the 14 Corps in Leh and Commander of the infantry division in Ladakh, who witnessed the trials, were well disposed towards them.

Two key developments subsequently clinched the deal. The Army Headquarters discussed the issue on February 23, 2000. The Northern Command also discussed it and decided to recommend it. Consequently, the Defence Minister approved the deal by exercising the necessary "waiver" authority to override the rigid operational parameters laid down earlier.

T-90S tank deal

On the T-90S tank deal, Lt. Gen. Mehta said they came into the picture in 1997. A technical evaluation committee was set up in early 1998, and extensive trials were held in the deserts and thereafter in Russia.

Surprisingly, the T-90S was pitted against the older T-72S tanks, the indigenous Arjun and the T-72M, manufactured in India under a Russian licence.

On why other modern tanks, such as the Israeli Merkava and the French Leclerc, were not considered, Lt. Gen. Mehta cited the compatibility of the T-90 with the rest of the Indian equipment, the high cost of the Western tanks and the problems related to transfer of technology as the factors behind this decision.

THE HINDU

31 MAR 2001

GSLV failure affects PSLV launch

By R.K. Radhakrishnan

CHENNAI, MARCH 30. One unintended casualty of the aborted Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) mission is the next flight of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), the workhorse launch vehicle of the Indian Space programme.

India uses the PSLV to launch its one-tonne Indian Remote Sensing series of satellites and also carry out commercial launches for foreign countries. The PSLV is capable of placing a 1,200 kg class satellite into 820 km-high polar sun-synchronous orbit.

According to the Indian Space Research Organisation's (ISRO) decade plan for 1992-2002, the lift-off of the PSLV C-3 was slated for 2000-2001 with a foreign satellite payload and an Indian satellite. A German satellite, BIRD and a Belgian PROBA, were scheduled for a launch along with India's TES satellite. Though it was known even earlier that this launch would be "slightly delayed" due to the GSLV launch, it reportedly remained well within "acceptable limits." The PSLV is also planned to be used

for geo-synchronous satellite mission. The first such mission will carry India's METSAT. The Space programme had earlier fixed this launch for 2002.

So far, all the PSLV launches — including the failed first one on September 20, 1993 — have kept to the ISRO's decade plan for 1992-2002. The last flight, that of PSLV C-2,

was in May, 1999. The 294-tonne, four-stage vehicle, placed three satellites, including a 107-kg Korean and a 47 kg German, in orbit.

Two options

At Sriharikota, right now, the problem is that the GSLV has to "vacate" the launch-pad — either a launch after replacing part of the vehicle or dismantling the vehicle from the launch pad.

After the GSLV launch, the same launch pad and paraphernalia has to be reconfigured for a PSLV launch. According to Mr. Narayana, Director, SHAR centre, the process of reconfiguration and getting the launch pad ready for a PSLV launch could take from "six to eight weeks."

The postponement of the GSLV mission also brought into sharp focus the need to speed up the construction of the Rs.290-crore second launch pad. The design phase has been completed and fabrication and civil works were in progress now. The launch pad will be able to handle both PSLV and GSLV launches, officials at the SHAR said. They are optimistic that the launch pad would be ready by December 2002.

Relaunch in May?

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 30. The Human Resource Development Minister, Dr. Murlu Manohar Joshi, today said the Geostationary Satellite Launch Vehicle, which failed to take off on Wednesday following a hitch one second before its scheduled flight, is now expected to be launched again sometime in May.

Fuel from the malfunctioning strap-on engine was being removed and the snag was likely to be rectified in about three weeks and the vehicle expected to be ready for re-launch in May.

MoD shopping spree during Kargil shows bad planning: CAG

RITU SARIN
NEW DELHI, MARCH 30

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2/13

THE Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has found several instances of delayed delivery and single-vendor purchases of ammunition, equipment and clothing during the Kargil war. It has also found that when newly purchased equipment landed in ordnance depots, their delivery to the front was sluggish. In all, 140 purchase deals signed during the Kargil operations are under scrutiny as part of CAG's special audit which is likely to be submitted in the Budget session of Parliament.

Defence Ministry officials have told the CAG's auditors that the 50-day Kargil operations—when hundreds of rounds of expensive heavy artillery shells were expended every day and specialized glacial clothing was the need of the hour—justified their buying spree. However, the CAG argues that the rushed purchases highlight the crippling problems of how the MoD has been depleting its war reserves and eventually went in for

CAG vs MoD

- Several instances of delayed delivery
- Single-vendor purchases of ammunition, equipment and clothing
- Sluggish delivery of equipment from ordnance depots to the front
- CAG examining 140 deals in all
- MoD says the immediate needs of Kargil war justified the frantic shopping

a spate of single-vendor purchases.

Interestingly, CAG's present inquiry dovetails with its audit on inventory management in ordnance depots it had submitted to Parliament in December last year. At the end of the exercise, the CAG had made 68 recommendations, of which the MoD agreed with 51. "If these and the remaining recommendations are implemented, the same will go a long way in improving the ailing sys

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INDIAN EXPRESS

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TRY AGAIN

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THE ABORTED FLIGHT of the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) should be seen by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) as an opportunity to analyse and set right things in a highly prestigious space endeavour. Dr. K. Kasturirangan, Chairman of the ISRO, and his fellow scientists do not have to be told that a much-too-demanding programme such as the launching of satellites does not always succeed straightaway. The giving up of the launch should indeed have been heart-breaking for the scientists and engineers who had been working on the programme for ten years, but what they have learnt about space ventures should have prepared them well enough for things going awry as it had happened with the GSLV launch. There have been many cases of satellites taking a dive and hurtling down to the earth after some systems had failed. The number of U.S. and Russian launch failures is in fact more than that which has come to notice. As many as 12 communications satellites of the U.S. Globalstar Telecommunications Ltd. crashed soon after they were launched from the Baikonur Space Centre in Kazakhstan in 1998 much to the dismay of the company. This led to the plummeting of Globalstar's shares.

It is yet to be known whether the U.S. sanctions against the supply of crucial materials imposed soon after the Pokhran testing and the cancellation of the Russian agreement for the supply of cryogenic engines under pressure from Washington had led to the present failure of the GSLV programme. The confidence expressed by Indian space scientists that they could go ahead with the launch with indigenously made cryogenic engines led to hopes that the space programme would proceed without a hitch. The ISRO should not take very long to find out what had gone wrong; there are some indications already. The most significant aspect of how the

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launch was aborted throws some light on the headway the ISRO has made with a technology which could well have baffled them but for their having prised it open with a determination. We are told that soon after the liquid strap-ons were ignited, the safety system got activated and the whole system was shut down. This reveals the highly advanced state of space technology which leaves nothing to chance and steps in to stop things from going haywire during a launch. If, as it appears, the ISRO had ensured against this with the activation of the safety system long before the GSLV was on its way to place the satellite in orbit, it should give an idea of how the organisation could do an engineering which would leave nothing to chance and has trained its scientists and engineers to be perfectionists.

Dr. Kasturirangan's remarks on the need for an enormous amount of data for pinpointing the deficiencies which had forced the cancellation of the GSLV flight give an indication of how severely uncompromising the task of satellite launching could be. The enormity of the task involved in putting a 1,540-kg satellite into orbit with a 401-tonne vehicle would have been known only to those charged with the programme at Sriharikota. A successful launch of the GSLV would have placed India among the small number of countries which could embark on such a Herculean venture. It would have been a big leap from what the ISRO could achieve in view of the stupendousness of having to design, develop and place satellite synchronising its orbit with that of the earth. The technology which could achieve this had to catch up with what had been ordained for the earth and the other planets of the solar and the stellar systems millions of years ago. The GSLV programme has suffered only a temporary setback. The ISRO should go ahead with the GSLV programme to make it failure-proof.

THE HINDU

30 MAR 2001

SPACE FOR MORE

GSLV failure is not fatal

IT isn't as bad as it looked on the evening TV, or as it appeared in the morning's papers. ISRO's first geosynchronous satellite launch vehicle (GSLV), ten years in the planning and making, was supposed to put India into the premier league of space programmes. Wednesday's aborted mission will most probably mean a manageable delay, not a crippling hiatus. Launch failures in space programmes are more common than imagined. From Nasa and the European space programme to Japan and China, all have been hit by aborted launches and last second snags. Prominent examples of first launch failures, as in the GSLV's case, include the Japanese Lambda-4S and US Scout vehicles. In the late 1990s, the US lost five launch vehicles in 12 months. American media was full of gloomy predictions, Nasa was under fire as it never had been before. But recovery, in research and public image, was swift, and these days, no one asks whether Nasa and its programmes are fundamentally unviable. Perhaps the only definitive casualty of launch failures has been the Japanese H II rocket. Cryogenic-fuelled, like India's GSLV, the Japanese vehicle went through a series of mishaps between 1996 and 1999, resulting in Tokyo "putting on hold" a space programme that many experts in the early 1990s felt had extraordinary high promise.

India's GSLV too is burdened with high expectations. The cryogenic technology being used has become a politico-scientific prestige point — indigenous efforts plus Russian help battling US sanctions and non-cooperation. Isro is yet to develop full indigenous capability on this front. Expectations on the GSLV also come from its commercial potential. The earlier polar satellite launch vehicles (PSLV) that Isro successfully tested in 1996, 1997 and 1999 gained India entry in the commercial satellite launching market. But the real money comes from the ability to put satellites in geosynchronous orbit, a capability commercially exploited now by the US, Russia, China, Japan and the EU. To see how lucrative a working GSLV programme for India might be consider the experimental satellite, GSAT-1, that the failed GSLV was to put in orbit. GSAT-1 was to address digital audio and audio-visual broadcasting and Internet services. The demand for such services and, therefore, for satellites to make them possible are growing at a rate which will allow even a late new entrant like India to make money on space research.

There are questions whether Isro, irrespective of its world class scientific and engineering capabilities, is the best agency for playing the commercial game in satellite launch markets, where nimble private American companies and pushy state agents from Europe and China have been long operating. Another private/public issue is satellite photography, a fast-growing market where the most skilled players are private, and where governments, including India's, seem to be insisting on curbs in the face of technological inevitability. The Indian government is unlikely to understand or address these issues very well. But Indian space scientists should be able to understand and address the GSLV's problems and, as earlier, go from a failed launch to a successful mission.

THE STATESMAN

30 MAR 2001

GSLV fails to lift off following technical snag

JAYA MENON
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SRIHARIKOTA, (Andhra Pradesh), March 28. — India's first Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle, using Russian made cryo-engines, failed to lift off from SHAR Centre here after a technical snag, dealing a blow to the country's space research programme.

GSLV-D1's test flight had to be aborted just a second before it was to take off. "We have cancelled the launch. This is a setback," a visibly upset Isro chairman, Mr K Kasturirangan, said.

Briefing journalists 30 minutes after the failure, Mr Kasturirangan said one of the four liquid strap-on motors (L-40) had failed to get the necessary thrust. The strap-ons should have at least 90 per cent thrust before a command could be given to ignite the solid stage.

"But, here we found that one of the strap-on motors didn't have the required level of thrust... So the computer ordered shut-down of the entire system."

The finding was based on preliminary assessments on "enormous amount of data" collected by the computer. What is significant, however, is that the safety mechanism had functioned perfectly and the computer ordered shut-down barely a second before take-off. The safety mechanism's failure could have resulted in a lopsided take-off and a "mid-air mishap".

Journalists and a large number of local people had gathered on the Sriharikota Air Range Centre terrace to watch the historical event. But instead of a seeing rocket going up in the air, they just heard a loud noise. Those watching the live coverage of the event, transmitted by the Isro cameras, saw a massive tunnel of flame before it went dead.

But by far it was the greatest disappointment for the team of scientists, working day and night since 1990 to put together the vehicle. "You can see our faces," Mr Kasturirangan said when asked about his reaction.

He said he had informed Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee of the development. "Realising the

MOON MISSION

NEW DELHI, March 28. — India's moon mission could be affected by the GSLV failure. The mission was to have been a fly-by and the satellite was to be powered by a GSLV. The GSLV launch has been considerably delayed. For, it was due to be launched either late last year or early this year. — SNS

extreme disappointment that we were going through, the Prime Minister was most kind and understanding. He said it was all part and parcel of this game."

Can the GSLV be launched before 3 April (window period)? Mr Kasturirangan said: "There is no window period. We have declared the mission cancelled for the time being. We will try our best to set right the anomaly and try to have the GSLV flight as soon as possible."

But when can it be expected to launch? He said: "There's not much I can tell you at this

stage." The GSLV was to lift off at precisely 3.47 p.m., to place a 1,540-kg experimental satellite in a Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit 17 minutes and 3 seconds later. If the 49-metre-long, 401-tonne, three-stage GSLV, costing Rs 1,400 crore, had lifted off smoothly, the satellite would have been in place, over the eastern part of Indonesia.

This is the first time that the Indian Space Research Organisation had used a cryogenic stage, procured from Russia, in its launch vehicle. The launch facilities at the SHAR Centre were suitably modified to launch the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) and the GSLV.

The vehicle's performance was to be monitored with extensive instrumentation from SHAR Centre.

The four ground stations at SHAR Centre and the down range stations at Port Blair, Brunei and Biak, Indonesia, were to monitor the complete telemetry, tracking the vehicle from lift-off to satellite injection.

While the first developmental test flight

was primarily to validate the vehicle design, its performance parameters and the ground infrastructure, the flight would have placed the experimental satellite GSAT-1 in orbit for demonstrating digital audio broadcast, Internet services, compressed digital TV experiments and developmental communications. The GSLV was to have been declared operational after two successful developmental flights.

The cryogenic stage is more efficient and gives more thrust for every kg of propellant it burns compared to solid and earth-storable liquid propellants.

With cryo-fluids (liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen) the impulse achieved is 450 seconds against 350 seconds by earth storable and solid fuels, giving a substantial payload advantage.

While the initial GSLV flights will use Russian supplied cryogenic stage, ISRO is in the process of developing the stage indigenously. Of the seven cryo-engines procured from Russia, four have been used in the GSLV.

THE STATESMAN

29 MAR 2001

Integration of MoD, Services still far off

GAURAV C. SAWANT
NEW DELHI, MARCH 28

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THE Ministry of Defence (MoD) has begun preparing for a transformation to establish the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) structure, enhancement of delegated administrative and financial powers to service headquarters and constitution of a defence procurement board.

The step is being described as "piecemeal and hotchpotch" which still does not address the fundamental problem of integrating the Services with the MoD. "These are only partial steps," says Jasjit Singh, Director of the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses. "India is the only democracy where the military establishment is not a part of MoD. The three services continue to work as attached offices and even if they have a few more powers now, unless the rules of business are changed, the status of services will remain the same," he adds.

Noted Defence expert and chairman of Kargil Review Committee K. Subrahmanyam concurs. "The Government is only delegating more powers to the services. It means that they are still not merging the services with the

MoD. The Government is keeping the two separate," he says.

The Army will now proceed with its recommended review of the logistics and personnel functions and appointment of an Inspector General of the Army, a step which assumes significance in the wake of corruption in the highest echelons of the military. The IG looks at the state of preparedness of the Army from outside

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rity system is to be placed before the Cabinet for formal approval.

Commodore C Uday Bhaskar, deputy Director IDSA, on the constitution of the Defence Procurement Board, says that this would provide a certain nimbleness in procurement. "Presently each service projects its demands individually, but now they would know each other's demands and try to pro-

seen. But most important is that there needs to be joint planning," he insists. The MoD has also announced that the Rashtriya Rifles is to be designated as part of the regular Army and will rank as a regiment in view of its sterling performance. The manpower and budget provisions for the Rashtriya Rifles will continue as earlier.

The proposal that revised rates of war injury pension be extended to those injured prior to 1996 has been approved. The MoD has also decided to give priority to meeting accommodation requirements of Defence personnel, including the allocation of higher budgetary outlays. The Government has decided to review and, where necessary, amend procedures governing civilian recognition and certification of technical qualifications obtained by Defence personnel in the course of their duties (pilots, air traffic controllers, mariners and so on). The implementation of this decision in various ministries will be pursued expeditiously. The Government also decided to institute a National War Museum at the earliest. It has also decided to implement schemes for medical care to ex-servicemen at the district level depending upon the concentration of ex-servicemen in given areas.

Step to establish a Chief of Defence Staff structure still does not address service integration issue, say analysts

yet is a man from the Army.

Subrahmanyam feels that the appointment of Inspector General (IG) of the Army is a positive step. "The IG is a very senior officer who does not look for further promotion. He is from within the service and is a very independent man. He reports straight to the minister on the state of preparedness of the Army," says Subrahmanyam.

Defence Minister Jaswant Singh on Tuesday directed the MoD to start the preparation following a nod from Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee on "management of defence". The group of ministers' recommendations on reforming the national secu-

re equipment together. The Government too would be dealing with them together and this would speed up the process," he says.

Jasjit Singh feels the DPB was actually set up in 1947 as part of the 13 committees. "We are coming one full circle. By restarting the DPB we are only going back to the starting point," he adds. Singh also feels the "devil would be in the detail" even when it comes to the establishment of the post of CDS. "What would his charter be? Would he be the commander-in-chief of the three services and have operational command over the three chiefs? All this remains to be

INDIAN EXPRESS

29 MAR 2001

Five..four..three..two.. and GSLV fails to lift-off

Indian bid to enter space club suffers temporary setback

By Srinivas Laxman

The Times of India News Service and PTI

SRIHARIKOTA: India's first Geo-Synchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) mission was aborted here on Wednesday just a second before it was to lift-off as one of the strap-on engines failed to derive adequate thrust.

At 3.47 p.m., lift-off time, there was an announcement over the public address system that the flight was aborted. Five minutes later, a formal order was issued by officials of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) cancelling the launch for the time being, much to the disappointment of everyone.

Mediapersons who had been waiting to watch the lift-off from the terrace of the Brahm Prakash hall some seven kilometres away from the launch pad, heard a loud rumbling sound before the mission was cancelled.

Addressing the media, ISRO chairperson K. Kasturirangan described the cancellation as a "setback for the space agency. My colleagues and I will now work day and night to find out what went wrong".

The ISRO chief said the next test flight would take place "as early as possible" but declined to specify the exact time.

"Until April 3, we have declared the mission as cancelled," he stated.

Mr Kasturirangan said that the Prime Minister had been informed about the flight cancellation and he shared the disappointment of the ISRO team.

Rocket failures during launch are not uncommon feature

By Manoj Joshi

NEW DELHI: Failures and rockets go together. Hubris does not encourage man's efforts to transcend his planet. A checklist of space launch vehicle failures reveals almost every conceivable reason for disaster—leaking pipes, failed power, short-circuits and so on. It remains to be seen what went wrong with the first GSLV flight test.



The aborted takeoff of GSLV at Sriharikota on Wednesday as the rocket appeared to catch fire on the launch pad.

AP/Doordarshan

Those inclined to mope over India's inability to master advanced technology would do well to recall the debate in the U.S. in 1998-1999. That was the year when the U.S. lost three military and two civilian space launch vehicles in just one year, sparking widespread concern about the U.S. ability to ensure access to space for commercial and military purposes. But the U.S. setbacks are piffling compared to what the Japanese space programme underwent. Until 1994, when the Japanese space agency launched the cryogenic-fuelled H-II rocket, everything seemed to work on a text-book pattern. So sophisticated was the Japanese programme that they were invited to join the International Space Station Programme. Japanese engineers pointed out that the H-II, weighing 260 tonnes, could lift a two-tonne satellite to geo-stationary orbit (also known as GTO), in contrast to the French Ariane-4, weighing 460 tonnes and lifting a 2.3-tonne payload. The Russian Proton weighs 770 tonnes, but can carry only 2.4 tonnes. The failed GSLV D-1, which weighed as much as the Japanese H-II, was meant to hoist a payload of 1.5 tonnes to GTO.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

29 MAR 2001

Rashtriya Rifles will be part of Army Armed forces to get chief of staff, more teeth

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 27. — The armed forces will get a chief of defence staff, more administrative and financial powers and the defence ministry, a procurement board.

Also, the Rashtriya Rifles, fighting militancy in the Kashmir valley, will be incorporated into the Indian Army.

The Prime Minister today announced the decisions, saying they will soon be placed before the Cabinet for approval. Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee's directive is based on the recommendations to reform the national security system made by the Group of Ministers, headed by the home minister, Mr LK Advani.

The GoM's recommendations stemmed from the reports of the four task forces, set up to find ways to improve the national security system after the release of the Kargil Committee report. The reports on defence management, internal security, Intelligence restructuring and border management were considered by the GoM.

Initially, the GoM appeared divided over creating the post of the chief of defence staff because some members were not sure what the defence minister and defence secretary would do if there were a chief of defence staff (CDS). But with time, it appeared that the armed forces favoured such a decision and the GoM unanimously cleared it.

The CDS is likely to be responsible for India's nuclear force and strategic surveillance structure. One of the chiefs of the armed forces could be elevated to the post. At the moment, the Navy chief, Admiral Sushil Kumar, is the

most senior Service chief. Alternatively, a retired chief may be considered.

It seems the decisions will be implemented sooner than later. For, no departmental examination is now necessary before the decisions go to the Cabinet. This removes the one fear the armed forces had too — that the bureaucracy would slow down such efforts.

In another significant move, the acting defence minister, Mr Jaswant Singh, today authorised the Army chief, General S Padmanabhan, to review the logistics and personnel functions in the Army and appoint an inspector-general. This appears important after the Tehelka expose of a shady "defence deal" in which a number of logistics personnel, including major-generals, were involved.

The decision to make the Rashtriya Rifles part of the Army — literally, upgrade it — is a sign of realism. For, the Rashtriya Rifles has been fighting militants in the Kashmir valley for a decade. The Rashtriya Rifles will no longer be a paramilitary force but a full-fledged regiment.

Other decisions by the Centre include approving the proposal that revised rates of war-injury pension be extended to those injured before 1996. This would help those injured fighting militants in the Kashmir valley and defending the Siachen glacier. This will be done very soon, officials said.

Also, the Centre has decided to have a National War Museum and ensure that accommodation requirements of defence personnel get priority. Now, qualifications obtained by defence personnel — like flying or acting as air traffic controllers — will be

recognised in the civilian sector. The defence ministry will ensure better medical care for ex-servicemen.

The chief of defence staff issue has been a controversial one ever since the post was mooted several years ago, reports PTI. But the major opinion is that a single point of reference is needed now that India has gone nuclear. There have been reservations to the chief of defence staff's post, for fear that it may undermine the powers of the three chiefs and lead to a psychological mismatch.

Besides the establishment of a chief of defence staff and associated structures, the much needed enhancement of delegated administrative and financial powers to the Service headquarters has been a long-standing demand of the Army, Navy and the Air Force.

Dattatreya: The Union minister of state for urban development, Mr Bandaru Dattatreya, today lashed out at the Congress and the Left parties for trying to tarnish Mr Vajpayee's image and gain political mileage out of the Tehelka expose, adds UNI from Hyderabad.

Addressing a press conference here, Mr Dattatreya said the Congress had no moral right to talk about corruption because there were a "basketful" of scams, including the Bofors gun deal, during its regime.

He said that during yesterday's public meeting in Delhi, NDA leaders reaffirmed their faith in Mr Vajpayee and decided to hold nationwide rallies to expose the Congress's and Left's gameplan to pull down the Vajpayee government. He said pamphlets would be distributed at the rallies highlighting the scams during the previous Congress rule.

THE STATESMAN

28 MAR 2001

Govt starts giving shape to defence procurement board

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 27 MARCH

THE DEFENCE ministry, on Tuesday, decided to start preparatory work on the establishment of defence procurement board and its associated structures.

This was part of the recommendations of a group of ministers on national security. The ministry will place its proposals before the next meeting of the Union Cabinet for approval.

The decision was taken after Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee consulted defence minister Jaswant Singh.

The step for establishment of a combined defence procurement board, their associated structures and the go-ahead given for appointment of an inspector general of army assumes significance in the wake of the Tehelka expose. Mr Singh said preparatory work should also commence on another major recommendation by the Group of Ministers (GoM) pertaining to the "management of defence" for enhancing delegated administrative and financial powers to services' headquarters.

"The recommendations of the GoM were finalised in consultations with the concerned ministries and agencies and, therefore, do not require further departmental examinations before the matter is taken to the cabinet for final orders," the announcement said.

The defence minister also authorised the chief of army staff to proceed with the recommended review of appointment of an inspector general of the army and to go ahead with review of the logistics and personnel functions of the army.

As part of the new measures, the ministry has also redesignated Rashtriya Rifles, the new force to deal with counter-insurgency operations, to be part of army.

"The Rashtriya Rifles raised as a paramilitary force under MoD in 1990 will now rank as a regular



FOR THE BRAVE SONS OF THE SOIL: CRPF cadres pay tribute to members, killed by militants, at a funeral ceremony in Srinagar on Tuesday. — AFP

regiment of the army in view of its sterling performance," the announcement said.

The creation of the new post of inspector general of army is apparently aimed at setting up a regulatory body to streamline discipline and conduct of personnel. Other new measures included extending war injury pension to those who retired before 1996 and setting up a national war museum.

With the go-ahead given for implementation of recommendations, decisions on the reports of the GoM, headed by home minister L. K. Advani, on border management, internal security and intelligence apparatus are still pending.

The GoM, which reviewed the security set up after Kargil and submitted its 137-page report to the Prime Minister recently, had suggested creation of a new post of chief of defence staff to hold command of the nuclear forces and ensure greater coordination of the security apparatus.

The Economic Times.

27 MAR 2001

The GSLV project

By N. Gopal Raj

HD-12
27/3

WHETHER IT was the SLV-3 in 1979, the Augmented Satellite Launch Vehicle (ASLV) in 1987 or the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) six years later, the first launch of each new rocket by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has marked a major technological advance. The present Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV), which is scheduled to be launched on March 28, is the exception. Its most important new technology element — the stage with the cryogenic engine — is entirely Russian, the first time that a non-indigenous stage has flown on an Indian launch vehicle.

Moreover, the cost of the GSLV project, taking into account also the cost of indigenously developing the cryogenic technology, has more than doubled. At the same time, instead of the 2,500 kg satellite it was supposed to launch, the present GSLV will be carrying only a 1,540 kg satellite, an unprecedented shortfall of 38 per cent in performance. In subsequent flights, the GSLV with the Russian cryogenic stage is expected to deliver about 1,800 kg into what is called a geostationary transfer orbit (GTO). The GSLV with the equivalent Indian stage, currently scheduled to fly in two to three years, is expected to place about 2,000 kg into orbit.

Contrast this with the wholly indigenous PSLV on which the GSLV is based. The escalation in the PSLV project cost was 33 per cent and the shortfall in performance at the first launch was only 15 per cent. Three flights later, the PSLV's payload had increased to 20 per cent more than the 1,000 kg in sun-synchronous polar orbit which the rocket had been originally designed for. With further improvements, the PSLV's capability is expected to rise to 1,400 kg, a 40 per cent increase over its original specification.

The improvements planned for the PSLV would also give it the capability to put 1,000 kg into GTO. If it were equipped with the GSLV's four liquid strap-ons, the PSLV would probably be able to deliver around 1,400 kg in GTO. The present GSLV, equipped with the Russian cryo, therefore represents a mere 10 per cent increase over that capability, something which can hardly be described as a big jump in performance.

More worrying is the inadequacy of the GSLV. Intended to put 2,500 kg communication satellites into GTO, the GSLV was

essentially a launcher designed for the early 1990s. Even if this capability could be achieved, it would still probably be inadequate to meet the requirements of the present decade. To meet competition from fibre-optics, communication satellites have steadily grown bigger, with more on-board processing, improved flexibility and greater power. In the process, the satellites have become heavier. The average weight of communication satellites increased from 1,200 kg in the 1980s to 3,000 kg by

growing competition from both fibre-optics and other satellite operators. So, although it currently plans a series of 2,000 kg communication satellites to fly on the GSLV, ISRO may be forced by circumstances to build heavier satellites. Such satellites would then have to be launched abroad. By contrast, after the first successful launch of the PSLV, only one remote sensing satellite, the IRS-1C, has had to be launched abroad. The PSLV was rapidly improved and the IRS-1D, identical to its

Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) had come into being and the United States had modified its laws to enforce the export controls required by the MTCR.

To make matters worse, by the time ISRO signed the deal in January 1991 for getting the cryogenic engine technology from the erstwhile USSR, the Soviet Union was already falling apart and by December that year had ceased to exist. Words of warning from ISRO insiders about the dangers of entering into a contract with an economically and politically weakened Soviet Union for so critical a technology were ignored. In dire economic straits, Russia, which inherited the cryo contract after the break-up of the Soviet Union, was in no position to withstand American embargoes and enticements. In mid-1993, Russia told India that it would not supply the cryogenic technology.

Given that ISRO would now have to develop cryogenic technology on its own, a sensible course would have been to take a fresh look at the GSLV configuration and the cryo engine to be developed. It was quite clear by this time that the existing GSLV configuration would be inadequate in the years to come. The cryo contract with the Russians had been renegotiated and India was to get seven ready-to-fly cryogenic stages from them. So a GSLV with these imported stages could be flown while ISRO developed its own cryogenic stage and, quite probably, a different sort of GSLV as well.

But ISRO's response when Russians refused to supply cryogenic technology was to insist that much of the technology had already been acquired and that an indigenous equivalent could be quickly developed. The private assessment of ISRO's liquid propulsion engineers at the time was that an indigenous cryogenic stage was ten years away. Events have now proved this assessment to be accurate.

Given the official ISRO position, when the Cryogenic Upper Stage project to develop an indigenous cryogenic stage was approved in 1994, its aim was to produce a stage similar to the Russian one. The consequence of this strategy has been that the GSLV will deliver only about 2,000 kg to GTO. If a different cryogenic stage and GSLV configuration had been taken up then, it is quite possible that a far more powerful and relevant GSLV would have become available to ISRO in a couple of years from now.

If a different cryogenic stage and GSLV configuration had been taken up in 1994, a far more powerful launch vehicle could have become available to ISRO a couple of years from now.

the end of the 1990s. The present decade is expected to be dominated by communication satellites of over 4,000 kg.

To meet this challenge, ISRO is now planning to develop the GSLV Mark-III which would be able to carry over 4,000 kg to GTO. Since, the Mark-III is a completely new launch vehicle and not, as has been done with the PSLV, the steady improvement of a proven basic design, it will cost a good deal of money and time to develop. Although ISRO believes that it can have the Mark-III ready in six years, many of its own launch vehicle experts privately say that ten years is more realistic. Ten years corresponds well with ISRO's past experience as well as the experience of Arianespace, the world's most successful commercial launch company. But that also means that the GSLV will be stuck with about 2,000 kg in GTO all through this decade.

This could be the very decade when ISRO faces its greatest challenge in the lucrative communications satellite segment. Already, a large number of satellite transponders in use over India (half of all transponders, according to one unofficial estimate) are said to be on non-ISRO satellites. Greater penetration of the Internet and private sector entry into telecommunications basic services and long-distance traffic are likely to provide major business opportunities in this decade. There are already reports of vast stretches of fibre-optic cables being laid down in India, including by several private companies. It is therefore probable that ISRO will face

sister satellite, could be launched from Sriharikota two years later.

There is already a surfeit of launchers available on the international market. If ISRO were to continue launching its communication satellites abroad even after the GSLV becomes operational, it could easily raise questions, even within the organisation itself, about the relevance of the GSLV programme.

The present configuration of the GSLV represents what was intended to be the path with the lowest cost and least development time for launching the Insat communication satellites from within the country. The first two stages of the four-stage PSLV were retained for the GSLV. The PSLV's six solid strap-ons were replaced with four liquid ones which used the same engine as the second stage. The top two stages were replaced with a single cryogenic stage. Running on liquid hydrogen and liquid oxygen, a cryogenic engine is a much more efficient system.

So it was clear early on that cryogenic technology was the single most critical element in the development of the GSLV. In December 1983, an internal committee established by ISRO submitted a detailed 15-volume report on developing this technology. If indigenous development had been pursued wholeheartedly right away, India would almost certainly have had its own cryogenic engine by now. Instead, ISRO waived for the next seven years between developing the technology indigenously and importing it. During this period, the

THE HINDU

27/3/94

Army's procurement wing to be revamped

By Atul Aneja

119-13

NEW DELHI, MARCH 26. Within weeks of the Tehelka expose, the Government has decided to revamp the Army's troubled procurement wing. According to highly-placed Government sources, the Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Planning and Systems), Lt. Gen. S.S. Mehta, who heads the Army's procurement chain, has been posted as chief of the Army Training Command (ARTRAC).

Lt. Gen. Mehta headed the committee which negotiated the prices for the controversial T-90 tank deal. The Army's Weapons and Equipment Directorate also falls under the office of the Deputy Chief (P&S).

Maj. Gen. P.S.K. Choudhary, named in the Tehelka tapes and who acknowledged his involvement, belonged to this directorate. Government sources, however, say that Lt. Gen.

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Mehta's posting may not necessarily be linked to the Tehelka episode as the decision was taken before the scandal broke out.

Significantly, Lt. Gen. Dhillon, the Master General Ordnance (MGO), also a key player in Army procurements is making way for Lt. Gen. S.J.S. Sehgal. Lt. Gen. Dhillon's name has cropped up in the Tehelka tapes.

According to the tapes, Brig. Iqbal Singh, Prospective Procurement Officer (PPO) who functioned under the MGO's office allegedly promised to introduce representatives of the fictitious company, West End, to Lt. Gen. Dhillon and received a bribe of Rs. 50,000 from the Tehelka team.

In another significant move, the Government has shifted Lt. Gen. A.S. Khanna as the head of the Nagrota-based XVI Corps. His track-record as corps commander came under a cloud after the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-

Taiba stepped up attacks in the area under his operational jurisdiction.

The attacks prompted a visit late last month by the Director-General Military Operations (DGMO), Lt. Gen. G.S. Sihota, to the XVI Corps area. Sources point out that his observations may have prompted the Army's decision to shift Lt. Gen. Khanna, who will now replace Lt. Gen. S.S. Mehta as Deputy Chief of the Army Staff (P&S). Maj. Gen. S.B.S. Yadava, who is number two in Army's hierarchy in the Western Command, will replace him.

These high-level changes, in which the advise of the Army has been a key input, are expected to strengthen the hands of the Chief of Army Staff, Gen. S. Padmanabhan. He is keen on ensuring that top positions are manned by officers of unquestionable integrity.

THE HINDU

Govt names tehelka probe judge

New Delhi, March 24

JUSTICE K Venkataswami, a retired judge of the Supreme Court, will head the one-man commission of inquiry to probe the tehelka expose.

The commission will submit its report within a period of four months from the date of publication of the notification in the official gazette. "I have accepted the offer to head the commission after the Chief Jus-

tice of India consulted me," said Venkataswami.

Chief Justice A S Anand, after expressing his inability to nominate a sitting judge of the Supreme Court to head the commission, had on Friday conveyed to the Government that Venkataswami was his choice for the probe. "Though I have accepted the responsibility to head the commission, I have not yet seen the terms and reference of the inquiry"

Venkataswami, who is expected to reach Delhi mid-next week, said the four-month time limit fixed by the government for completion of the probe could be sufficient. "I hope the probe into the matter would be completed within the time limit fixed by the Government," he said. "I have not applied my mind to the subject at all and it will be too premature to comment on the issue."

PTI

The man in the middle

After a brief period of startled wakefulness, the country always goes to sleep again

IT IS not yet clear whether the tsunami of the Tehelka Tapes has fully crested. But swirling in its turgid wake are the half submerged debris of governance, of personal probities as well as public ethics, constructive responsibilities, national security, defence preparedness, the image of the Services, and a host of other such flotsam, each one critically important for our nation. However, the public attention is not really focussed on any of these. Along with savouring the cricket scores at Chennai, it has remained generally fixed on the Man in the Middle of all this — the "middleman."

Who is he — this middleman? Actually there are two of him. One, the authorised representative in India, of any foreign concern which wishes to supply weapons according to established rules and procedures. The other is the sly, greasy fixer whose image has been preserved on the grainy footage of the Tehelka tapes. The role of the first category is strictly legitimate and even essential to the process of defence procurement, especially when the vendors of the original equipment are foreign, and do not wish to maintain a separate establishment in India. An Indian commercial concern is often appointed by them to represent their in-country business interests. The latter, on the other hand, attempts to infiltrate and influence the defence procurement system, siding up to low level clerks and minor officials in the Ministry of Defence, as also to assign military officers who disgrace their uniform by greedily guzzling Scotch whisky whenever they can get it for free, and foolishly demonstrate their machismo in vulgar *paan*-shop vernacular.

However, in addition to these two, there is yet a third persona

of the middleman which floats totally outside the limited range of the Tehelka spy camera-shadowy figures who operate with numbered accounts in Swiss banks, non-Indian citizenships, luxury yachts and offices located in off-shore tax havens. Some of them fit the classic profile depicted by Frederick Forsyth in *Dogs of War*, international operators with the financial resources and personal contacts to influence the highest levels of political and bureaucratic governance in more than one country. It is this category which is ultimately the highest potential threat to national security, because it feeds on individual and organisational weaknesses at the very highest level. No system, however transparent or well devised, can be foolproofed against internal subversion by its own leadership.

But in all the heat and dust of the Tehelka Tapes, do please spare a thought for the real Man in the Middle of all this — the soldier, sailor, airman or civil servant whose responsibility continues to try and see that the country's defence preparedness is not allowed to wind down in spite of all this. Whatever have been the

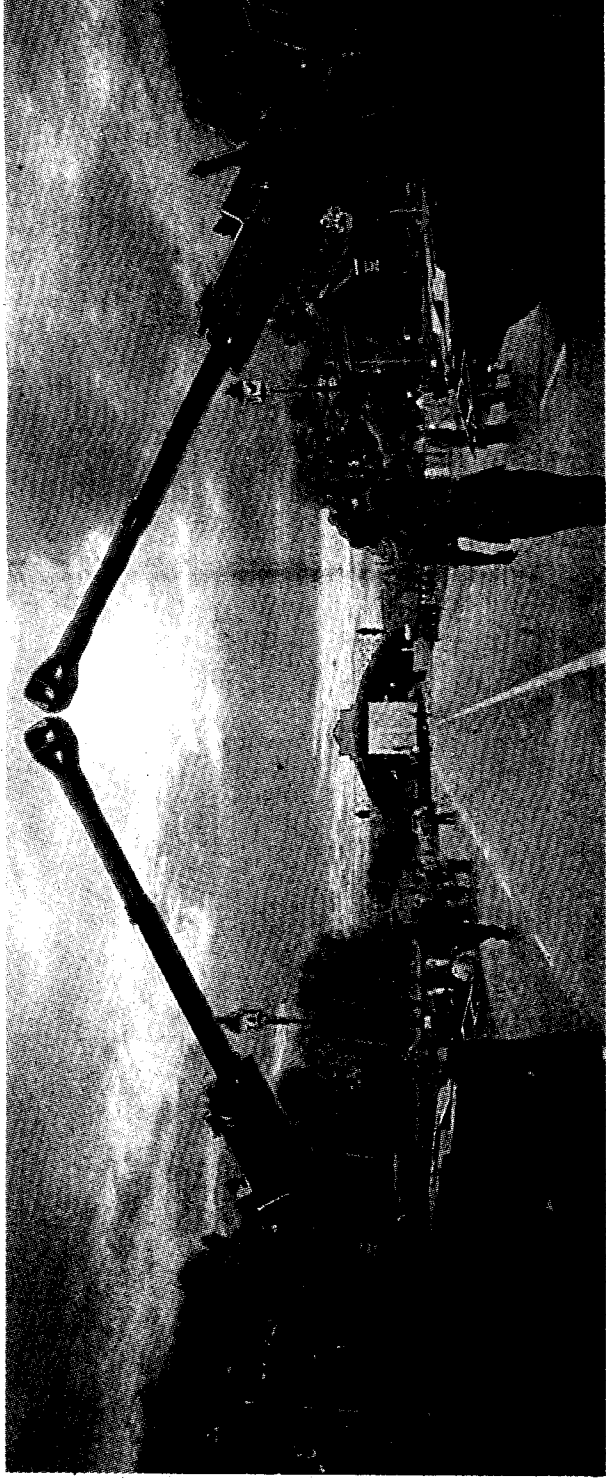
political effects of the Bofors controversy, its impact on the defence forces has been devastating.

Bofors controversy

THE 155-mm FH 177B Bofors weapons system was a carefully assessed long-standing requirement of the Army for a long range artillery gun firing a variety of general and specialised ammunition, together with its integrated support systems by way of fire direction, transportation, and artillery logistics management. The transaction was finalised and the total amount involved, approximately Rs 1,500 crores, was paid.

Thereafter, under normal circumstances, it would have followed the channel of initial import of a certain number of complete systems (which took place) and transfer of technology culminating in complete manufacture of the equipment in India. But reports surfaced in the media of alleged kickbacks and slush money paid by unnamed (obviously!) middlemen in the deal, and the Opposition of the day, which is today in Government, raised a storm of protest on the issue. An election was

now summarily forbidden, the



BOFOR'S GUN: The political controversy surrounding the deal hampered the modernisation efforts of the army

gap was too great. In-house demands from the Army to delink the political issues arising from the Bofors investigation to at least retrieve the balance of the equipment and technology already paid for were not accepted due to possible political implications.

The Army was reduced, in the meantime, to keeping only a proportion of its Bofors artillery functional, with the help of components removed and refitted from other serviceable pieces of equipment. The Services call it by an entirely appropriate name — cannibalisation. It was these cannibalised guns which saved the day at Kargil.

More importantly (and indeed, more ominously) as far as long-term national security was concerned, the Ministry of Defence, including a succession of *Raksha Mantris*, simply stonewalled any further decision-making regarding modernisation of the Defence Forces, or any but the most cosmetic efforts at long-term defence planning. The cumulative effect of this criminal ostrich-like attitude of the political and bureaucratic class under a succession of dispensations for over a decade was final-

ly displayed in Kargil in 1999.

Once again those much flogged but unwaveringly devoted old warhorses — the Defence Services — were called upon to retrieve the situation, which as always they again did with their blood, unhesitatingly shed for a totally obsolete, unfashionable and indeed apparently irrelevant idea called patriotism. The poor fools.

So today, as I watch the effect of the Tehelka Tapes I am glad, sad, apprehensive and cynical. I am glad because the Tehelka Tapes have administered the periodic shock that every system requires to expose its rotting inner core, and bring the vermin out into the sunlight. These vermin have to be stamped upon, hard.

I am saddened because I have this feeling that whereas the Services, in this case the Army, will do whatever is required to be done to try and put their houses in order, the R K Guptas, R K Jains, Jaya Jaitlys and Bangaru Laxmans will get away with it, as usual.

I am apprehensive about the future when I see history about to repeat itself with well known political figures making snap, ill informed, ill considered, pronouncements to the media about possible irregularities in other long pending defence projects which were moving slowly forward, such as the Advanced Jet Trainer (15 years or more in the waiting), or the T-90 tanks (5 or 6 years in the waiting).

Under the impact of Tehelka, I fear that history will repeat itself, and decision making will again enter another era of stonewalling which will put long contemplated programmes of force modernisation on hold.

And, finally, I am cynical because I have seen a succession of such shocks being administered to the country over the last fifty years. After a brief period of startled wakefulness, the country has turned over and gone to sleep again. Let us see what the Tehelka Tapes bring.

(Gen. Shankar Roychowdhury is the former Army chief and now member of Rajya Sabha)

George to lead govt defence in 'people's courts'

CL MANOJ
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

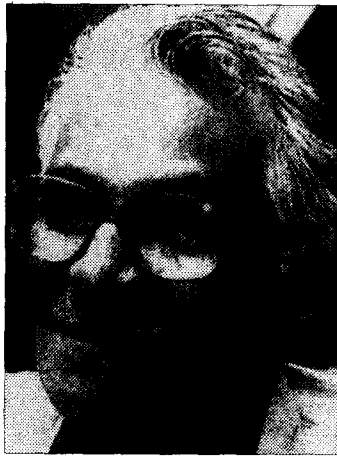
NEW DELHI, March 23. - With the Parliament going into a three-week recess from tomorrow "Armsgate" aka Tehelka politics is all set to hit the states now, specially the five where Assembly polls are due.

The NDA campaign will be led by Mr George Fernandes. According to NDA leaders, Mr Fernandes will be the star speaker in all major rallies, starting with the one in Delhi on Sunday. The consistent theme - explaining to the people the "deep-rooted conspiracy" behind the Tehelka tapes.

Though other NDA top leaders, including Mr AB Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani, will attend some meetings, Mr Fernandes' oratorical skills and determination to "silence" those who "suppressed" his voice in Parliament have, reportedly, made him the "natural choice" as the main speaker. Mrs Jaya Jaitly, say NDA leaders, is not scheduled to speak at these meetings. Asked if the NDA took into consideration Mr Fernandes' habit of making controversial statements, the leaders said controversies in this context could be a blessing in disguise.

The argument being that Fernandes-centric controversies will keep the focus away from

more "delicate subjects", PMO officials, for example. Mr Fernandes, with his political career possibly at stake, is reportedly working meticulously on a "sound defence strategy", focussing on a "conspiracy hatched by an international arms mafia in coordination with the enemies of the Vajpayee government".



Mr George Fernandes

Mr Fernandes, for long a political enemy of the Congress, is also expected to give some "special attention" to the main Opposition party and Mrs Sonia Gandhi.

The Congress, which has political ambitions in all five poll-bound states, also plans a major cam-

paign on the Tehelka issue. But party officials said Mrs Gandhi, given her well-demonstrated oratorical shortcomings, may leave the platform mostly to the more seasoned players, limiting herself to some "special appearances". The Left may, end up "betraying" the Congress in this poll-determined political fortnight.

Though Left parties played the perfect partner to the Congress in stalling Parliament and are even maintaining a "tactical silence" on the Vincent George issue, they may change tack when it comes to West Bengal and Kerala.

THE STATESMAN

24 MAR 2001

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Army may conclude probe in a month

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By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, MARCH 23. Concerned about the negative impact of the Tehelka.com "expose" on its troops, the army is likely to wrap up its inquiry soon.

Highly-placed sources say that the army wants to conclude the inquiry within a month. It feels that a crackdown on some officers, who may have accepted bribes to facilitate a fictitious arms deal, is necessary to retain the credibility of its senior leadership before the ground troops. The expose of corruption in the army can be detrimental on army discipline which is based on unimpeachable leadership standards, especially in the field areas.

The Chief of Army Staff, General S. Padmanabhan, according to sources, is taking active interest in

ensuring that the inquiry completes its task as quickly as possible. In fact, he has expressed his displeasure at the short delay in instituting the court of inquiry, they add. Both the Army Chief and the Vice Chief of Army Staff were out of the capital when the Tehelka scandal broke out.

According to sources, only one of the officers implicated has been suspended because of his admission of guilt. Others they say have denied the charges and have been consequently "attached."

Technically, it means that they are temporarily detached from their present assignment and attached to another army directorate. Unlike suspension which involves nearly 25 per cent cut in salary, the pay and allowance of the attached officer are protected.

The "attached" officers are Brigadier Iqbal Singh, Prospective Procurement Officer, Brigadier Anil Sehgal, Director in the Directorate General of Ordnance and Supply and Major General, Manjit Singh Ahluwalia, Director General of Ordnance and Supply (DGOS).

The Tehelka tapes allege that Brigadier Sehgal received a bribe of Rs.40,000 while Major General Ahluwalia got Rs. 50,000 during the undercover operations to sell non-existent hand-held thermal cameras for the Indian army by a fictitious company, West End.

Brigadier Iqbal Singh, who allegedly promised to lobby for Westend with Lt. General Dhillon, Master General Ordnance in the tapes, also received a pay-off of Rs.50,000.

THE HINDU

24 MAR 2001

Defence Ministry panel to probe 'expose'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 22. The Defence Ministry today appointed a one-man fact-finding committee to probe the conduct of its officials whose names had figured in the Tehelka expose on arms deals. A court of inquiry is already conducting a formal probe in accordance with the Army Act.

Headed by Mr. R. P. Bagai, Joint Secretary and Chief Vigilance Officer of the Ministry, the probe committee has been directed by the new Defence Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, to complete the job and submit a report within a month.

The committee will look into the transactions relating to procurement of armaments, weapons systems and stores referred to in the Tehelka tapes and transcript in order to ascertain whether the prescribed procedure had been followed. It would also report back whether the scope for manipulating the procedure for extraneous considerations existed in the present procurement policies and the corrective steps that need to be taken.

According to sources, the committee proposes to examine defence ministry and army officials who featured in the Tehelka tapes. It has already approached the Tehelka.com editor, Mr. Tarun Tejpal, to appear before it along with the two-member team of reporters, Mr. Anirudh Bahal and Mr. Samuel Mathews. They have further been asked to produce unedited tapes and transcript before the committee for perusal.

THE HINDU
23 MAR 2011

'George didn't push Barak'

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 21

FORMER DEFENCE Minister George Fernandes had not pushed the deal to buy the Barak anti-missile defence system, Navy chief Admiral Sushil Kumar said today.

"It is wrong to say that Mr Fernandes had tried to push through the Barak deal," PTI quoted Admiral Kumar as having said.

"The Navy was convinced of the efficiency, cost-effectiveness of the Israeli missiles, which had undergone tests since 1992. Mr Fernandes came into the scene only in 1998. So it is wrong to draw Mr Fernandes into the controversy."

The Admiral was talking to journalists after the naval investiture ceremony. He did not,

however, mention that the Barak missile deal was approved only in December 2000.

Replying to a question in the Lok Sabha on March 8 this year, George Fernandes, then the Defence Minister said, "Contracts for procurement of Barak anti-missile defence systems for installation on front-line ships of the Navy and for procurement of missiles were signed with Israel last year."

RK Jain, who appears in the tehelka tapes, has gone on record to say he took Rs 1 crore from Suresh Nanda of Crown Corporation to get the deal pushed through by George Fernandes.

Even if one takes Admiral Sushil Kumar's statement at face value, the question remains why the Barak system was not bought earlier, since the trials were com-

pleted as early as 1992.

The Navy's logic that the acquisition of the Barak system acquired urgency during the Kargil war needs to be scrutinised.

India's sole aircraft carrier INS Viraat was undergoing a complete refit at that time and thus there was no question of using the carrier in the operational theatre.

A weapon is bought after assessing the threat to environment and capabilities of a country's principal adversaries. The Barak system may have suited the Navy's requirement in the early 1990s with Pakistan inducting missile-firing P 3c Orion aircraft.

But today, in the era of supersonic missiles, the Barak system has lost much of its relevance.

Hope for State in Cabinet package

HTC and Agencies
New Delhi, March 21

THE CABINET today approved a Rs 1,329.5-crore package for the revival of the Hindustan Photo Films Ltd and a Rs 900 crore-restructuring plan for Engineering Projects India Ltd.

It also allotted Rs 6.5 crore for development work in 11,699 plots in underdeveloped urban colonies of West Bengal.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, said the Cabinet has also decided that the development work will be taken up between 2003 and 2004 and funds thereafter would depend on the progress of work.

The government will convey to BIFR its intention to revive HPF by writing off the loan advanced by the Centre and the Rs 184.21 crore interest.

First GSLV to take off on 28 March

JAYA MENON
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

SRIHARIKOTA (Andhra Pradesh), March 21. - The first Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV)-D1 will take off on 28 March from the SHAR Centre here, marking a "quantum jump" in the Indian space programme.

For the first time, the Indian Space Research Organisation has employed a cryogenic stage, procured from Russia, in its launch vehicle. "The GSLV-D1 mission signifies a quantum jump and a new level of capability in our space programme," Mr K Kasurirangan, chairman, ISRO said here today.

Briefing mediapersons, he said the GSLV-D1 launch had been fixed at 7.47 p.m. and could be shifted up to

four hours depending on conditions. The countdown will begin at 6.30 a.m. on 28 March. A full dress rehearsal was conducted today.

"Going by past experience and the ground preparations, we are confident this mission will be a success. It is the proud culmination of a work which began in 1990," the ISRO chief said. The GSLV flight will last for 17 minutes after take-off until the injection of the spacecraft into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit.

The GSLV will place the 1,540 kg experimental satellite, GSAT-1, over the eastern part of Indonesia. Four ground stations at Sriharikota, Port Blair, Brunei and Baik in Indonesia will track and monitor the movement of the vehicle at various stages until it separates and injects the satellite into orbit.

"The first flight test, GSLV-D1, is intended to validate the various systems of the vehicle in an actual flight. Each sub-system has been tested on ground but it is only through a few developmental flight tests that the launch vehicle as a whole, and all the associated ground systems can be validated," Mr Kasurirangan said.

The launch facilities at SHAR had been suitably modified to launch both Polar Satellite Launch Vehicles and the GSLV. A second launch pad is now under construction to enable more frequent launches. "The GSLV will become operational when we have two successful launches," Mr Kasurirangan said. "If everything goes well, we will have the next GSLV launch within a year."

Detailing the high points of the Rs

1400 crore GSLV, Mr Kasurirangan said for the first time four liquid strap-ons were built around a solid propellant core, reducing the complexity of the second to third stage separation. A composite encapsulated heat shield was developed and a new set of guidance controls incorporated.

"The vehicle has been subjected to extensive tests and several simulations and we are keeping our fingers crossed that everything will go well," Mr Kasurirangan said.

USA is putting pressure on Russia to force it against selling the cryogenic stage to the ISRO. Asked whether this would affect the GSLV, the ISRO chief said "this programme has a major indigenous effort, so we could move ahead making sure geo-political developments do

not affect much. However there are factors that would influence."

On India's capability to make its own cryogenic engines, Mr Kasurirangan said the target was to complete the tests in about two years and develop the engine around 2003 to 2004.

On the commercial exploitation of the Indian satellite programme on a global scale, he said the Indian space programme had always focused on social relevance. The ISRO helped in developmental communications, literacy, rural development, meteorological studies for agriculture and remote sensing to tap natural resources, just to name a few areas of social relevance. "We do not want to become entirely commercial and compete with other world agencies," he said.

THE STATESMAN

22 MAR 2002

Armstrong fallout: Need for legislation

By H D SHOURIE

Thehelka's revelations have confirmed the general belief that corruption widely prevails in the governmental machinery of the country and highlighted serious deficiencies that exist in our political system and, particularly, in party funding.

For long I have maintained that unless the system of party funding is altered and reformed, we will not be able to get rid of corruption which prevails on account of our antiquated laws, rules and procedures. Five years ago, I had filed before the Supreme Court a writ petition on election expenses and the concomitant factor for party funding.

The matter was raised in relation to the provision that had been very cleverly incorporated, during the regime of Indira Gandhi, in the Representation of Peoples Act, Section 77 of this Act prescribes that any candidate, exceeding the limit of expenses prescribed for an individual's election to the central or state legislature, will be disqualified.

The alteration effected in it stated that the expenditure incurred on the candidate by the political party will, however, not be counted towards his expenses. This amendment gave scope for incurring all sorts of expenditure during the election, including erection of pandals, use of trucks, advertise-

ments, cut-outs and placards etc, besides handing out all sorts of inducements for attracting crowds and persuading them to vote for a particular candidate.

I submitted before the Supreme Court, that crores of rupees are spent by political parties during elections without indicating the source of money spent; that elections are fought with the help of money power which is ostensibly gathered from black sources; and that once a person gets elected it becomes easier for him to collect more

TIMES COMMON CAUSE

black money which is used for retaining power.

The other relevant provisions in this connection are Section 293A of the Companies Act and Section 13A of the Income Tax Act. The latter mandates that every political party must maintain accounts and all connected documents for enabling the Assessing Officer of the Income Tax department to properly ascertain its income; wherever there is contribution of more than Rs 10,000, all particulars thereof should be attached to the accounts; and the accounts should be annually audited in accordance with the prescribed procedure.

Need for legislation

Section 293A of Companies Act prescribes that every company which contributes any amount to a political party or to a particular person

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Tehelka tapes have opened a can of worms, putting politicians in the dock.

must do so only after a resolution to that effect has been passed by its Board of Directors, and any such contribution must be shown in its profit and loss accounts.

the Government to enforce these provisions and that "when elections are fought with unaccounted money, the persons elected in the process think of nothing except getting rich by amass-

on party funding

ing black money".

It was emphasised by the court that unless these statutory provisions which are meant for bringing transparency in the functioning of democracy are strictly enforced and the election funding is made transparent, the vicious circle cannot be broken and corruption cannot be eliminated from the country.

The Court's verdict was that every political party must file return of their income in respect of each assessment year in compliance with the provisions of the Income Tax Act; the finance ministry should initiate enquiry against the parties which have defaulted in doing so; and that any party which has not maintained audited and authenticated accounts cannot exercise the authority to incur any expenditure on the election of a candidate under the amendment made in Section 77 of the Representation of People Act.

In light of the Supreme Court verdict, we from *Common Cause* wrote to political parties requesting them to confirm whether they were maintaining accounts of income and expenditure and whether these accounts are being annually audited. We urged the finance ministry to take necessary action against the defaulters.

Sadly, we did not receive confirmation from any party. We wrote to them

again as late as march 2000. Only CPI and Samata Party, besides two regional parties, replied saying they were complying with these statutory requirements.

The Tehelka expose highlights the need for bringing about a legislation on political funding system. The provisions of the law, mentioned earlier, need to be supplemented by specific provisions prescribing how a political party can raise funds to meet its election and other expenses; how much can an individual or a company contribute; how every contribution must be recorded, and possibly made deductible from the income as is being done in connection with contributions to the PM's Relief Fund; how the accounts should be annually audited and the audit report submitted to the finance ministry and Election Commission.

On the other hand, the government agencies must have the authority to launch proceedings against any party, as well as any contributor, which default in observance of these provisions.

We hope the Government will initiate immediate measures for devising suitable legislation on political funding.

• Comments and suggestions are welcome. Write to COMMON CAUSE, A-31, West End, New Delhi 110 021.

The armed forces are keen observers of national governance

The security malaise

It is hazardous to take to the keyboard in the midst of a snowballing political controversy, specially when investigative journalists are still sitting on many hours of videotape, waiting to treat a hungry media and frustrated, out-of-work politicians with morsels of trash. But when the defence minister resigns on national television, ostensibly to uphold the morale of the armed forces — thereby implying that this unsavoury episode is indeed undermining the morale of our forces — then commentators on national security are forced to take note.

Watching the idiot box these last few days, one is touched by the deep concern shown by political leaders of all hues to the cause of national security. A concern that has been conspicuous by its absence in worse times for the security establishment. It is to unravel the cause of genuine national security that this writer has embarked on this piece even before the drama has unfolded fully.

As far as one can determine in the current fog of political oneupmanship, the following allegations are being levelled against the government, based on which Parliament proceedings are being halted and the government is being asked to step down — corruption in defence purchases at every level of the ministry of defence, including uniformed personnel; political party functionaries accepting funds from arms dealers, thereby subverting the defence procurement system; use of the defence minister's residence for meetings with arms dealers, and finally, the subversion of national security.

To look at corruption in defence purchases first. Within our fragmented polity and independent media, military personnel are following events keenly. That they are not permitted to express themselves in the media should not be construed as endorsement of the state of affairs. The truth is that while the armed forces are keen observers of the rights and wrongs of our governance, they are resigned to the fact that in defence procurement, as in every other walk of life, there is rampant corruption and unfair money is being made.

Indeed it is this acceptance that may have tempted some Tehelka actors in uniform to cross the morality foul line. After all, during the past decade or more, even within the armed forces, fingers have been pointed at those indulging in malpractices in concert with politicians, bureaucrats and middlemen. Surely with the background of scandals like Bofors, HDW Submarine and Airbus 320, it would be futile to expect reality to be otherwise. In this scenario, the armed forces are unlikely to be upset if some of this home truth has now come on their TV screens. Although, one must admit, that seeing uni-

The author is a retired air marshal of the Indian Air Force

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BRIJESH D. JAYAL

formed officers debase themselves must surely undermine the professional pride and *izzat* of our forces — causes for which they put their wery lives on line.

Look at the propriety of collecting party funds from arms dealers, next. The law does not permit any means of fund-raising by political parties. Yet not only do political parties spend thousands of crores of rupees on electoral

housemaster would say, is not accepting the money but getting caught.

Much concern has been expressed about the supposed arms dealers having met the leader of a political party in the defence minister's residence and accepting handouts. As far as the location is concerned, one wonders which of the two undermines national security. Otavio Quattrocchi in New Delhi having access to the highly classified RAX tele-



At the hands of our servicemen in the field, national security would in no way have been threatened

and other expenses, they are also given funds by individuals or institutions, often in cash. This has been accepted as a norm. From whom and how the funds are collected and how they are accounted for should have been an important issue to be laid down. For obvious reasons, nobody would want to give himself ample margin.

How then does one differentiate the Tehelkas from genuine political contributors? This is the poser for those in the forefront of today's shouting brigade. When the Jain *hawala* case hit the news, we had many senior leaders admitting that they had received money towards party funds. Jain's antecedents — the source of funds, the methods of payment and return favours — were never mentioned. In the harsh commercial world, one truth prevails. That there are no free lunches. So perhaps not just the two party presidents felled by Tehelka, but all others need to tell the people how they are any different. The crime of the two ex-party presidents, as my school

phone authorized only to very senior government functionaries or the residence of the defence minister also being used by a party president? Detractors of the present government need to answer whether the method would have become acceptable if it had taken place in a five-star hotel? Clearly, therefore, this is a non-issue, more a tactical ploy to inject confusion in the enemy political camp.

Finally, the crux of this debate and an issue that concerns ordinary patriotic citizens of the country with no political axe to grind. Has this episode, in itself,

compromised national security and is it a pointer to a deeper malaise slowly but surely eating into the vitals of national security? The answer to the former is clearly in the negative while to the latter it is clearly in the affirmative.

To take the former first. In the Tehelka case, even if the various functionaries subverted either by power or by greed had succeeded, a time would have come for the army to evaluate the system. Such evaluations are done by specialists from field formations and test establishments and not by the likes of those military men, corrupted by the Delhi system, which the Tehelka film has exposed.

With the hindsight of many years in the Indian air force test establishment, this writer can reassure the reader that in this case, even if the equipment had existed, its performance would have been judged on purely technical merit no matter what interest was shown, by whom and at what level. At the hands of our servicemen in the field, national security would in no way have been threatened. Mercifully for this nation, this is still true. But as we have seen, the abyss is approaching.

As far as the deeper malaise is concerned, there is a silver lining to this otherwise great national shame. We now have on record deep concern for national security expressed by every political party. The nation has every right to be assured that these are not crocodile tears camouflaging political ambitions, but are borne out of genuine concern for the security of the country, to stem the rot that has ingrained itself into the defence procurement system.

As a test and as a self-cleansing exercise, let this opportunity be taken by the Parliament to unanimously agree to an investigation by a sitting Supreme Court judge into the entire Sukhoi-30 purchase. A programme that, including licence production, will run into tens of thousands of crores of rupees and stands as the largest programme in India's defence history. A programme that has at one stage or another been steered by different governments consisting of almost every major political party in the country. And a programme that has drawn serious allegations of the involvement of middle-men and kickbacks in some parts of the media without drawing even a whimper from the very parliamentarians who are today literally up in arms.

If such an inquiry gives the system a clean chit, the nation can heave a deep sigh of relief. If, on the other hand and as many suspect, it proves to the contrary, then all those shedding crocodile tears for national security today will stand exposed with their hands in the till. Their tears today will be seen not for national security, but because the till is presently out of reach. Is the national polity willing to accept this challenge?

from the front page

Tejpal gives tapes to Army...

examine him. The general asked me, "are you the author of the transcripts, to which I replied no".

While Chaudhary has been suspended, four other senior officers Maj Gen M S Ahluwalia, Maj Gen Satnam Singh, Brig Iqbal Singh and Col Anil Sehgal, under probe, have been "attached" to the Court of Inquiry.

The court, with K Maj Gen Mohinder Puri and Maj Gen M Mathews as the other members, began proceedings on Monday with the request to the portal to make available the controversial tapes to it to study them minutely.

As the probe is constituted under the Army Act, it does not have powers to summon civilians to appear before it. It can only make a request and it was up to those asked whether or not to appear before it.

Describing the Army as one of the finest organisations in the world, Tejpal said his investigation was aimed at exposing the system

No more tapes as of yet

NEW DELHI: Tehelka editor Tarun Tejpal said on Tuesday they were not "immediately" releasing any more tapes on corruption in defence deals, adding tantalisingly, "you never know". Tarun Tejpal said, "we are not releasing any tapes at the moment... but you never know." Asked specifically whether the portal had anything more on the issue, Tejpal maintained "we are not releasing anything as yet."

and its weaknesses.

He said for the deposition he was accompanied by his colleague Anirudhha Bahal, a member of the investigation team. While Tejpal left after 90 minutes, the court asked Bahal to stay on for cross-examination by Gen Chaudhary.

Bahal, Army sources said, has been requested to re-appear before the court.

INDIAN EXPRESS

21 MAR 2001

When MoD goes shopping...

assessments, battlefield environment and adequacy of the production base should all be given. Now the MoD is losing its bargaining powers in the very first stage. What negotiations can be conducted if the QRs are prepared for a specific equipment?"

Several reviews of the procurement process have been conducted over the years, the latest being done by the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) after the MoD asked for an omnibus inquiry into the 380 deals signed ever since defence agents were banned in 1989. Central Vigilance Commissioner N Vital says there is an urgent need to bring in transparency into the system, suggesting that procurement of lethal systems be separated from that of the non-lethal systems.

Vital insists that "procurement procedures have to be made more transparent since there is a lot of myth about national security and how negotiations are conducted on a need-to-know basis. Procedures should be simplified since otherwise when weightage and grading has to be given to equipment, all sorts of mischief can be played." He adds that the Comptroller and Auditor General's report on defence deals, which the CVC had studied as part of its own inquiry, had shown that some very basic rules of procurement were being violated.

According to former Defence Secretary N N Vohra, one way of simplifying the procurement procedures is to isolate the procurement wing from the day-to-day functioning of the MoD. "Recently, we had a case of the Deputy Chief heading the price negotiation committee of the T-90 tanks. The military should never be exposed to this. Why should future chiefs and commanders be exposed to the hazards of negotiations?" he asks.

Ghosh agrees with this view and cites the example of the British procurement executive department which exclusively handles all purchase matters. "The British model is ideally suited for us since there the QRs are firm up after serious deliberations and proper feasibility studies. The most cost-effective options are picked up instead of specific QRs being prepared and long years spent on choosing a single piece of equipment."

However, another former Defence Secretary, K A Nambiar, says one shouldn't blame the system but the people. According to him, systemic procurement procedures are in place and inputs from intelligence agencies and threat perceptions are taken into consideration before a requirement is projected. "The procurement system is elaborate and in my view various checks and balances are in place," he argues. "One cannot find fault with the basic procedure though I must say all human beings are not the same. There will always be some black sheep in the system."

The flaws in the process apart, there is little prospective planning on defence procurement, a point stressed by Vohra. Unlike the frenzied buying that was witnessed during the Kargil war, procurements take years, even decades (take the case of the Advance Jet Trainer for the IAF). Just the field trials for the 155-mm Bofors gun took seven years.

Vohra points out that over the years procurement has become a year-to-year affair. "Our planning system has become totally defective and instead of a five-year plan, the MoD is often found working on a one-year plan. They should ideally have a plan for the next 15 years, and it is because this planning has gone amiss that there is an over-dependence on imports," he explains.

When MoD goes shopping, who pushes its arms cart?

HQs shouldn't disclose choices in initial stages, say experts

RITU SARIN

NEW DELHI, MARCH 20

"The fact of the matter is that the Navy had moved a proposal for procurement of six Barak systems in the year 1996 and the Ministry had accepted the Navy's proposal in 1996 itself and the technical evaluation, price negotiation etc. had commenced thereafter..."

George Fernandes in his address on Doordarshan after resigning.

Fernandes was trying to rebut the Tehelka allegations but unwittingly exposed another chink in the Ministry of Defence (MoD) armour. Experts say that his disclosure that the service headquarters (SHO) — the Navy in this case — asked the MoD specifically for Barak shows how there are problems in the very first stage of the laborious and complicated process of procurement of defence equipment.

They argue that the trend of SHOs making specific procurement demands is against the stipulated procedure that Qualitative Requirements (QRs) be prepared. Only after the QRs are submitted does the time-consuming



By Copyright B K SHARMA

and the rest of the process is unblemished.

Ghosh, who has written a book on defence budgets and expenditure management, says: "Instead of sending specific QRs to the Ministry, the service should provide broad-spectrum QRs in which an analysis of threat

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Defence Infosys, then calls off price-rigging probe

George holds talks with President

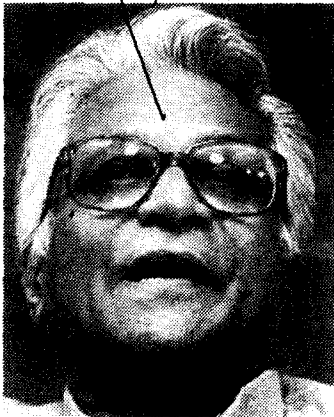
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 20. - Mr George Fernandes today met the President, Mr KR Narayanan, to explain the position on defence deals.

Mr Fernandes met the President before lunch and the discussion lasted an hour. The meeting is considered significant as Mr Fernandes sought an appointment with the President, who is reported to have indirectly played a part in getting the defence minister to resign after the Tehelka story broke.

This is something Mr Fernandes has always denied. The President is also the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

It was learnt that "Mr Fernandes explained the situation



Mr George Fernandes

to the President" or rather, presented his side of the story. This is likely to involve the issues about the defence deals and the alleged payment of Rs 2 lakh to the Samata Party

president, Mrs Jaya Jaitley, at the defence minister's residence. Some of the payments to politicians, bureaucrats and Army personnel were photographed by a hidden camera carried by a Tehelka reporter.

Mr Fernandes has strongly refuted all charges that the deals involving the purchase of the Barak anti-missile missile, the Advance Jet trainer and the armoured recovery vehicles were dubious and it is learnt that these could have come up in the meeting.

Tehelka clarification: Tehelka officials clarified that the Major-general Murgai involved in the deal is Major-general SP Murgai, who retired as director-general, quality assurance and not Major-general BP Murgai of the Corps of Signals.

5F-8
20/3

Tehelka tapes: Army court begins inquiry

J. D. & N. Scull

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 19. — The Army's court of inquiry into the Tehelka tapes scandal began today with three officers mentioned in the transcripts "attached" for questioning.

The officers "attached" are Major-General Manjit Singh Ahluwalia, Brigadier Anil Sehgal and Brig Iqbal Singh, who was seen receiving money on the tapes. Major-General PSK Choudhary has already confessed publicly and will not be part of the court of inquiry. Major-General Satnam Singh, commanding 8 Mountain Division in Drass, has not been "attached" but will be questioned later.

Interestingly, Major-General Singh's predecessor as

General Officer Commanding 8 Mountain Division, Major-General Mohinder Puri, is one of the members of the court of inquiry. Major-General Mathew M, of the Corps of Engineers, is the second

member of the committee head by Lieutenant-General SP Jain of the EME.

The court of inquiry is a long process as a large number of officers and even civilians can be examined. But unlike in a court martial, civilians (all Tehelka staff are civilians) do not have to attend a court of inquiry.

Though the Tehelka tapes are not with the court, the transcripts can be used as evidence. Just who will be called and how long the court of inquiry will last is not certain, but it appears that whoever is named by those attached may have to appear. If those attached are found guilty, they will be court-marshalled.

Hypothetically, they can be stripped of their rank and decorations if found guilty by the court marshal.

Major-General SP Murgai, who retired several months ago, is also involved, the tapes suggest and he can also be subject to a court of inqui-

ry and then, court-marshalled under the Army Act. A retired officer is liable to be under the Act for three years.

It is clear that the Army wants to take action. The Army chief, General S Padmanabhan, had told senior officers after taking over that he would not tolerate any corruption. He reiterated his statement in a note to his top commanders and directors-general late last week.

The court — including a Lieutenant-General and two Major-Generals — suggests that no officer senior to Major-General will be "attached". So, Lieutenant-General Shankar Prasad, director-general, infantry, who is mentioned in the Tehelka report as the person who called the reporters pretending to be arms traders that "his" work would start only after the evaluation trials were ordered by Major-General Choudhary, may be invited to speak but will not be questioned.

THE STATESMAN

Jaswant²⁰¹³ takes charge of Defence

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 19 ^{HS 9}

EXTERNAL AFFAIRS Minister Jaswant Singh today took over the Defence portfolio as additional charge, but decided to function from his foreign ministry office. Singh visited the Defence Ministry this afternoon and met Defence Secretary Yogendra Narain and other top ministry officials at the conference room. The three service chiefs, Gen S Padmanabhan, Air Chief AY Tipnis and Admiral Sushil Kumar later called on him. The Minister barred TV cameramen and reporters from covering the takeover. Ministry officials explained that he did not want any publicity. Singh would operate from his room in the External Affairs Ministry at the other end of South Block and ask for files to be sent there. Meanwhile, the three-member Army court of inquiry today began in-camera proceedings into the defencegate scandal. Besides Lt Gen S K Jain, the court of inquiry has two other members, Major General Mohinder Puri and Major General M Mathew, both holding the rank of additional Director-General at the Army headquarters here. The first major task of the inquiry was to write to tehelka.com asking for the tapes, Army sources said adding that all the five other officials who figured in the tape had been attached to the army headquarters here pending the completion of the inquiry. The inquiry has provisions for calling civilian witnesses, the sources said. Though there was no time-frame set, it would be completed at the earliest, they said.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 MAR 2011

George contemplates defamation suit against Tehelka

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 18 MARCH

HAVING RESIGNED from the Cabinet to "maintain the morale of the armed forces," former defence minister George Fernandes, on Sunday said he was contemplating legal action against Tehelka.com, on charges of libel and defamation.

Dismissing the contents of the Tehelka videotapes as "manipulated and concocted," Mr Fernandes told BBC in its Hard Talk programme that "manipulation is not the word, my belief is that they have been concocted at a point when, I don't know, what kind of crimes have been committed in the process."

"To suggest that the entire defence procurement establishment of ours is having at every stage persons who could be bought...Is there anything more absurd or obnoxious?" he asked. Mr Fernandes, who also

revealed during the interview that he had offered to resign five times before it was finally accepted, said he would take the portal to court "if I get such legal advice." At the same time, he admitted to the disadvantages of litigation, saying that it was time consuming and kept meandering.

Talking about the events leading to his resignation, the former defence minister told the BBC that Prime Minister A B Vajpayee had turned down his offer of resignation at least five times before finally agreeing to it. This too, was just before he went on air to announce his resignation on Thursday.

According to Mr Fernandes, he had offered to step down on three occasions in the Cabinet meeting on March 13, the day Tehelka.com broke the story, and twice in the NDA meeting the following day.

In the Cabinet meeting,



Fernandes: Ready to walk on Street Legal

"there was unanimity, from the Prime Minister and the home minister downwards to members of the Union council of ministers...in one voice they said no (to my offer to quit)."

During the NDA meeting the

the NDA member who favoured his resignation. As to what had changed the circumstances on March 14 that caused the Prime Minister to accept his resignation, Mr Fernandes said he had met Mr Vajpayee that evening for about five minutes, just before he was to make the statement on Doordarshan announcing his resignation.

Till then, the Prime Minister had not "directly heard from me but I'm sure he was aware of (my stand). I gave him my resignation along with the copy of the statement (which he had prepared to read out on television)." Mr Fernandes felt Mr Vajpayee was "not happy about it because I had expressed my views and told him I was not prepared to re-think. He (the Prime Minister) gave me a big hug and said this is not the end of the road. He said 'if you are insisting, I will accept.'"

Mr Fernandes said he had no

doubt that the Prime Minister was reluctant and unhappy about his resignation. "The Prime Minister has confidence in me and I do not think I have been dispensed with," he told the BBC. Earlier on that day, the defence minister had gone to meet external affairs minister Jaswant Singh with the note he had prepared to read in Parliament.

But as Parliament proceedings were continuously disrupted, he had decided to read it out on television as he was concerned about the morale of the troops because the word went round that "the whole defence establishment in India was a den of corrupt people."

In an apparent reference to Trinamul Congress, which quit the government to press its demand for Mr Fernandes' head, the former defence minister said "people who we had trusted... were as rotten as anyone else."

Tapes point to George's link in Israeli missile deal

Our Political Bureau

NEW DELHI 13 MARCH

COULD BARAK become the NDA government's Bofors? Among the various allegations that emerge from the tapes, there is one that points a finger at defence minister George Fernandes of accepting bribe to ensure that this Israeli missile system is bought for the Indian Navy.

The suggestion is that Mr Fernandes overruled Abdul Kalam, the then scientific advisor to the Prime Minister, who apparently insisted that the navy should use the indigenously developed Prithvi or Trishul instead.

The deal allegedly involves the Barak system of air-to-air and surface-to-surface missiles being bought for seven of the navy's ships in a transaction worth Rs 560 crore.

The pay-off is allegedly 3 per cent (Rs 16.8 crore) to the Samata Party and an unspecified amount to the man who set up the deal, Samata Party treasurer R K Jain.

The relevant portion of the tapes has Mr Jain explaining in detail how the deal was negotiated. He claims that he was originally offered a sum of Rs 1 crore by Rafael, the Israeli company manufacturing the Barak system. Mr Jain was heard telling the website's representatives that Rafael told him he could pass on this money to his party even if the deal could not be clinched, but he should try and help.

Mr Jain claims that he passed on the money to party president Jaya Jaitly and told her that it would be unwise to keep the money if they could not help in fixing the deal. Ms Jaitly, he claims, asked for two days time, after which she got back to him and said,

"I have spoken to the boss. Don't worry, he said he'll make everything fine."

According to Mr Jain, Mr Fernandes called for the relevant file and made a note on it suggesting the Barak system should be installed in INS Viraat, the country's leading aircraft carrier. The minister allegedly raised the bogey of Pakistan's naval preparedness to justify the procurement of one Barak system for the aircraft carrier.

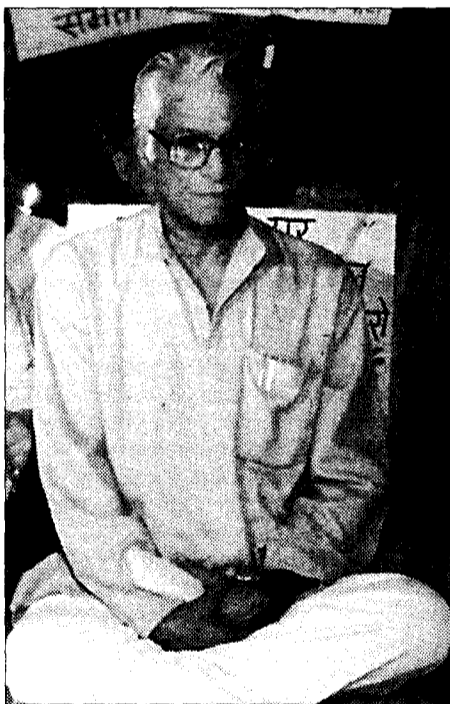
He allegedly told Mr Jain that since he was overruling Mr Kalam, it would be unwise to order the system for all seven ships in one go. It would be better, Mr Fernandes, is said to have told, if a demand "from below" could be created after the Barak had been installed in INS Viraat. Mr Jain claims that Suresh Nanda, a former naval official who is now an arms dealer, managed to get the navy to write a letter to Mr Fernandes saying the system was needed for all seven vessels and that "without this we can't survive."

After this, says Mr Jain, the ministry sanctioned the order of seven systems, each worth Rs 80 crore.

At the time of the clandestine recording, according to Mr Jain, the deal had still not been finalised.

The price negotiation committee (PNC) was still in the process of final negotiations.

While there are scattered references to the line of commissions going all the way up to the RM (raksha mantri) in the tapes, there are also some who insist that Mr Fernandes himself is immune to bribery, unlike some of his other cabinet colleagues.



Fernandes: Defenceless

The Economic Times

Jaswant gets Defence

1913 9-22 9M 110-1
By Our Special Correspondent

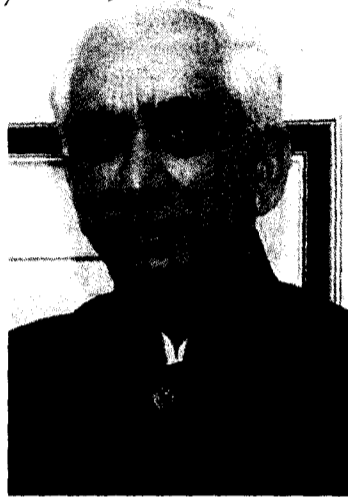
NEW DELHI, MARCH 18. The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, has been appointed the country's new Defence Minister in the place of Mr. George Fernandes who resigned on account of the *tehelka.com* "expose".

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

The appointment of Mr. Singh, known to be a close confidante of the Prime Minister, sends a double signal — that Mr. A.B. Vajpayee is asserting himself, and that he expects Mr. Fernandes' absence from the Government to be temporary. Officials in the PMO said as much and after the NDA meeting two days ago, it was formally stated that once Mr. Fernandes is cleared by the judicial inquiry he would get back the Defence portfolio.

The Railway Minister's slot, following the resignation of Ms. Mamata Banerjee, is not likely to be filled in a hurry. Apparently, the view is that since the Ministry has two Ministers of State, which was not the case in the Defence Ministry, there was no need to rush an appointment.

As for Mr. Jaswant Singh's appointment as Defence Minister, there were other considerations



as well. A former soldier and a product of the National Defence Academy, Mr. Singh is familiar with the inner workings of the country's military establishment. His appointment as Defence Minister, when turbulence in the country's military establishment is visible, is therefore expected to go down well, especially among the three services.

Already the defence forces are well disposed towards Mr. Singh and see in him the attributes of a military "moderniser". His inputs, for instance, in the sweeping recommendations on higher defence management which have been made Group of Ministers recently have been well recognised by them. Mr. Singh is also a close

friend of the former Minister of State for Defence, Mr. Arun Singh, who has been the driving force in initiating these changes.

Mr. Singh may have to work hard to come to grips with the defence bureaucracy which might have reservations about impending "pro-services" changes.

Mr. Singh's appointment takes into account the fulfilment of the country's larger national security commitments. The Government appears keen that the *Tehelka* disclosures, which have rattled the Vajpayee regime, do not unduly obstruct the country's post-Kargil modernisation drive.

In fact, the military modernisation effort has just begun to gather steam. The SU-30 deal which is meant to make the Indian Air Force into a long reach "strategic force" has been signed. But major acquisitions are still pending. These include the air-to-air refueling planes which will greatly extend the reach of the IAF far beyond the Indian borders.

The responsibilities which India's nuclear weapon status has bestowed may also have been a factor behind Mr. Singh's appointment. India, for instance, is yet to translate on ground its doctrine of minimum nuclear deterrence.

Known for his "strategic foresight" in the Ministry of External Affairs, Mr. Singh, as Defence Minister, may now have his hands on the levers to translate his "vision" into reality.

THE HINDU

19 MAR 2001

Jaswant Singh gets temporary charge of defence ministry

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Amidst a renewed controversy over the ruling NDA piling platitudes on George Fernandes, re-confirming him as the NDA convener and expressing "hope" that he would return to the defence ministry soon, Prime Minister Vajpayee on Sunday handed over the defence portfolio to external affairs minister Jaswant Singh.

This is clearly an ad hoc arrangement since Mr Jaswant Singh, a former army officer who is considered to be an expert in security affairs, will also hold charge of the external affairs ministry.

"The President, as advised by the Prime Minister, has directed that Mr Jaswant Singh, minister of external affairs, may hold the charge of minister of defence, in addition to his current charge," a Rashtrapati Bhavan communique said.

Curiously, there was no indication from official circles or the Prime Minister's Office on who would hold charge of the railway ministry some three days after Mamata Banerjee quit the cabinet and pulled her party out of the ruling alliance. Indeed, it was her angry action "on principle" and the demand that those tainted by the 'Armstrong' expose should be shown the door that forced Mr Fernandes to step down late on Thursday night.

With Ms Mamata Banerjee, her party colleague and minister of state for external affairs Ajit Panja

also quit the council of ministers. And in an escalating confrontation, several of Mr Fernandes' peeved Samata Party colleagues re-tendered their resignations on Friday morning.

While six ministerial berths are lying vacant, the Prime Minister has chosen to fill just one and there has been no word yet on the others. Officially, though Mr Fernandes' Samata colleagues have quit the council of ministers, the PM has not yet accepted their resignations. Obviously, it is hoped that they could be persuaded to return to their ministries.

In fact, home minister Advani called Nitish Kumar to his office on Saturday and had a long talk with him. Though it is public knowledge that there is no love lost between Mr Fernandes and Mr Nitish Kumar, the former agriculture minister has not yet been persuaded

to return to the cabinet.

Rather significantly, though the 'Armstrong' expose has affected the railway ministry the most, the PM has made no effort to fill up the vacancies there.

Meanwhile, JD(U) leader Ramakrishna Hegde demanded that Mr Fernandes should step down as convener of the NDA till he was cleared by the probe into the defence deal expose though the party leadership did not share his view. "I don't want Mr Fernandes to continue as the convener of the alliance till he comes out clean," Mr Hegde said.



Jaswant Singh

MONDAY, MARCH 19, 2001

PROBING THE ALLEGATIONS

THE TEHELKA TAPES drew attention to two independent, although sometimes inter-related, issues. The dubious manner in which political parties are funded and the dubious means by which defence deals are struck. Under the terms of reference, the judicial probe — an omnibus inquiry which will cover all aspects of the “revelations” contained in the Tehelka tapes — will cover both these problems. While the setting up of a judicial probe is a welcome thing, a couple of things need to be kept in mind. The probe should not be allowed to become an occasion for the country to be served up another list of recommendations — a document which merely spells out measures for the systemic reform of the process of defence procurements or political party funding.

Such reforms are important, also imperative. But the information contained in the Tehelka tapes demand a look at specific defence deals the tapes refer to. The probe must identify whether there is a prima facie case for conducting further investigations into such deals as the Barak anti-missile defence systems acquired for the Navy. If the revelations do, as Mr. Vajpayee has suggested, provide an “opportunity” to cleanse political life and make the defence of the country stronger, the probe must aim at uncovering the whole truth. It is true that much of the information pertaining to defence deals in the tapes is in the nature of hearsay. Much of it is also provided by characters — principally the former Samata Party Treasurer, Mr. R. K. Jain, and the so-called RSS “super-trustee” Mr. R. K. Gupta — whose credibility may be called into doubt. Some of what has been said also appears to be contradictory. But the tapes contain enough to cast deep suspicions on the manner in which a few specific deals were put through. One of the most important tasks of any inquiry into the Tehelka tapes would be to carry out a thorough scrutiny of this. It is also important for any enquiry not to get diverted

into a search for any conspiracy behind the expose merely to gain some political solace for the NDA.

The Tehelka tapes also disclose what has been an open secret in the corridors of the Defence Ministry for many years. Namely, that arms purchases are invariably, if not always, effected through the use of middlemen despite a specific prohibition on such persons interceding on behalf of sellers or manufacturers. It was in 1985 that the Rajiv Gandhi Government slapped a ban on defence agents when it was shopping for howitzers, a contract which was eventually signed with the Swedish arms manufacturers Bofors AB and which resulted in charges of kickbacks. It is doubtful whether the prohibition on middlemen was ever taken seriously after it was imposed. Ironically, it was the former Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, himself who had asked the Central Vigilance Commission (CVC) to probe allegations that middlemen were used in defence deals even after the ban. The Tehelka tapes suggest that he was either (at best) blind or (at worst) extremely hypocritical since the transcripts clearly establish that middlemen were not only alive and well during his tenure as Defence Minister but operating with impunity in the corridors of power and even within his house. Mr. Fernandes’ lengthy and emotional defence on television is unconvincing because it fails to answer the fundamental questions. How the man he personally selected as his party’s treasurer could brag of fixing specific defence deals, why bundles of notes were accepted at his official residence from someone posing as an arms seller and how the ministry he presided over could be so easily penetrated by middlemen and a couple of investigative journalists. It does not require a probe to demonstrate that there is something horribly wrong about all of this. What it could do though is to address how such things may be prevented from recurring.

THE HINDU

18 MAR 2001

19 MAR 2001

Press must accept restrictions in defence issues: PM

'National security overrides all and is given highest level of protection'

BY OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 17: Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee while urging the armed forces to raise the standards of probity, transparency and accountability has stated that the press has to accept restriction while covering defence matters.

Delivering the key note address at the second ANN regional conference on 'Role of Military in Asian Democracies' here on Saturday, Mr Vajpayee said, "Just as all institutions of a democracy are expected to respond to the rising expectations of the people, so too must the military. While keeping to their well-defined role, the armed forces need to constantly raise the standards of probity, transparency, and

accountability." The Prime Minister said, "Because national security overrides all other considerations, it is given a higher level of protection against external oversight to prevent interference in its functioning. Even the press, which normally plays the role of a watchdog on other institutions of a democracy, has to accept restrictions in covering military matters. Similarly, military decisions are not dragged into political controversies in a democracy."

Mr Vajpayee said, "The men in uniform are also an example of how to put the nation's interests above personal and sectional interests. Besides, the military is also a model of discipline, which civilian organisations and the people at large are expected to

emulate." He said that the military is constitutionally required to accept the supremacy of a civilian authority. "Its role is to defend and not to govern. The military is neither expected nor oriented to intervene in politics. Because in a mature democracy, people have a well-defined way of expressing their discontent against bad governance by voting out a set of people in power and voting in another set of their choice. They know that they need not turn to the military for affecting such a change," Mr Vajpayee said.

He further stated, "Defining the specific relationship between the armed forces and the civilian authority does not in any way belittle the importance of the military. Rather, it provides a

protection to the military as an institution whose integrity should not, in any way, be weakened by its stepping into the role of other institutions of governance. Such constitutional provisions also protect the institution of the military from individual adventurism."

He pointed that experience has shown how the people have disfavoured, rejected, and when necessary, revolted whenever democratically elected governments were superseded by military regimes. "The military is respected in a democracy. However, the military in a dictatorship is at best tolerated — and that too for a short period," the Prime Minister said.

He pointed that since independence, the relationship between

India's democratic polity and her armed forces have evolved on healthy lines.

"Our military has made a significant contribution to our efforts to build a strong and self-confident nation, proud of its open and pluralistic ethos, secular in outlook and forward looking. The many formations of the Indian armed forces within themselves encompass our rich and diverse national ethos," he stated.

The Prime Minister said that India favours an early convening of a global conference on terrorism under the United Nations. "In recent decades, terrorism has emerged as a global menace. It becomes deadlier when it is combined with religious extremism and receives cross border

support. Often, it is the medium through which proxy wars are waged. It is also a threat to democracy," Mr Vajpayee said.

Welcoming the participants at the conference organised by the Asia News Network and the Konrad Adanauer Foundation, the director and managing editor of the *Statesman* and member of the executive body of the network Ravindra Kumar said that recent events may have lent a tinge of irony to the question of the military's role in Asian democracies.

"But even labels — blue or black — need to be viewed in perspective and we hope informed discussion will allow the cameras of our brains to capture images that are intellectually edifying," he said.

THE ASIAN AGE

18 MAR 2001

Army panel may question vice-chief

Shishir Gupta
New Delhi, March 17

THE ARMY'S Court Of Inquiry headed by Lt-Gen S K Jain, is expected to interview vice-chief of Army Staff Lt-Gen Vijay Oberoi, Deputy Chief of Army Staff Lt-Gen S S Mehta and record statements of all officers named in Defencegate.

Government sources said Oberoi and Mehta, who headed the price negotiating committee in the T-90 tank deal, will be interviewed by the inquiry committee as they head the now-tainted weapons and equipment department (WED).

While the vice-chief is the overall in-charge of the WED, Lt-Gen Mehta was the immediate superior of Maj-Gen P S K Choudary. The statement of general Choudary. Additional Director General, WED, who has already admitted to receiving

bribes, has been recorded by the inquiry team.

The other officers expected to figure in the Army's investigations are: Director General (Infantry) Lt-Gen Shankar Prasad and Master General Ordnance Lt-General Dhillon. Both

officers have been named by sundry arms dealers in the videotapes.

It's understood that barring Maj-Gen Choudary, all serving Army officers under cloud, including Major-Gen Manjit Singh Ahluwalia and Maj-Gen

Chief sends reassuring signal to troops

ARMY CHIEF General S Padmanabhan on Friday night sent a clear signal to operational formations reassuring them that the "black sheep" within the services would not be spared and asked them to concentrate on the "professional tasks at hand".

The Army Chief's message to his officers and men said, "As you are aware of the media focus on shady defence deals, regrettably there are one or two black sheep among us. But these will not be allowed to tarnish the image of the entire force."

Gen. Padmanabhan promised that the guilty would not be spared and dealt with a heavy hand, while those wrongly victimised would be protected. According to the signal, the General apparently requested the troops not to indulge in gossip but concentrate on tasks at hand.

The Army Chief, who is extremely unhappy at the involvement of army officers in the defencegate, decided to transmit the signal in a bid to boost the morale of his troops.

HTC, Delhi

Ssatnam Singh, have denied receiving any bribe from tehelka investigators. However, all tainted officers have been relinquished from their charges and attached to the Staff Duties Directorate pending inquiry.

While Maj-Gen Satnam Singh, General Officer Commanding, Nimu-based 8 Mountain Division, has denied his involvement, investigations show arms dealer Maj S J Singh was his company commander during the 1971 Indo-Pak conflict. Both belong to the regiment of grenadiers.

It is understood that the Army wants the "corruption issue" to be dealt with a heavy hand as the entire fraternity is aghast at the levels the arms dealers have penetrated in the military establishment. The general refrain is that by taking bribes, the ordnance, weapons and equipment establishments pushed in suspect equipment during war.

Don't drag defence into Press, pleads PM

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 17

REELING UNDER the political convulsions in the wake of the thelka tapes, the Prime Minister today called upon the Press to accept the restrictions in covering military matters and underlined the supremacy of a civilian Government over a military one.

In a complete U-turn from the Bofors days when the Opposition piggybacked media scoops in its movement against the Rajiv Gandhi Government, he said at a

seminar organised by the Asia News Network: "In a democracy, military matters are not dragged into political controversies."

Defending the supremacy of a civilian authority over military, especially in a democracy, Vajpayee remarked that in this kind of a relationship, the armed forces as an institution get protection to carry on with its role as a protector of national honour.

While elaborating on the role of the armed forces in a democratic polity, he asserted that the role of the military was to defend

and not to govern. "The military is neither expected, nor oriented to intervene in politics."

In a pointed reference to military takeovers in several countries, the Prime Minister said experience had shown how people rejected and even revolted whenever democratically elected governments were superseded by military regimes.

"The military is respected in a democracy. In dictatorship, it is at best tolerated, that too for a short period."

Referring to the relationship of India's armed forces to its demo-

cratic polity, he said it had evolved on healthy lines for over 50 years of independence.

"Even as the various formations of the Indian armed forces encompass the nation's rich and diverse ethos, the military has made a significant contribution to the evolution of a strong and confident nation state."

Calling upon the armed forces to go along with the changing times, Vajpayee called upon the various defence formations to constantly raise the standards of probity, transparency and accountability. "They should

respond positively to new issues such as environmental protection, human rights and greater participation by women."

While labelling the growing specter of terrorism as a global menace, he said its threat had become deadlier in combination with religious extremism and cross-border support.

"Even as these terror tactics are used as a medium to engage in proxy wars leading to a threat to democracies, its suppression urgently requires new responses by both the military and civilian institutions."

Journalists must honour restrictions while covering defence'

Vajpayee calls for discipline in military

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STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 17. — The Prime Minister today called upon the armed forces to raise their standards of probity, reminded the media they have to accept restrictions when covering military matters, and said that in a democracy military decisions shouldn't be dragged into political controversies.

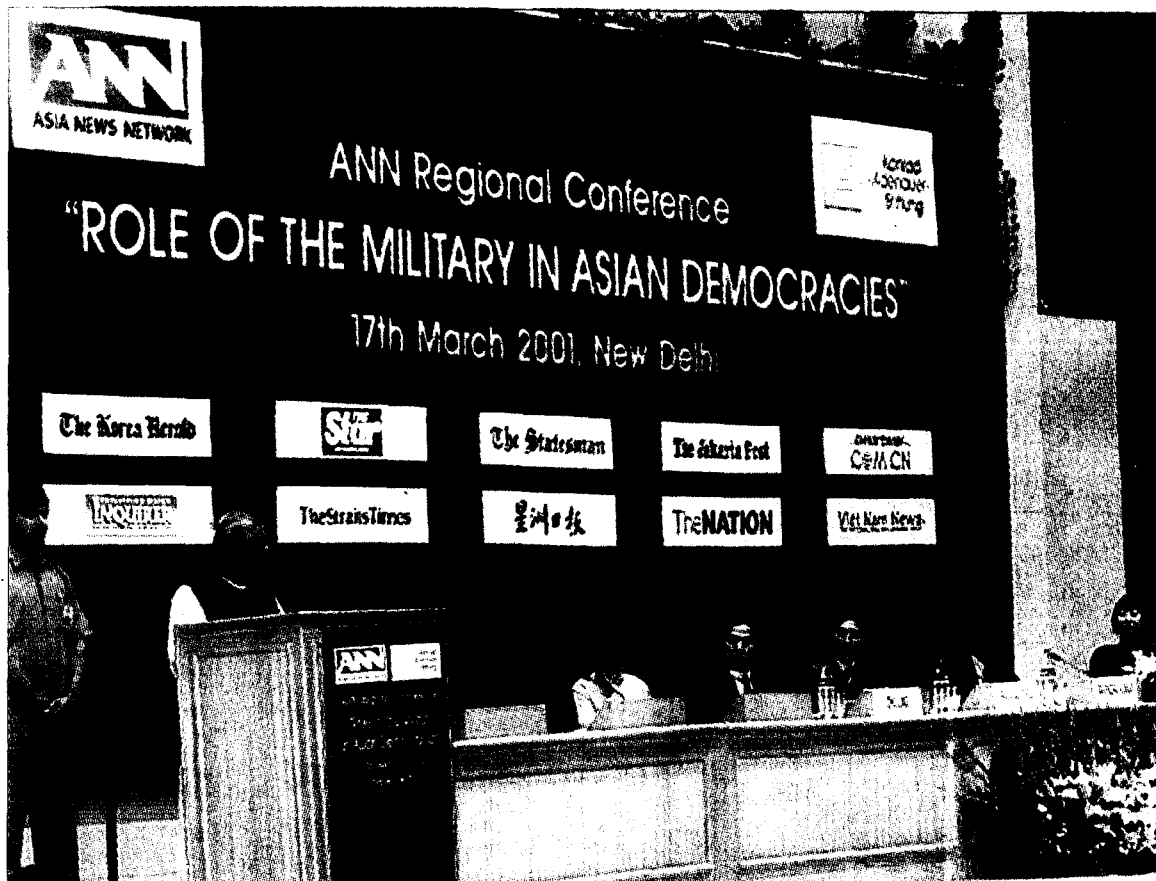
Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee refrained from directly referring to the political turmoil after *tehelka.com* exposed the shady "defence deal" but the charged environment in the country provided the backdrop to his keynote address to a conference on the "Role of the Military in Asian Democracies".

Organised by *Asia News Network*, which links 10 major newspapers of the region and Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the conference brought together strategic thinkers and media leaders to reflect on the critical nature of the civil-military relationship in this part of the world.

"Because national security overrides all other considerations it is given a higher level of protection against external oversight to prevent interference in its functioning," Mr Vajpayee said. "Even the press, which normally plays the role of a watchdog on other institutions of a democracy, has to accept restrictions in covering military matters. Similarly, military decisions are not (to be) dragged into controversies in a democracy," he said.

Mr Vajpayee called upon the military, like other institutions of democracies, to bow to inevitable changes in society and respond to the rising expectations of the people. "While keeping to their well-defined role the armed forces need to constantly raise the standards of probity, transparency and accountability," he said.

Among the "new issues of



Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee delivers the inaugural speech at Asian News Network's conference on the 'Role of the Military in Asian Democracies' in Delhi on Saturday. — *The Statesman*

modern times" to which the forces should respond positively that Mr Vajpayee identified were environmental protection, human rights and greater participation by women. "In all these matters, armed forces in democracies around the world can benefit a lot from each

other's experience," he said.

The global "wave of democratisation" will spread through Asia, Mr Vajpayee said. In an era of globalisation and increasing inter-dependency, there was need to strengthen institutions of global democracy. "We need to de-militarise conflicts so that these can be resolved through peaceful means."

That led him to another issue of increasing concern — terrorism. "In recent decades terrorism has emerged as a global menace, It becomes deadlier when it is combined with religious extremism and receives cross-border support. Often it is

the medium through which proxy wars are fought. It is also a threat to democracy."

Declaring that India favoured "early convening of a global conference on terrorism under the aegis of the UN," he said suppression of terrorism "urgently requires new responses by both military and civilian institutions along with global cooperation."

The history of civilisations, Mr Vajpayee said, had established that the people's will served as the principal source of legitimacy for a good system of governance, which was the basis of modern

On page 10

- Advani dares Opp to topple govt
- TDP the 'be all' of NDA now
- Many in Sangh parivar want PMO revamped

■ See PM: page 7

THE STATESMAN

18 MAR 2001

5:27 PM: 18/7
(Continued from page 1)

democratic systems.

While the world over the armed forces were hailed as representing the highest manifestation of patriotism, Mr Vajpayee said the military was constitutionally needed to accept the supremacy of a civilian authority.

"Its role is to defend and not to govern," he said.

"In a mature democracy, the people have a well-defined way of expressing their discontent against bad governance by voting out a set of people in power and voting in another set of their choice.

J. D. N. Selva
"They know that they need not turn to the military for effecting such change."

Welcoming Mr Vajpayee, the managing editor and director of **The Statesman** and member of ANN's executive board, Mr Ravindra Kumar, said the conference was an attempt to "explore an issue that forms a part of the Asian backdrop".

"Recent events may have lent a tinge of irony to the question of the military's role in Asian democracies," Mr Kumar said, "but even labels — blue or black — need to be viewed in perspective and we hope informed discussion will allow the cameras of our brains to capture images that are intellectually edifying."

Tracing India's tremendous influence in the region while thanking the Mr Vajpayee for his opening address, Dato' (Mrs) Ng Poh Tip, *Asian News Network* chairperson, expressed admiration of the country's strides in information and communication technologies.

"These are important in creating a challenging environment within which is evolved a Press that is vibrant, credible and responsible," said the *The Star* (Malaysia) group editor. She added: "New technologies * will certainly shape the future of newspapers and demand from us, as publishers, appropriate responses."

THE STATESMAN

1 18 2001

George is re-elected NDA convenor

BY OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 16: Former defence minister George Fernandes, who chaired the NDA meeting on Friday, was re-elected its convenor.

Mr Fernandes along with the NDA partners approved setting up a judicial probe into the defence deals exposed by the Tehelka tapes. The probe is to be headed by a sitting Supreme Court judge.

The parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, said that after the probe, Mr Fernandes could be re-installed as the defence minister. "His handling of the ministry was exemplary," Mr Mahajan said.

Mr Fernandes also said that his party was with the government and has not asked for the resignation of the principal secretary to the Prime Minister, Mr Brajesh Mishra and Officer on Special Duty

N.K. Singh. Referring to his party MPs' demand for the removal of the PMO officials, Mr Fernandes said that it is "the view of individual MPs and the Samata has no such demands." He, however, added that since a judicial probe was to be ordered, there was no need for anyone to resign. That the BJP-led NDA was

gunning for the Trinamul Congress chief, Ms Mamata Banerjee became evident, when Mr Fernandes said that there was "no question of calling her back to the NDA fold."

He then added: "Both me and Atalji had campaigned for her. By walking out during the crisis, she let down the government."

The NDA meeting which started around 4 pm, continued for an hour. Mr Fernandes, who was sitting on the chair, was once again re-elected as the NDA

convenor.

After the meeting, a beaming Mr Fernandes along with Mr Mahajan walked up to the waiting reporters.

Mr Mahajan started the address by praising Mr Fernandes' work as the defence minister. He described Mr Fernandes' decision to step down as an example of "individual honesty."

He then said after the judicial probe when things were out in the clear, "Mr Fernandes could be re-installed as defence minister."

According to Mr Mahajan, "Mr Fernandes' functioning as the defence minister was exemplary."

After that the former defence minister took over. He tried to refute the contents of the Tehelka tapes by saying that the entire issue was "irrelevant, since everything was fictitious."

He argued: "The deal was fictitious, the company was fictitious." He, however, kept quiet when asked whether the amount accepted by the former Samata president, Ms Jaya Jaitley, was also imaginary.

Mr Fernandes said that since the Opposition was stalling the functioning of Parliament, the NDA decided to order a judicial probe into the Tehelka episode.

He said that the inquiry will look into every aspect including criminal ones.

The former defence minister tried to speak out his achievements as a defence minister and about his honesty.

He, however, was interrupted as crowding reporters kept asking whether he was the "fall guy," "a scapegoat."

Asked whether there was any threat to the National Democratic Alliance government, Mr Fernandes merely replied that the government was formed on basis of a popular mandate.

SPOTLIGHT

THE ASIAN AGE

15 MAR 2001

17 MAR 2001

Mr Fernandes, do you remember this George?

RITU SARIN
NEW DELHI

How do you find the environment in the Ministry of Defence (MoD)?

THE MoD works on a fixed, allocated budget and the allocations are fairly tightly controlled. However, large defence purchases are made and experience has shown that there is a lot of room for corruption. Bofors is a classic example—it's still haunting the country and there is an ongoing, continuous effort to uncover the truth.

What I have observed in the MoD is that there are outside lobbies, maybe comprising arms dealers or high-profile operators—who could be in Parliament or simply be people who have interests in these defence

deals. All the important dealers have stationed their agents here or there is a tendency among the arms dealers to see if they get the better of their rivals.

How do these lobbyists function? How has their stranglehold on the system continued after scams like Bofors and HDW?

People say a lot of money passed hands in major transactions but nobody has given me proof yet. In one case, a person, whose credentials are above board, gave a written statement about money being paid for a major deal. But he is yet to provide me with concrete evidence.

Also, in these five months, I still have not had a case where the lobbyists have had ac-

cess to the Defence Minister's office. I have not directly come face-to-face with any instance of corruption or influence-peddling. There have only been faint efforts on the part of people to see if they can have access to me.

Recently, I hit upon an idea of putting a dozen complaint boxes in the MOD. Many complaints have come and where we have seen prima facie room for further investigation; action has been set into motion. A majority of these allegations is about one particular agency or the other trying to influence decision-making, again, on arms purchases.

Are you convinced that kickbacks in defence deals have stopped after the Bofors

scam?

In the Defence Ministry, lobbying is a universal phenomenon and the merchants are part of very, very powerful lobbies. To use Mrs Gandhi's one-liner, corruption is a global phenomenon. But these transactions don't take place within their country of operation, but in tax havens in secret Swiss bank accounts. Look at the time it has taken for us to get to the root of the Bofors bribes.

Has India, like several other countries like the UK, accepted the principle of in-built kickbacks in defence deals? Is it just that kickbacks have become a bad word and the commissions are continuing?

Home Minister L. K. Advani and I had shared thoughts on this subject recently.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

REPORT

INDIAN EXPRESS

JUN 1991

Do you remember this...

1713
We discussed how one way of dealing with this problem was to see if we could impress upon the establishment that those from whom we make our arms purchases, the built-in commissions (depending on the class of the product) taken by the arms manufacturers should be done away with. The problem is: even if you do not accept it, even there there are arms manufacturers who will say this is the price.

Are in-built commissions continuing in India?

The bulk of our arms purchases are from Russia. Talks, since I have been here, have been directly between the customer (us) and the seller (Russians). In this deal, so far, there has been no cushion that had to be shared or ferreted away. But as I was saying, the Home Minister and I were discussing the issue and we felt that we should tell all those from whom we are buying the weapons that the prices should not be padded with commission or bribery, and that if they have, we should be given that item by deducting that quantum of money.

So, is a new arms purchase policy on the anvil?

96-2
That is what we discussed. But we are yet to take a formal decision. Which means that there will be no kickbacks and wherever there is a cushion, it must be identified and we should be told that this is the extent to which your price will be reduced.

What about internal transparency? How much accountability is there in the MoD for internal functioning and purchases?

In the MoD, out of the budget of Rs 42,000 crore, an overwhelming sum will go in payment of salaries. Then, there is ordinance purchases which are purely book transfers. I am still in the process of trying to find out where the various leaks take place.

For instance, how defence money gets laundered: political parties, Ministries and State Governments together owe the MoD about Rs 200 crore for the hiring of IAF aircraft.

The money is coming out of the MoD's budget and all this is money spent for defending the country.

INDIAN EXPRESS

17 MAR 2001

Nanda is the name of the game

BHAVNA VIJ profiles Admiral Nanda, who has been named in the Tehelka tapes

□ He's a brave officer who gave the Indian Navy something to celebrate: the siege of Karachi on December 4, 1971, that's since observed as Navy Day.

□ He's an arms dealer and the owner of Crown Corporation, who considerably helped his son Suresh Nanda's career to fix murky defence deals?

□ A dotting grand-father — but "definitely not a gentleman" according to the police — who spent a great deal of his money, resources and energy to help grandson Sanjeev Nanda in the BMW accident case.

THE real Admiral S M Nanda may never stand up. But the name of the former Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) keeps getting mentioned in defence deals of all hues. Not surprisingly then, his name was among the slew of names that popped up in Tehelka's sting operation on defence deals.

The name 'Suresh Nanda' — his son — and just 'Nanda' crops up several times in the transcript of the clandestinely recorded video tapes. The name of the Admiral's son is always mentioned in connection with politicians, and can be heard offering them huge bribes (or donations or commissions as they prefer to call them) to grab contracts.

Nanda's name is mentioned in the tapes in relation to the one crore rupees paid to Samata Party treasurer R.K. Jain for the order of 250 Armoured Recovery Vehicles from a Slovak company and rela-



(left to right) Air Chief Marshal P.C. Lal, Admiral S.M. Nanda and General S.H.F.J. Manekshaw join the then Indian Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram after the 1971 victory. Photo courtesy bharatkrishak.com

tion to George Fernandes and in the Barak deal worth Rs 560 crore for INS Viraat.

The then CNS, Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat, had also consistently claimed that the Indian Navy did not need the expensive Barak system. He had insisted that the money should not be invested in defensive technology but in offensively oriented systems.

In his affidavit before the Lok Sabha on March 14, 1999, Admiral Bhagwat said his view was overlooked because of "well known lobbies of arms dealers involved in import of arms who are more in-

terested in commissions than security of the country."

"I would like to state that one particular arms dealer, Admiral S.M. Nanda who was the agent of several arms transactions for import of arms," stated Admiral Bhagwat.

Bhagwat also spoke of the longstanding relationship between Admiral Nanda and George Fernandes, which dates back three decades, when Nanda was the Managing Director of

The relationship between Nanda and George Fernandes goes back to three decades when Nanda was the Managing Director of Mazagaon Dock Limited (in 1967-68) and Fernandes was a trade union leader

Mazagaon Dock Limited (in 1967-68) and Fernandes was a trade union leader.

It was after retiring as CNS that Admiral Nanda started the now common trend of hiring retired defence personnel into his firm Crown Corporation. His son Suresh Nanda, who was also in the Indian Navy, took retirement after attaining the rank of a Lt Commander and joined his father.

Their company supplied military ware to Third World countries. Officially, that's

still what the company does. The Nandas have steadfastly denied any link with any defence deal.

Yet, their name figures in almost every major defence deal — be it the Admiral Gorshkov ship for the navy (worth Rs 3,500 crore), T-90 tanks for the army (both from Russia) and Advanced Jet Trainers (AJTs) for the Air Force.

They may reject the label, but the Nandas, according to a competitor, have attained the undeniable status of being the foremost arms dealers in India, a status earlier enjoyed by M.K. Jajodia.

In fact, Suresh Nanda and his family have British citizenship, which helped them do business in that country with a branch of Crown Corporation flourishing. Nanda even acquired a stake in an Indian daily newspaper which had a United Kingdom edition (he later gave up the bid).

The Crown Corporation and the Nandas came into the limelight after the CBI and Income Tax department conducted raids on their premises in connection with the HDW deal in the late 80s. A peeved Admiral Nanda wrote a letter to the then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, saying he had served the country for three decades and that this was no way to treat him. The case is still being heard in the Delhi High Court.

The flamboyant Admiral Nanda has come a long way from the 1971 war, when the navy decisively defeated Pakistan by laying sledge to Karachi. At the time, the US naval fleet was advancing towards the Indian seas.

Admiral Nanda loves to tell the story of how he preempted the danger by inviting the US naval commander for a beer. His hospitality won friends even then

INDIAN EXPRESS

16 MAR 2001

'There's corruption in Defence Ministry'

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 16

CENTRAL VIGILANCE Commissioner N Vittal has been investigating over 400 defence deals of more than Rs 75 crore since 1989. A primary goal of his probe was to examine the role of middlemen in these deals. Though his preliminary report to the Government is a secret, he has enough to say on the murky world of defence middlemen. Excerpts from an interview by Saurabh Shukla:

HT: You had exhaustive meetings with some key officials of the armed forces on the defence deals that you were asked to look into. What was the outcome and why has it taken so long for you to pin the blame?

Vittal: Our interaction was quite comprehensive. We have submitted the preliminary report to the Government and it is now for the Government to make it public. We were supposed to submit our final report at the end of March. But now with these tehelka tapes, we will take a fresh look at it and this may take a month more.

HT: You have been talking about transparency. Then why is this report secret? The writing on the wall is clear, the tehelka episode demonstrates that middlemen are very much there.

Vittal: There are a number of secret documents we have used for our report. So the report has been marked secret. But I can tell you there is corruption in the ministry of defence.

HT: Most of these middlemen are not public servants. And then there are politicians, who do not

come under your purview. Then how do you think your report will deal with the issue?

Vittal: I am not saying we can do everything. The question is, what is it that you can do in the present situation? The idea was that the office of the CVC should be the focal point in the fight against the corruption, and it has become so.

HT: But middlemen are accepted in many countries. Is there anything wrong with having middlemen?

Vittal: Middlemen function throughout the world. In India, post 1989, the defence ministry decided there should not be any middlemen for any defence deal. It is a hypocritical approach and they have been misleading the country. The problem arises because of the non-transparency in defence deals in the name of national security, which is a farce. This leads to corruption and it's difficult to weed this out till these deals are done transparently. We have to explode this myth of defence secrecy.

HT: If you have to decide punishment for these ministry officials who took bribes and compromised national security, what kind of punishment would you prescribe for them?

Vittal: There should be a more stringent punishment for corrupt officials. The maximum punishment that we have for officials is departmental action, which may lead to dismissal. However, even this is not enough. There is an inherent weakness in the system. Someone who has been corrupt has already made enough money to lead a lavish life.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

17 MAR 2001

Security levels in armed forces breached: George

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

NEW DELHI, March 16. — Mr George Fernandes today said *tehelka.com*'s operation shows that "various levels in the armed forces have been penetrated" and felt that it could only benefit India's enemies.

"I have reasons to believe that it (the portal) has penetrated the defence establishment. My concern is that by creating a fictitious organisation and a story and offering five-star hotel luxuries and booze, various levels in the armed forces have been penetrated. The illegal exercise might have cost crores of rupees," he said.

India's security has also been sought to be subverted by those preventing a discussion on the issue in Parliament, Mr Fernandes said. He added that attempts were being made by certain quarters to lower the morale of the troops posted along the borders and in Siachen by ensuring that reports about the "rubbish" defence deals reached them through radio and TV without any discus-

sion in Parliament. Demanding an "immediate investigation into the damage done to national security," he said "foreign beneficiaries of the exercise can only be our enemies." Mr Fernandes, however, did not elaborate on his statement.

He said certain levels in the armed forces could also have been subjected to "blackmail" in the portal's exercise. Defending Ms Jaya Jaitley's remarks taped by the portal at his residence, Mr Fernandes said: "I challenge the world to give me one case of a deal that has been struck in this house".

Noting that the portal team got an appointment with Ms Jaitley through an acquaintance, he said: "She did not say anything that cannot be stated in public". Maintaining that political leaders and MPs have always approached ministers on various projects, he said: "It is my duty to see that justice is done".

"Jaitley was approached as the president of Samata Party. She did not take any money and asked those people to give the donation for the party's national convention."

THE STATESMAN

17 MAR 2001

Pressure on PM to resign, George stays NDA convenor

■ Continued from Page 1
yeh log hain (George Fernandes is being made the sacrificial lamb, the real culprits are these people), Mr Raghunath Jha said. The Akali Dal is unofficially "very upset," admitting that the charges of corruption will be difficult to ward off. The Telugu Desam has still to take a clear-cut stand with all eyes currently on Andhra Pradesh chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, who is under pressure from sections of his party to convince the government to go to the people for a fresh mandate.

The support of the Telugu Desam is crucial to the survival of the government and at present, the party is divided in its reaction. While officially the party wants a

thorough probe into the corruption charges and action against the guilty, several MPs have confided in their colleagues from other parties that the ground reaction "is making it very difficult for us to continue with this government." But instead of walking out like the Trinamul Congress, this section of the Telugu Desam is reportedly keen that the government resigns and goes to the people for a fresh vote. Mr Naidu has also been approached by leaders from the People's Front to part ways with the NDA and, as one leader in the government said, "What he will eventually do is known only to him."

The disclosures by the website have also helped split opinion within the BJP and the RSS. BJP leaders are openly heard saying,

"Pehle chori karte hain, phir hum se koi hain ki defend karo (First they steal, then they ask us to defend them)." Hardline leaders have begun quietly gathering around Union home minister L.K. Advani, who has again taken direct charge of the party. Significantly, the BJP has not even tried to defend the Prime Minister's men in the PMO. BJP acting president Jana Krishnamurthi, while passionate in his attack on the Congress for corruption, has been visibly lukewarm in his defence of the PMO, which has been directly mentioned in the tapes as being an accomplice in defence deals.

The RSS has gone a step further to admit that "prima facie" the evidence contained in the Tehelka tapes appears to be true. It

has demanded a thorough probe and action against the guilty. RSS leaders told the press that the guilty should be punished, and went on to state that former BJP chief Bangaru Laxman, always considered close to Mr Vajpayee, was not a swayamsevak. The RSS functionaries also have made no attempt to defend the Prime Minister in specific terms with the silence on Mr Brajesh Mishra's supposed involvement in the defence deals being particularly deafening.

The Opposition has taken a decision to step up the campaign for the resignation of Mr Vajpayee and the government. Mainstream parties have reacted cynically to the judicial probe, pointing out that this was "meaningless." The campaign will take the

form of a nationwide dharna on March 20 for the resignation of the government.

A senior leader in the NDA admitted that this was the beginning of the end. He said it would be difficult for the Prime Minister to withstand the pressure from all direc-

tions. According to him, the "whole edifice started cracking when George Fernandes refused to resign."

He said that if he had agreed at the first instance, Ms Mamata Banerjee could have been persuaded to stay on and the government could have withstood the Opposition attack as an united entity.

This has not happened and the fissures are widening, he said, echoing the sentiments of other MPs in the NDA.

■ Guilty will be punished: PM ■ George Vajpayee moots judicial probe

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, March 16. — The Prime Minister went on air today and proposed a judicial commission to probe the Tehelka allegations to control the fallout that has claimed two Cabinet ministers, a minister of state and the BJP chief.

But during his less than 10 minutes' address to the nation, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee didn't indicate whether the cleansing of the Aegean stables would extend to his office.

Referring to earlier governments' inaction on such matters, Mr Vajpayee took the issue to the Opposition's door, saying: "The important point is that action has been taken immediately... in sharp contrast to the way others similarly placed have reacted in the past."

NDA members and later the Cabinet met to decide on how the proposed one-man commission would function. A sitting or retired Supreme Court judge will be appointed after consulting the Chief Justice of India to inquire into all aspects of the tehelka.com expose, including the conspiracy angle, if any, the parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, said. It will report in four months.

The commission has a four-point agenda, according to the terms of reference:

1. to probe defence transactions and other procurements exposed in the tehelka.com videotapes and transcripts and find out if they were carried out

according to the prescribed procedures and imperatives of national security;

2. to inquire if any individual, organisation or government official got bribes in any of the procurement transactions; if yes, to what extent;

3. to suggest action to be taken against persons found guilty in such transactions; and

4. to probe all aspects of the allegations and other matters connected with or incidental to any act of omission or commission referred to in 1 and 2.

The commission will be notified as soon as a judge is selected, Mr Mahajan told journalists after the Cabinet meeting.

Speaking of "issues of great moment" that "have arisen", Mr Vajpayee said "at no point have such allegations been made" against his colleagues in his 52-year public life. That's why they are of the "gravest concern" to him.

Mr Vajpayee questioned the motives and timing of the "intense discovery" and spoke of the steps he has initiated to contain its fallout.

Dismissing as "patently false" the "boasts and allegations" in the tapes, he defended his government, saying: "No minister is involved... No deal is actually struck... Hurling such allegations is criminal... Paying heed to them is just as destructive."

But the "din of allegations and explanations should not be allowed to obscure essential principles, and the interests of

our country," Mr Vajpayee said. Of these he classified as "paramount" the interests and security of the nation and the cleaning up of the political system.

The government "shall do everything necessary to bring everyone guilty to account — howsoever high or low".

He urged the Opposition to let the Parliament to function. "Let us have a thorough discussion in Parliament. Let us get back to work."

But earlier in the day, slogans and counter-slogans between the treasury benches and the Opposition forced the Speaker to adjourn the House for the third consecutive day today. No business could be transacted.

Before Mr GMC Balayogi arrived in the House, MPs were on their feet with allegations and counter-allegations. As the Opposition asked the government to resign immediately, BJP members waved a Hindi daily that had reports on the Bofors scam.

Mr Balayogi pleaded with the members to restore order and let the proceedings resume. But his pleas were ignored and the House was adjourned till 19 March.

Neither the Prime Minister nor the home minister were present. Most of the Congress MPs too were absent, as was their leader, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, who was in Bangalore for the AICC session.

■ Editorial: Captain courageous, page 8

17 MAR 2001

DEFENCE EXPENDITURE

Long-Term Perspective Is Still Lacking

By GURMEET KANWAL

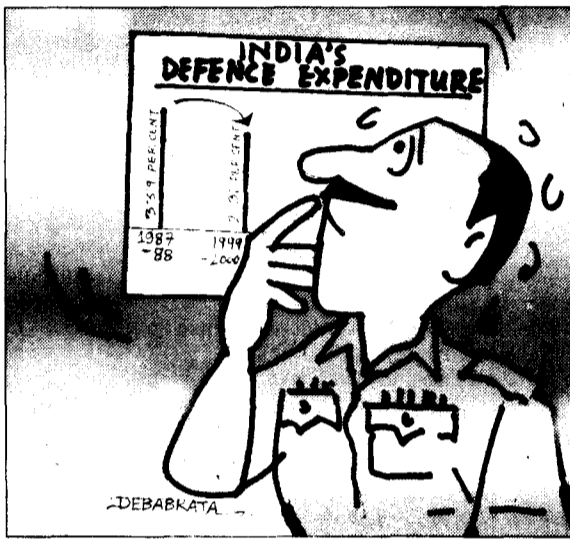
EVEN as the threats to national security increased manifold towards the close of the 20th century, India's defence expenditure decreased progressively as a percentage of the Gross Domestic Product from 3.59 per cent in 1987-88 to 2.31 per cent in 1999-2000. During this decade of stagnation, every finance minister reiterated while presenting his budget that India's security will never be compromised. Ironically, each one of them further reduced the budgeted defence expenditure, both in real terms and as a percentage of the GDP. At 3.59 per cent of the GDP in 1987-88, the defence expenditure was the highest ever after 1963-64 when it had been hiked from 1.69 (1961-62) to 3.84 per cent of the GDP consequent to the fateful 1962 war with China. Incredibly, despite two more wars since the ignominy of 1962 and a decade of Pakistan's low cost, high payoff proxy war, the defence budget was again allowed to slip to levels below 2.5 per cent of the GDP. Quite obviously, the Kargil conflict was waiting to happen.

INSUFFICIENT

An analysis of defence expenditure over a period of one and a half decades since the mid-1980s leads to several deductions. First, the rate of increase of defence expenditure in current rupees shows a notable decline. Capital expenditure that goes towards modernisation has been the main casualty of this drop in the average annual growth rate of defence expenditure. The gap between the needs assessed by the services and what was made available was invariably large. Also, even as the share of capital expenditure was falling as a percentage of the defence budget (from 31.8 per cent in 1991-92 to 26.95 per cent in 1997-98), the rupee depreciated by about 75 per cent against the US dollar and other hard currencies. Taking inflation also into account, this resulted in the almost complete stoppage of the replacement of obsolescent equipment and force modernisation; whatever funds still remained in the capital account kitty in real terms had to be utilised to meet existing contractual liabilities for weapons and equipment acquired during the previous decades.

While examining the budget proposals of the ministry of defence for 1998-99, Parliament's Standing Committee on Defence made the following observations: "The committee note that the total defence allocation for the year 1998-99 has been pegged at Rs 41,000 crore, an increase of 14.13 per cent over the Revised Estimates 1997-98. The hike in defence budget is just about enough to meet the outflow of the Fifth Pay Commission recommendations which is estimated to be 10 per cent of the budgetary estimates (BE) and general inflation of about six per cent. The rupee devaluation has further eroded budget capacity. Thus, in real terms, the provision for items other than salaries and allowances in the defence budget has remained static, if not reduced... This low

level of funding is totally insufficient to meet crucial requirements including modernisation of armed forces. This committee in the preceding years (had) also emphasised that in the interest of the security of the country, defence spending should be raised at least to the level of three per cent of the GDP". The 11th Finance Commission has also recommended the defence expenditure should be raised to around three per cent of the



GDP by 2004-05.

Arguably, Pakistan's strategic blunder in launching its unsustainable incursions into Kargil was based on the assumption that the fighting capabilities of the Indian armed forces, particularly the army, had been seriously degraded by a progressive decline in the defence expenditure even as commitments for internal security duties and counter-insurgency operations increased in Punjab, J&K and the northeastern states. Jasjit Singh, director, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, has expressed similar views: "This (the declining defence expenditure) has resulted in serious degradation of the conventional military capability. The war in Kargil highlighted the basic problem caused by the decline in defence spending for more than a decade..." During the Kargil conflict, General VP Malik, Chief of the Army Staff, had stated that the army, "... would make do with what we have".

UNSPENT

It is well known that there was a rush to import a large number of critical items, including 155-mm Bofors artillery ammunition, while the Kargil conflict was on. That the Pakistani intruders were evicted in less than two months from their well-entrenched perches is more a tribute to the indomitable courage of Indian infantrymen against seemingly insuperable odds.

The services continue to be plagued by large-scale shortages. Obsolescent war machines, like the 1970s vintage Vijayant tanks, are still stationed for frontline duty. Artillery guns of World War II vintage like the 25 Pounder and the 1960s technology-based 75/24 Indian Mountain Gun have only recently been reported to have been phased out of service. The Indian Air Force is still flying refurbished MIG-21s with an alarming accident rate that does no credit to its fine reputation as an excellent fighting force. The acquisition of Advanced jet Trainers is still under "active consideration" several decades after the project was initiated.

India has still not acquired a second aircraft carrier to replace the decommissioned Vikrant. Shortly before retiring

in 1996, Admiral VS Shekawat, the Naval Chief, had stated that the Indian Navy would have no battleships left after 10 to 15 years as no new orders had been placed on Indian shipyards and no purchases ex-import were in the pipeline. The induction of modern force multipliers has had to be put on the back burner in most cases. It was in this difficult situation that the finance minister had permitted a sharp increase of 28.2 per cent in the 2000-01 budget (over the defence budget for 1999-2000) to Rs 58,587 crore. Even after this hefty increase, the defence expenditure was still pegged at only 2.67 per cent of the GDP against the need to raise it to at least three per cent of the GDP initially and to 3.5 per cent over a sustained period of 10 to 15 years if adequate capabilities are to be developed to meet emerging threats. However, this year's budgetary allocations made public on 28 February 2001 revealed that of the additional Rs 10,000 crore allotted in the 2000-01 budget estimates, Rs 4,000 crore had remained unspent. Of this large chunk of unexpended funds, 75 per cent was due to funds earmarked for modernisation not having been utilised.

CHURCHILL'S VIEW

This year (2001-02) defence spending has been pegged at Rs 62,000 crore, approximately 2.5 per cent of the GDP. This amounts to an increase of Rs 7,539 crore or 13.8 per cent over the revised estimates of Rs 54,461 crore (2000-01). Though the increase is sufficient to take care of inflation and a drop in the value of the rupee, it remains to be seen whether this year the funds will be completely utilised. So far India's finance ministers have not even taken a medium-term view of defence expenditure. There is no reason to allow unexpended defence funds to lapse at the end of a financial year. These must be carried forward, only then can long and medium-term strategies for force modernisation be implemented in a realistic manner. The Finance Act must be amended to permit such budgetary practices.

Armed forces capabilities take several decades of painstaking effort to build. These must not be subjected to the vagaries of annual budgetary exercises. Winston Churchill's views on the force structures of the armed are revealing. Speaking as a MP in the House of Commons in 1923, he had said: "The armed forces are not like a limited liability company to be reconstructed from time to time as the money fluctuates. It is not an inanimate thing like a house to be pulled down or enlarged or structurally altered at the caprice of the tenant or owner. It is a living thing. If it is bullied, it sulks; if it is unhappy, it pines; if it is harried, it gets feverish; if it is sufficiently disturbed, it will wither and dwindle and almost die, and when it comes to this last serious condition, it is only revived by lots of time and lots of money".

India's national security planners must take heed of the timeless wisdom of Churchill's considered views and unshackle defence planning from the straitjacket of annual budgetary exercises.

The author is a former Senior Fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

THE STATESMAN

How to remedy mental block

THE Subrahmanyam Committee report on Kargil was followed up by the government instituting a special think-tank comprising a group of ministers to go into specific aspects of the defence apparatus and submit recommendations towards making national defence more compact and comprehensive. One aspect of this is the appointment of a Chief of Defence Staff.

The CDS concept in the Indian context is not new as it had been recommended by the Arun Singh Committee. The government has yet to take action despite repeated reminders.

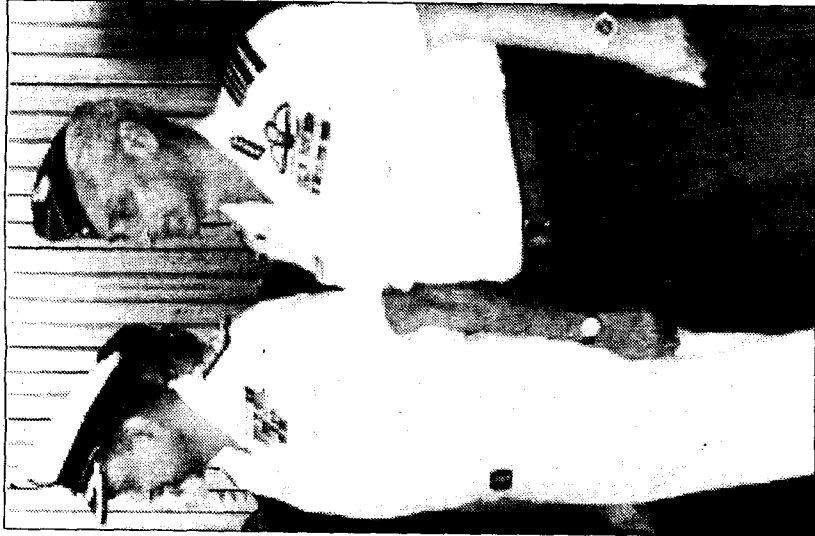
Understandably, the CDS cannot be created in a vacuum — a prerequisite is full integration of the ministry of defence with the three Service Headquarters. That is where the rub lies. The civilian establishment in the MoD is dead against any such integration because of a misplaced notion that integrating these two principal components of defence would lessen civilian control over the serviceman. In any democracy, it is axiomatic that the overall control of the armed forces invariably rests with the political leadership. But in India, it has become a fetish that any perceived dilution of this control cannot be tolerated.

It has now reached a stage where politics prevails overwhelmingly and professionalism goes backstage at the very fountainhead of defence.

A concurrent, unfounded apprehension is that a CDS might usurp power and enact a *coup d'etat*. Nothing could be further from the truth. First, the standard of discipline of the Indian armed forces is so robust that despite extreme provocations of their misuse — Operation Blue Star, the IPKF fiasco, Kargil, etc, speak for themselves — there has been no deviation whatsoever to the serviceman's dedication apropos Sir Philip Chetwode's credo emblazoned at the Indian Military Academy in Dehra Dun: "The safety, honour and

In any democracy, it is axiomatic that the overall control of the armed forces rests with the political leadership. In India, it has become a fetish that any perceived dilution of this control cannot be tolerated. It has now reached a stage where politics prevails and professionalism goes backstage,

says J K DUTT



Army chief S Padmanabhan (top left), Navy chief Sushil Kumar and his Air Force counterpart AY Tipnis. If a coup were to be carried out, it would not require a CDS to do so; it could easily be done by any serving Service chief.

welfare of your country come first, always and every time..." The serviceman has ever remained true to the government of the day despite the latter's follies and foibles.

Second, if a *coup* were to be carried out, it would not require a CDS to do so; it could easily be done by any serving Service chief. And last, the Services know that the size and complexity of this country is wholly unsuitable for military rule: it simply will not work.

One of independent India's major failings has been the truism that we have never taken warfare seriously, preferring to play politics rather than inducting high-grade professionalism. The wars we fought in 1947, 1962, 1965, 1971 and 1999 exemplify this. The same holds good for counter-terrorism. It is high time

Cabinet, particularly on all facets of national strategy. He will be a member of the Cabinet Committee on Security and will coordinate all functions of the Army, Navy and Air Force on a tri-service platform, both in war and peace.

Simultaneously, India's present regional operational command — for example, the Eastern Command, Eastern Naval Command, Eastern Air Command and so on — is required to be modified into composite Theatre Commands to match with the CDS ideology. Warfare in days to come will always involve all three Service elements.

The current arrangement of the Chiefs of Staff Committee along with its rotational chairman is not only archaic but also unsatisfactory. This arrangement should be done away with because the hapless chairman is neither able to do justice to his parent Service nor to the other two in his incumbent capacity. He is often accused of partisanship towards the colour of his own uniform! Further, this chairmanship is a temporary assignment which every Service Chief assumes in turn on a rota basis. It is more a ceremonial slot than a professional one.

The 1965 Indo-Pakistani war makes an educative case study of the Chiefs of Staff Committee's ineffectiveness. The Army fought its own battles with the Air Force providing support as the IAF deemed fit, and the Navy was left out of the war altogether! Our strategic gains would have been manifold had a CDS been on the scene as an apex-level coordinator.

The 1971 conflict was somewhat better managed by India, but still left a lot to be desired in the western sector in the area of coordination and operational objectives. Kargil in 1999 proved the point that a CDS

would have ensured far greater involvement of the IAF than what was accrued.

Counter-insurgency operations is another realm where a CDS can contribute handsomely. In the North-east, for instance, the Army apart, the IAF and the Navy can be inducted under the CDS's aegis. Coordinated tri-service operations can interdict the insurgents beyond compare. The CDS can be the overall monitor of arm procurement for all the three Services, with periodic reporting to Parliament.

The fallacious belief exists that only those countries that have global aspirations need a CDS and countries like the USA are held up in this regard. Conducting multi-service modern warfare, be these domestic or at an international scale, is what is of the essence. To this end, a CDS's charter should be viewed in terms of military productivity, not by semantics.

All said and done, a fully integrated ministry of defence is *sine qua non* for the appointment of a CDS. The bureaucracy, which is the main obstruction to this integration, has shed its "them and us" syndrome, a syndrome that has impaired tri-service efficacy for over 50 years in India.

Opposing integration is in truth the outcome of a mental block and the best method of removing this impediment is to organise in-depth deliberations on the subject between the bureaucracy and the Services over prolonged durations. Models from other nations that have successfully incorporated the CDS system could be studied.

A sample of integration in the British armed forces is worth emulating: "A brigadier or equivalent ranking Director in the War Office reports to a civilian Under Secretary, who is turn reports to a civilian Deputy Secretary, who reports to the military Vice-Chief of Defence Staff."

(The author is a retired Lieutenant Colonel, Indian Army.)

THE SUNDAY

By George! Vajpayee lands in a mess

Mamata has Hobson's choice in Cong.

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 15

DELHI QUIVERED under the tehelka aftershocks today, with three Samata ministers resigning and the Trinamool Congress pulling out of the NDA Government.

Defence Minister George Fernandes, at the epicentre of the political storm following the exposé, stepped down from office shortly after Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee called on President K R Narayanan.

Vajpayee's meeting with Narayanan came after Trinamool chief Mamata Banerjee's withdrawal of support to the Government after she was categorically told by the Prime Minister that Fernandes would not be asked to resign.

Announcing his resignation on Doordarshan, Fernandes said the exposé was aimed at maligning the Government and destabilising the defence set-up by "anti-national forces... I have done everything to prevent corruption in the defence ministry".

He said he had been waiting for an opportunity to clarify the matter on the floor of Parliament, but could not do it as it has not been functioning since yesterday. Asserting that he has held democratic values close to his heart throughout his political career, Fernandes harped on his struggles during the Emergency.

He added that the defence procurement system in the country was time tested and could not have been manipulated, as tehelka was alleging.

His decision to quit was preceded by his party chief Jaya Jaitly's resignation from the post. Barely a day after she firmly ruled out any chance of stepping down, the Samata Party president today said she resigned because she wanted to save her party from "unnecessary attack and demigration". Lashing out at the Opposition for not letting her enter Parliament, she said she



Defence Minister George Fernandes talks to reporters at his home in New Delhi on Thursday.

Ashis Chakrabarti
Kolkata, March 15

CONGRESS SPOKESMAN Jaipal Reddy's elated response to Mamata Banerjee's—exit from the Trinamool Congress's—exit from the NDA Government and the alliance may be a little premature. It may appear to be the most logical thing to follow, but she has to jump over many hurdles before forging an alliance with the Congress for the Assembly elections in West Bengal. She has to do all that unless, of course, George Fernandes' exit prompts her to do a U-turn and return to the Government.

Like Reddy, most Congress leaders, including PCC chief Pranab Mukherjee, would only be too happy to have her in their fold now. The party will be more than

willing to go the extra mile to reach out to her. But she may have to sort out too many things in too short a time before she clinches a deal with the Congress.

No doubt she will have to start the seat-sharing exercises all over again. She had just concluded that with three allies—BJP, Jharkhand Mukti Morcha and the Kamtapur People's Party—apart from leaving seats open for the Gorkha National Liberation Front in the Darjeeling hills and for close lieutenants of Congress heavyweight from Malda, Ghani Khan Choudhury. She may have done it in Choudhury in three seats in Malda. But it will be a totally different exercise if she has to do it for the Congress in the entire State. One simple solution could be to give to the Congress all 39



seats she had given to the BJP. She should have no problem with the Congress agreeing to the seats for the KPP (6) and the JMM (8) because the Jharkhandis are bitterly opposed to the CPI(M) and have been Congress allies in earlier polls. The same applied to the GNLFF, which too had been an ally of the Congress for some time.

NEWS ANALYSIS

Vajpayee and his enemies within

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 15

There is a point, in the life of every Government, when those at the helm of affairs lose control over the pace of events. With the Rajiv Gandhi Government it came on that fateful day in 1987 when VP Singh resigned. With VP Singh's own Government, it happened when Devi Lal challenged his authority with a Kisan Rally.

On what must have been the single-worst day in the life of the Vajpayee Government, Delhi's political circles asked just one question: Will the Ides of March be remembered as the point of no

return for this regime? Certainly, it is hard to imagine a more graceless and churlish exit than the one made by George Fernandes and Jaya Jaitly. Till the end, they were defiant and self-righteous. Ms Jaitly seemed to believe that it was entirely acceptable to collect cash in the Defence Minister's living room. And Fernandes made the bizarre point that had the Tehelka proposal been a genuine defence project, then it would have been investigated. The sub-text seemed to be that because it was not genuine, it was quite all right for his party president to have accepted bribes from the vendors.

Vajpayee has been damaged by his failure to act decisively and force Fernandes to resign on the day that Bangaru Laxman was sacked. He has been hurt also by Mamata Banerjee's departure from the NDA. The message sent out by Banerjee's exit is that there is electoral mileage to be gained in distancing your party from the corrupt NDA.

Part of the problem is that Vajpayee's real opposition is not the Congress: it is his own Sangh Parivar. For over six weeks now, the Prime Minister and his aides have been relentlessly worn down by a sustained campaign against the PMO. Much of the criticism comes from the BJP

and its friends. So great is the sense of siege in the Prime Minister's camp that it seems to have forgotten that it is Vajpayee's personal image and popularity that led to the creation of the NDA and put this Government in office.

When a Prime Minister stops believing in himself, when he seems unable to swiftly sack corrupt ministers and when he lurches from crisis to crisis, the strain always shows. The Government's greatest asset has always been Vajpayee's image. When his own colleagues begin doubting the strength of this image, then it could well be the beginning of the end.

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I was determined to run a transparent Ministry: Fernandes

NEW DELHI, MARCH 15. Following is the statement of the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes' broadcast today on Doordarshan in which he announced his resignation. "Taking the lies against me as a weapon by blocking Parliament, thereby preventing me from telling the truth; by taking to the streets, when a discussion in Parliament would have brought out the facts, the Opposition parties have caused immeasurable harm to our national security. That is why I am here before you.

Allegations of kickbacks and middlemen have always been there in the defence sector. Allegations have been levelled from time to time in Parliament also. When I entered the Ministry of Defence on 19th March, 1998, I came with the determination to run a clean and transparent Defence Ministry. The first step I took was to keep complaint boxes at many places in the Ministry of Defence and other defence offices in Delhi. Complaints began to pour, some anonymous and others identifying the complainant. We took action on these complaints. When allegations were made in Parliament about the presence of middlemen, I took a decision in January 2000 that defence contracts worth Rs. 75 crores or more would be sent to the CVC and C&AG for a time bound and mandatory scrutiny. At that time, some people attributed political motives to this decision. The truth was that my orders were meant to cover past as well as on-going and future transactions.

The Central Government has also taken many steps to eradicate and eliminate the role of middlemen and agents. Today, in every defence contract, the party contracted with, has to certify in the contract itself that it has not employed any agents or middlemen and that if it is found that it has done so, then the contract is liable for cancellation. I am proud to say that the Defence Ministry of this country would be one of the very few Defence Ministries of the world which has such clauses man-

dated and included in the defence documents.

While it is true that there are black sheep in every organisation and it is quite possible that some individuals in this vast machinery of Government could have been corrupted, it would be wrong and despicable to tarnish everyone with the same brush.

Against the backdrop of the on-going turmoil over a so-called investigations by a web site, I would like to clarify in some detail some of the defence acquisitions which have been approved in recent years and about which allegations of corruption and middlemen have surfaced in the transcript released by this web site. Before that, however, it needs to be understood that this whole tape and transcript is in fact about a fictitious contract by a fictitious company. I want to assure my countrymen that our procurement system is a time-tested one and is not porous and vulnerable as sought to be made out by this so-called investigation.

If they were a genuine company with a genuine product they would have had to undergo a series of rigorous tests including trials and evaluation and any bogus company with sub-standard or inferior product would have been rejected by the armed forces at the first instance. I am making this point because it is only the anti-national forces who would benefit from the sordid picture which is being attempted to be painted by this so-called investigation. Let me come to some specific allegations that have become slogans shouted in Parliament and publicised through all sections of the media. The first one is that I approved the Barak systems for the Indian Navy despite objections by Dr. Abdul Kalam, Scientific Advisor. The fact of the matter is that the navy had moved a proposal for procurement of six Barak systems in 1996 and the Ministry had accepted the navy's proposal in 1996 itself and the technical evaluation, price negotiation etc had commenced thereafter. The then

Scientific Advisor to Raksha Mantri, Dr. Abdul Kalam, had also accepted that navy's requirement needed to be met immediately. Since the DRDO was also developing an indigenous system, Trishul, which was yet to be tested, it was agreed after discussions that the Barak anti-missile defence systems be approved for immediate deployment and Trishul be fitted on future warships i.e. when it became available.

I may also mention that the Chief of Naval Staff had, in fact, written to Dr. Abdul Kalam and the Government explaining the urgency of the requirement and had brought out the criticality of the need in view of the purchase of P3C Orion aircraft fitted with air to surface missiles and the Submarine-launched Exocet missile by Pakistan. This proposal was approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security in March 2000. Incidentally, the Trishul system is not ready even today for fitment on the Indian naval ships. The last trials were held in May 2000. DRDO complains about the lowest offer of a Czech company for supply of Armoured Recovery Vehicles being rejected by me. The fact is that a report from the Indian Defence Attache, Prague, was already on record in file that the Czech company was not an original equipment manufacturer. It was a company for production of heavy metal parts, cement plants and agricultural machinery. This report even went on to say that this company was planning to procure surplus stocks of ARVs from the Czech army, break them down, modernise/improve them and sell them off. Thus, we would have been buying old second-hand equipment and contrary to existing government guidelines from a non-original equipment manufacturer. In the event, we decided to procure these vehicles from none of the foreign companies but from indigenous concerns, and that too from public sector undertakings and a contract for 87 vehicles was equally shared between BHEL and BEML.

THE HINDU

16 MAR 2001

A ministry left with no defence

Shahir Gupta
New Delhi, March 15

DEFENCE MINISTER George Fernandes' resignation here tonight had a touch of supreme irony. About three years ago, the one-time socialist icon began his innings as Defence Minister with a vow to end graft in arms deals so much so that he even placed complaint boxes at the doorsteps of his high security South Block chambers to ward off corrupt middlemen and arms dealers.

But as brought out by the tehelka tapes, the system Fernandes had promised to clean up remained sleazy as ever. His valedictory speech telecast live by

Doordarshan failed to alter popular perception of corruption in defence contracts, especially those which the Minister so valiantly defended, relying on needless technical details.

Fernandes claimed that Barak anti-missile system was approved by the Prof A P J Abdul Kalam, then scientific advisor to Defence Minister, as the indigenous Trishul system was still under trials and could not be fitted on Indian warships before April 2003. He said the Chief of Naval Staff has written to Kalam and the Government about the urgency of installing Barak system after Pakistan acquired missile-firing P-3C Orion aircraft

and anti-ship Exocet missiles.

What Fernandes perhaps conveniently forgot was that the Navy did explore any other anti-missile systems besides Barak. The anti-missile system was opposed by a section of the naval top brass on grounds that it was suspect against incoming supersonic anti-ship missiles. It was used only by fledgling navies of Chile, Singapore and Israel. The system was prohibitively expensive at Rs 80 crore a piece, which amounts to one-fifth of the cost of the latest generation guided missile destroyer.

Senior naval officers handling the project had put in writing that there was no use for invest-

ing such a huge amount in defensive capabilities and the Navy would gain if the same sum was spent on an offensive weapon. They pointed out that Exocet missile manufacturers had offered Pakistan supersonic missiles and Chinese Sovremenny class destroyers were already equipped with supersonic Sunburn and Moskit missiles.

It seems the Barak system was included in the post-kargil shopping list of weaponry. The Tehelka tapes have now revealed how palms were greased by Suresh Nanda of the Crown Corporation to expedite the Barak deal. A retired Naval officer and son of a former Navy Chief, Nanda has

been in the centre of controversy since the dismissal of Admiral Vishnu Bhagwat.

While Fernandes maintained that he resisted pressure from the Russian MAPO-MIG company in the advanced jet trainer project, the tehelka tapes show that the company missed the boat as it did not have air-sea worthiness certificate for its trainer aircraft. This left the Defence Ministry with little option but to go with the IAF's shortlist of French Alpha Jet and British Aerospace Hawk. Today, the IAF is negotiating with a single vendor, British Aerospace, as the French Alpha Jet went out of production some years ago.

THE HINDUSTAN TIME

16 MAR 2001

A great cover called national security

Shishir Gupta

New Delhi, March 14

DEFENCE MINISTER George Fernandes told the Lok Sabha last Thursday it would not be in the interest of national security to disclose the details of the Rs 700-crore Israeli Barak anti-missile defence system deal. But what he did not want to share with the elected representatives has for long been common knowledge to shady arms dealers and fixers.

It seems that in the name of national security, the defence minister kept under wraps several decisions that could trigger uproars in Parliament. One such defence deal is the purchase of nine airborne early warning (AEW) Kamov-31 helicopters from Russia despite the fact that they haven't been tested in equa-

torial waters of the Indian Ocean. This deal runs into Rs 900 crore.

Government sources said four radar picket helicopters have already been purchased for the Navy, while the defence ministry signed the contract for another five KA-31 choppers last year. The Navy plans to operate these copters from Khrivak-class frigates and heavy aircraft carriers. Three of these frigates are currently being built at the St Petersburg shipyard in Russia.

Coming at Rs 100 crore apiece, Roosvoorouzhenie's KA-31 helicopter is used to detect low-altitude air targets flying below the craft's altitude in a patrol zone and obtain data on water surface conditions. It's capable of automatically tracking up to 20 targets and transferring information to the mother ship. Sources said KA-

31's capabilities were shown to the Indian team comprising Navy and defence ministry officials in Russia in 1998. But the helicopter was only tested on land and that too without testing the craft's on-board computer. But despite the helicopters' unproven capability on Indian waters, the defence ministry has gone ahead with its acquisition.

The helicopters were purchased to complement the Barak missile system or the indigenous Trishul missile system as in real-time operational mode, the mother ship would be alerted by the craft about any incoming missile within a range of 100 km. However, in his reply to Lok Sabha, Fernandes tried to play down the DRDO missile system vis-a-vis Barak, saying the indigenous system "does not employ vertical

launch system technology".

What remained hidden from the Lok Sabha was that 'vertical' or 'horizontal' launchers do not make any difference as long as the incoming missile is destroyed. Tehelka tapes now show Samata Party treasurer R K Jain admitting he took Rs 1 crore from Suresh Nanda of Crown Corporation for the defence minister to push the Barak deal despite the DRDO's objections.

The buzz is that Fernandes was so keen on the Barak deal that he openly asked Chief Of Naval Staff Admiral Sushil Kumar about its status during the naval commanders' conference last year. The missile system deal was signed in December and the first system was installed on India's sole aircraft carrier *INS Vajrapati* the very next month.

Fernandes stays put, but makes seven defence officials pay

BJP says it is ready for a debate..

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI: Heads have started to roll following Tuesday's expose of sleaze in defence deals by Tehelka.com. With BJP president Bangaru Laxman, caught on a spy camera while accepting a wad of notes from a representative of a fictitious arms company, putting in his papers late on Tuesday, the Vajpayee government has started a damage control exercise.

As a combined opposition clamoured for the government's resignation, alleging corruption in high places, and paralysed parliament, the government offered a discussion in parliament under any rule as well as a probe into the expose. While asserting that defence minister George Fernandes would not quit, the National Democratic Alliance government placed under suspension seven officials of the defence establishment, including additional director-general of weapons and equipment, Maj Gen P.S.K. Choudhary. Also suspended were staff officer in the ordnance factory board H.C. Pant, assistant financial adviser in the defence ministry, Narendra Singh, and assistant in the army headquarters, P. Shashi. Action against additional defence secretary, L.M. Mehta was recommended to the ministry of personnel.

Action against three other top officials, additional director-general, technical stores, Maj Gen M.S. Ahluwalia, prospective procurement officer, Brig Iqbal Singh and director of ordnance stores, Col Anil Sehgal was kept pending as they were out of station.

In a related development, the army ordered a court of inquiry against the suspended officers which would be headed by a Lieutenant General who is still to be named.

A defence ministry spokesman said that the action against the officials was taken after a preliminary inquiry. He added that defence minister George Fernandes had summoned top officials of the ministry and the Services late on Tuesday night for an emergency meeting. But the opposition was not mollified with this limited action and bayed for the resignation of the NDA government.



A PENSIVE PM

ON THE MAT

Accusing the government of compromising national security, opposition members said the NDA government had no moral right to remain in power. They demanded the intervention of President K.R. Narayanan if the government refused to step down. Following the pandemonium, both houses were adjourned for the day.

"It is unprecedented. It is directly related to our national security. The government has no moral right to sit in the treasury benches and must quit immediately," deputy leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha Madhavrao Scindia said.

Congress chief whip in the Lok Sabha Priyaranjan Dasmunsi said these deals were not possible without the support of the Prime Minister. Indian Union Muslim League leader E. Ahmed described the expose as disgraceful and stinking. Another Congress MP, Kapil Sibal, said the government must go as it had lost all moral authority to govern.

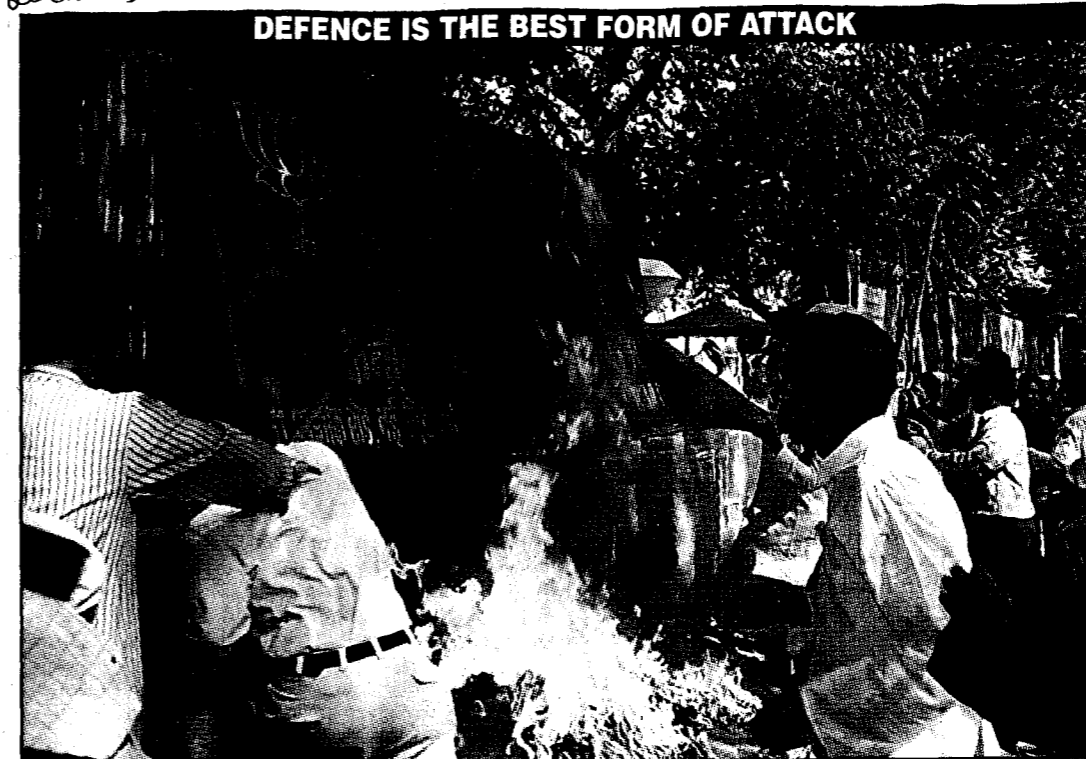
The National Conference, however, pledged full support to the NDA, saying the prompt action taken by the government to suspend some army officers and senior officials was a clear indication of its commitment to weed out corruption completely.

Minister of state for commerce and industries, Omar Abdullah, said that there was no need for anyone to resign as there were clear indications that the government meant business. The DMK, an NDA constituent, was more guarded in its reaction with party president and Tamil Nadu chief minister M. Karunanidhi saying that the Vajpayee government was already atoning for the expose, as was evident from Mr Laxman's resignation.

Later, Mr Vajpayee held informal consultations with his close cabinet colleagues L.K. Advani, Mr Fernandes and Pramod Mahajan, and called a meeting of the NDA allies at his residence.

Trinamul Congress chief Mamata Banerjee, who had earlier called for the defence minister's resignation, stayed away from the NDA meeting, which decided to stand by the government in the hour of crisis.

At the BJP headquarters, party seniors decided to appoint vice-president Jana Krishnamurthi as the acting president. The meeting unanimously accepted Mr Laxman's resignation. There was, however, no word from the Samta Party regarding the demand for the resignation of its party chief Jaya Jaitly.



Youth Congress workers beat the BJP name-board with lathis after attempting to set it on fire outside the BJP headquarters in New Delhi on Wednesday to protest against the Tehelka expose.

'Tapes will nail Advani, PMO too'

The Times of India News Service
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Tehelka correspondent Mathew Samuel who, along with a colleague, exposed the murky side of defence deals, has said they had more tapes which would implicate the very top rungs of the Vajpayee government, including the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) itself. Mr Samuel, who has gone into hiding here fearing a threat to his life, earlier spoke to newsmen at a meeting arranged by the Left camp, which is giving him protection.

He claimed that the border fencing communication system had been pushed through for Rs 1,300 crore, for a 25 per cent commission. He hinted that home minister L.K. Advani would figure in the next lot of tapes. "A fixer named S.J. Singh was

responsible for getting an Israeli company the contract from the home ministry. A minister and his private secretary had taken a 25 per cent commission. We have that testimony. It is coming next," he said.

He also said no deal of over Rs 50 crore was possible without the involvement of the very top. Mr Samuel said he had met Jaya Jaitly because he could not meet defence minister George Fernandes. He said commissions on defence deals were nothing new because the Sukhoi deal, worth Rs 34,000 crore, had been going on for many years. The remaining tapes had more information about more politicians, bureaucrats and fixers, he added.

He said he found not one man in the corridors of power who refused a bribe, adding that he planned to write a book about the whole stink.

Govt. denies deal

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI: The home ministry on Wednesday denied allegations of a deal with an Israeli firm in connection with border fencing. It said: "There is no proposal for border fencing and communication system involving any Israeli firm. The allegations are mischievous and malicious."

Chaos in state legislature

The Times of India News Service
MUMBAI: By stalling the proceedings of the two houses of the state legislature on Wednesday on P'Affaire Bangaru Laxman, the ruling Democratic Front MLAs played the opposition's role, complete with throaty slogans and unfurling of cloth banners.

The DF MLAs, led by chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh and deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal, vociferously demanded the dismissal of the Atal Behari Vajpayee government following Tehelka.com's expose involving BJP president Bangaru Laxman, Samata Party chief Jaya Jaitly and other senior defence officials.

The assembly was adjourned thrice amid slogans of "Deshdrohi Atal Behari ghar jaane ki karo tayaari (Traitor Atal Behari be ready to go back home)" and "Atal, George desh ke gaddar, raksha mantralaya kaa bhrash-taachaar (Atal and George are traitors, the defence ministry is mired in guns-n-graft)".

YOU SAID IT by Laxman



... and when I grow up I want to be a cricket star or a movie producer or a stock broker or a military commander or a party president.

Fernandes defiant, allies troubled, Opposition upbeat

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, MARCH 14. The day after the Tehelka.com "expose" of its dirty defence deal-making, the beleaguered NDA Government was precariously perched, with its moral authority visibly depleted and a significant ally, the Trinamool Congress, threatening to walk out of the ruling coalition.

The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, found himself buffeted, on the one hand, by a united Opposition, unrelenting in its demand that the Government — and, in particular, the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, — resign on moral grounds; and, on the other, by the George Fernandes-Jaya Jaitily duo, which appears to have dug in its heels, and which has more or less told the BJP establishment that the "Bangaru Laxman rekha" would not be drawn around the Samata Party leaders.

By evening while the National Democratic Alliance — minus Ms. Mamata Banerjee and Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde — formally resolved to close ranks, the Congress and the rest of the Opposition made it clear, in and out of Parliament, that there would be no let-up in the pressure on the Government. The Congress Working Committee, in a statement, talked of "the immense threat to national security from

the venality of the NDA government" and asserted that "this government has lost its moral right to continue in office".

The political cost of the expose to the Government and its image became evident as the reverberations of the scandal were heard even outside the Capital; non-NDA political groups and parties raised the issue of scandal and corruption in the State Assemblies of Karnataka, Maharashtra, Chhatisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand, Bihar, and Jammu and Kashmir. To further compound the Government's misery, a new allegation was sought to be hurled at Mr. L. K. Advani's Home Ministry, though the Ministry officials quickly moved in to douse the fire of suspicion.

Uproar in Parliament

The tone of confrontation was set in the morning when a determined Opposition disrupted proceedings in Parliament. In both Houses, the Opposition members gathered in the well even before the proceedings began, and did not allow the Chair to proceed with the listed business. Amid shouting and counter-shouting, the Rajya Sabha was adjourned for the day within seven minutes, while the Lok Sabha was disrupted twice before the Speaker, Mr. G. M. C. Balayogi, called it a day.

The Opposition members



The Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, with (from left) the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, and the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, at the NDA meeting in New Delhi on Wednesday. — Photo: S. Arneja

raised slogans about the corrupt Government. The mood was not to entertain any suggestion about any kind of debate or inquiry; instead, the idea seemed to be paint the Government in corruption colours. In the Lok Sabha, the charge to the well was led by Mr. Buta Singh, who was asked to resign from the Vajpayee Government in April 1998 on a corruption charge, but who today had the satisfaction of returning the compliment.

In contrast was the Government's strategy, in and outside

to suspend defence officials raised the issue of the constitutional responsibility and moral obligation of the Defence Minister. However, during the course of the day it became clear that the BJP leaders, particularly Mr. Vajpayee and Mr. Advani, had allowed themselves to be intimidated by Mr. Fernandes. The Defence Minister is believed to have threatened that if he was forced to step down, he would not go alone and that the whole Government would come tumbling down.

But an unintimidated Ms. Banerjee has come pretty close to demanding Mr. Fernandes' resignation from the Cabinet, while Mr. Ramakrishna Hegde, one of the founders of the NDA, found himself excluded from the NDA meeting for speaking out in the Central Hall against the Defence Minister.

The Government's political managers are understood to have concluded that ultimately the Prime Minister would have to concede a probe either by a Joint Parliamentary Committee or by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court, but neither the ruling party and nor its coalition partners (at least most of them) are in a mood to give in to the Opposition argument of "moral" culpability. It is also taken into calculation that

Parliament is not likely to be allowed to transact any legislative business, at least till the Congress MPs come back after the Bangalore plenary over the weekend. PTI reports:

Later, Mr. Vajpayee in his first reaction to the corruption charges said the Government was ready for an inquiry. On the Opposition's demand for the Government's resignation, he said "let them make a case for the resignation of the Government... this is a political demand. Let the matter be discussed in the House."

Asked if there was a conspiracy behind the expose, the Prime Minister said, "daal mein kuch kaala hai (there is something fishy)."

Mr. Advani said, "we are ready for discussions and we will accept whatever emerges from them. We have nothing to hide."

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, told reporters, "if the Opposition wants, we are ready for a discussion under any rule... 193, 184 or calling attention." He said Parliament had the right to discuss the issue. "I accept and Honour that right... Government will accept the general consensus."

The Rural Development Minister, Mr. M. Venkaiah Naidu, said, "there seems to be some big conspiracy behind this and the Gov-

ernment is willing to debate it in Parliament if it is allowed to function." The former BJP president, Mr. Kushabhau Thakre, said "that notwithstanding the video tape exposure, the NDA was united and there was "no reason" for anybody in the Government to resign. "The NDA is united and the Tehelka tapes are only a destabilising factor. There is no reason for anybody in the government to step down."

I did no wrong, says Jaya Jaitily

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 14. The Samata Party president, Ms. Jaya Jaitily, today stoutly denied the involvement of her party in the functioning of the Defence Ministry and ruled out stepping down from the post in the wake of the shady defence deals exposure.

Expressing doubts at the veracity of the Tehelka tapes in which a party functionary, Mr. R.K. Jain, was shown as claiming to have raised funds for the party through deals, Ms. Jaitily said even if it was as he claimed, the statement was 'ridiculous'. The party had nothing to do with Mr. Jain's claim as he had ceased being the treasurer some three months ago.

More reports on Pages 13, 15.

Defence Disclosures

Armed Against Operation Clean-up

By K SUBRAHMANYAM

SPECTACULAR corruption in defence deals goes back to the HDW submarine contract concluded in 1980. With the HDW contract, a new era of kickbacks from defence contracts began. Defence deals provide an attractive avenue for money making for corrupt politicians. The deals are huge and they are shrouded in secrecy in respect of the purchase itself, the size of the order and all other aspects of the transaction. It involves foreign exchange payment and the negotiating party is generally not accessible to our media and is used to the culture of secrecy.

Since most defence deals all over the world are tainted by corruption, arms dealers are adept at making secret payments and covering their trails. It is also relatively easy to fob off queries in Parliament and the media by invoking national security. The prices of defence equipment are also generally secret. The margins in pricing are usually kept so high as to enable the seller of the equipment to provide generous kickbacks and also ensure enough flexibility in adjusting prices marginally during negotiations. A reduction of one or two per cent in price, or payment of commission on the same scale will amount to enormous sums as these deals are always in hundreds of millions or billions of dollars. There was a time when Soviet arms deals were considered clean. It would appear that they were not so from the eighties.

All the defence deals go through prescribed procedures. The requirement of the equipment, its performance parameters, the numbers to be purchased, the extent of spares needed and unit cost of the equipment are all subject to the user's approval, financial vetting and quality assurance check on arrival. Therefore, every purchase involves a large number of people. Price negotiations are invariably conducted by a committee with the participation of officials from the ministry of defence, finance and defence services. The large deals have to be approved by the cabinet committee on national security.

A corrupt minister can get around these procedures. For most of the equipment, there is more than one bidder. The equipment usually varies slightly in performance characteristics. The ultimate decision on the equipment purchase would have to be made by comparative evaluation of performance characteristics, lifetime maintenance costs, the delivery schedule, unit price and, where credit is involved, on the

financing arrangements. Where the middlemen come in handy is to ensure that the firm offering the maximum kickback will be given information on how to make its bid most attractive so that when the committee considers the bids, the firm in question would find favour. The decision taken by the committee is usually an honest one. The politician gets the kickback for ensuring that such a decision is taken.

In other cases, the firm offering the maximum kickback may not be able to offer the lowest price. In that event, particular performance characteristics of the equipment concerned are given higher weightages to secure a decision in its favour. This happened in the case of the HDW submarine and Jaguar aircraft. In such cases, the politician has to rope in service officers to insist that those performance characteristics are crucial from their point of view. No civilian official or finance

IN BRIEF

- Most defence deals worldwide are tainted by corruption
- Middlemen are a part and parcel of such deals
- All attempts to clean up the system will be resisted by politicians
- In order to protect themselves, honest officials shy away from taking any defence decisions

person would be able to argue against that. Service officials, of course, have to be won over with appropriate inducements.

These kinds of transactions always involve middlemen who may be located either in India or abroad. Ministers or officials concerned do not want to be seen dealing with the firms involved. Often the middleman arranges to get articles written in the media praising the performance of his principal's equipment and running down rivals. In this kind of sales promotion, obliging media personnel also become beneficiaries. Officials in the defence and finance ministries cannot influence the choice of the equipment but are in a position to delay decisions or raise uncomfortable questions. Therefore, middlemen try to placate them in various ways. If a particular official is straightforward and proves difficult, he is shunted out of his post and a pliant one brought in.

Often the kickback is paid abroad

and transferred home, through the hawala route whenever required. This is the preferred method of payment for politicians. Officials who get smaller amounts are paid 'in black' within the country. Therefore, the problem of corruption in defence purchases cannot be tackled purely by improvising procedures within the ministry. It can be done only if the income and assets of individual ministers and officials are subjected to periodic scrutiny and the accounts of political parties subjected to public audit. A federal investigative agency should be able to keep tabs on all arms deals and middlemen involved in them and their contacts with ministers and officials. The politicians are not likely to agree to this.

Second, the major equipment selection decisions should be collegiate and not left to a single official whether it is a chief of staff or one of his senior officers but should be by boards of senior officers. The Lok Pal with jurisdiction over ministers and a vigilance commission with jurisdiction over officials have to be established urgently. It is to be recalled that an all-party committee of Parliament did not agree to the vigilance commissioner initiating action against officials without prior government approval. That was because, in India, almost all political parties are interested in money-making through such underhand deals for their party purposes. Therefore, there is a mutuality of interests among most politicians not to scrutinise big deals too closely.

Political corruption in defence deals has a very adverse impact on our defence preparedness. When there are complaints about certain defence procurement decisions being unduly delayed — for example, the AJT trainer — underlying the delay will often be considerations of making money out of such purchases. Most honest officials do not want to get involved in decisions which might involve corruption and so try to avoid taking decisions altogether. Pakistan would be very pleased with the present disclosures. This is likely to bring procurement decision-making to a complete halt. Even in 2000-2001, the ministry could not spend the money budgeted for procurement. In the coming year, it might slow down even further unless the entire procurement process is thoroughly cleaned up and all politicians are kept under continuous scrutiny in regard to money-making whether it is for party purposes or for personal aggrandisement.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

15 MAR 2001

Samata Party treasurer admits having fixed defence deals

'Armoured recovery vehicle deal was my first'

Who got what and got exposed

It's an important development: Vital

Excerpts of the conversation between Samata's National Treasurer R K Jain and the Tehelka team

R.K. JAIN: Armoured recovery vehicle was my first case, which I did for Slovakia.

TEHELKA: Okay.

R.K. JAIN: (This happened) when George was Defence Minister for the first time.

TEHELKA: Okay.

R.K. JAIN: Suresh Nanda approached me for armoured recovery vehicle. He was the agent for the Slovakian company.

TEHELKA: What was the product?

R.K. JAIN: Armoured recovery vehicle...worth Rs 250 crore...
TEHELKA: Okay.

R.K. JAIN: Nanda approached me...he said, "I will give you Rs 1 crore in advance...if they (the contenders) are disapproved, then you are my agent."

R.K. JAIN: You know I worked for your project initially here. I started with this project

called Air Jet Trainers.
TEHELKA: Okay.

R.K. JAIN: Air jet trainers. And you know there are three major manufacturers. Americans are also there, but since it is banned from America, they were not competing. The British Hawk, Alpha Jet from France and MAPO-MiG from Russia.

TEHELKA: Yeah.

R.K. JAIN: So the MiG people, approached me. I went to the boss. I said, "Look, sir, this is something..."

TEHELKA: Mr. Fernandes?

R.K. JAIN: Haan... This is a very big job, worth Rs 3,600 crore...and...if you bless me, then I'll take the agency from them and do it." He said, "Look, give me time. Let me check." He checked up and came back to me after two-three days. He said, "Mr. Jain, I have checked up, and I feel that they are going to stand the lowest.... They are already lowest in terms of price."

TEHELKA: Okay.

R.K. JAIN: There is a good

chance that the order will go to them. Catch hold of them.
TEHELKA: This is the MAPO-MiGs?
R.K. JAIN: MAPO-MiGs. You can tie-up with them.

R.K. JAIN: Then I went to the boss again. I spoke to MiG people. I said, "I can do it. He said, alright, but you have to get us introduced to George Fernandes. Fix up an appointment... and we will go and see. If you are able to do it, then you will be our representative in this particular deal."
TEHELKA: Yeah.

R.K. JAIN: I went to the boss again. I said, "Look, this is the problem." He said, "But they should trust you. You are a treasurer. What is the point of exposing me? Why do you want to expose me?" I said, "I am not exposing you because I am not asking for unofficial appointment. I am asking for an official appointment." He said, "All right".

R.K. JAIN: Then I spoke to

MiG people, I said, "Look, I want 10 per cent commission." The chairman said, "No, Mr. Jain, we can't give you more than seven per cent."
TEHELKA: Yeah, yeah.

R.K. JAIN: And then I said, "No, I can't do it for less than 10 per cent whether the deal is small or big because in this particular deal the PM is also going to be involved at one stage. It needs a Cabinet-approval. So...my party will expect at least three per cent. PM house will expect at least three per cent."
MiG chairman asked me to come to Russia to sign the agreement...I flew to Russia though I am not allowed to do so without Jayaji's permission.
TEHELKA: Okay

R.K. JAIN: I went to Jayaji and said, "Madam they are calling me to Moscow. She said, "No, no Mr. Jain.... People are keeping an eye on you." I said, "Unless I do the job they won't pay me party will say where is our commission." She said, alright go, go.

Bangaru Laxman, National President, BJP:
 Paid Rs 1 lakh.

Jaya Jaitly, Samata Party president:
 Paid Rs 2 lakh

Brig. Anil Sehgal, Director, Directorate General of Ordnance and Supply (DGOS):
 Paid Rs 40,000.

Sashi Menon, Senior Section Officer (DGOS), Ministry of Defence
 Paid Rs 52,000

Brigadier Iqbal Singh, Prospective Procurement Officer (PPO), Ordnance, Ministry of Defence:
 Paid Rs 50,000

Lieutenant Colonel Sayal (Retd), Defence middleman, formerly with the Directorate General of Ordnance and Supply:
 Paid Rs 80,000

Major General P S K Choudhary, Additional Director General, Weapons & Equipment:
 Given Rs 1 lakh and a gold

chain.

Major General S P Murgai (Retd), Additional Director General, Quality Assurance:
 Paid Rs 1.20 lakh.

Narendra Singh, Additional Financial Advisor, Ministry of Defence:
 Paid Rs 10,000

H C Pant, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Defence:
 Paid Rs 50,000.

Surendra Singh Sulekha,

Supplier of uniforms to the Ministry of Defence for the past 20 years:
 Paid Rs 1 lakh

L N Mehta, Additional Defence Secretary:
 Given a gold chain.

Raju Venkatesh:
 Paid Rs 10,000

Raghupati:
 Paid Rs 16,000

Suresh:
 Paid Rs 7,000

WHO IS RAKESH KUMAR JAIN?

A resident of New Friends Colony, Rakesh is the Samata Party's national treasurer. He was allegedly paid Rs 50,000 during the Tehelka operation. Rakesh belongs to the influential Jain family, which has several industries and export houses in the country. His brother's name had figured in the infamous Beef Tal-low scandal that rocked the nation many years ago. Another of his brothers, Mukesh Jain, was allegedly kidnapped and later committed suicide in the mid-90s. Jain has offices in Connaught Place and some other parts of Delhi and has essentially been a middleman. While his brothers have a flourishing business, a couple of his industries had to be closed down. He is considered to be close to Union Defence Minister George Fernandes and several other Samata Party leaders.

HT Correspondent
 New Delhi, March 13

CENTRAL VIGILANCE Commissioner N Vittal withheld detailed comment tonight on the Tehelka's video documentation of kickbacks in defence deals. But Vittal, who is already probing defence contracts signed since 1985, termed the expose as an "important development".

Talking to *Hindustan Times*, Vittal said the Commission would formally react after a detailed study of Tehelka's findings. Vittal said the CVC has been probing all such deals as per certain terms of reference laid down for the purpose.

He pointed out that the Commission had started inquiring into defence deals nearly a year ago during the course of which confidential files pertaining to certain contracts have been studied. A final report in this context is expected by March end.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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Charged opposition seeks explanation on videotapes

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: Charges of corruption in high places by a web portal touched off a political storm both inside and outside parliament on Tuesday.

Parliament House corridors were abuzz as word of the secretly-recorded videotapes did the rounds. Exultant opposition members, sensing blood, finally found themselves presented with an explosive issue with which to hound the Vajpayee government.

To begin with, charged opposition members paralysed proceedings in both houses, demanding an explanation from the government on the serious allegations levelled against senior politicians, including BJP president Bangaru Laxman and Samata Party president Jaya Jaitely, and asked the treasury to disprove these charges. Both houses had to be adjourned early, given the mood of the opposition.

The uproar witnessed in parliament, however, promises to be only the beginning of a stormy session ahead with opposition parties making it clear that they would not allow the two houses to function till the government comes out with a credible explanation. "The government must explain itself on what seems to be incontrovertible evidence of corruption," maintained Madhavrao Scindia, Congress deputy leader in the Lok Sabha, stating they would not allow any business to be transacted in parliament from Wednesday till the government is able to give a convincing reply.

While the screening of the tapes was still on in a city hotel, angry slogan-shouting opposition members, led by the Congress, stormed the well of the Lok Sabha, charging that the country's security had been compromised and demanded that Prime Minister Vajpayee make a statement.

Bangaru Laxman quits

The Times of India News Service and Agencies

NEW DELHI: Bharatiya Janata Party president Bangaru Laxman, alleged to have received money from a non-existent company for fixing a fictitious defence deal, resigned from his post on Tuesday night, according to party sources. He decided to tender his resignation after a discussion with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, the sources said. Mr Laxman is understood to have told the Prime Minister that he was willing to face any inquiry in the matter. Pending the inquiry, he has taken the decision, the sources said.

Earlier in the day, on the lawns behind his official residence in the capital's Kushak Road, a harassed-looking Mr Laxman admitted that he had accepted Rs 1 lakh, as alleged in a video recording by Tehelka.com, but claimed he had taken the money for his party.

Mr Laxman then said he had not spoken either to the Prime Minister, the home minister or any senior leader of his party. Asked if he would resign, he had then said, "Why should I resign? My conscience is clear. In any case, what is the credibility of that dotcom?"

"People often come to congratulate me on becoming party president. They bring sweets, money for party funds, small amounts. In this case also, I took the money and gave it to the treasurer," he said.

He said, "This (video) is part of a political conspiracy, a plot by the Congress. Otherwise, would they come in with hidden cameras if they did not have some other intention?"

But was it usual to take money from arms dealers for the party? "I don't know from where the defence deal comes in. It has nothing to do with a defence deal. They were traders and they tried to meet me thrice to congratulate me, and they said they wanted to contribute to party funds." If that was the case, why did he ask for the rest of the money in dollars? Mr Laxman, now looking even more uncomfortable, shot back: "What do you do with dollars?"

In Parliament, shortly after the news of the video detailing corruption in high places broke, BJP ministers, like Santosh Gangwar and Vidyasagar Rao, and party MPs, like V.K. Malhotra and R.C. Tomar, all made a beeline for the office of parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan. Finally, the usually voluble Mr Mahajan came out but brushed past journalists in an uncharacteristic hurry, saying he didn't know anything.

R.K. Gupta not a trustee: RSS

The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The RSS on Tuesday disputed Tehelka's claim that R.K. Gupta was a trustee of the RSS.

"The RSS is not a trust and hence we don't have any trustee. In the 1970s Mr Gupta was one of the contractors who built the office in Jhandewalan. Other than that, Mr Gupta is not linked to the RSS at all. He has never been an office-bearer of the RSS at any level," an RSS spokesman said. Shocked at the dotcom expose, the RSS was not willing to comment on the allegations that the BJP president had taken bribes.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

10 APR 2001

Significant extravaganza

BRIJESH D. JAYAL

Fleet reviews are part of the ceremonial tradition of navies across the globe. Traditionally, the Indian navy used to hold a review once during the tenure of the president who is the supreme commander of the armed forces, although none has been conducted since 1989. The eighth review recently concluded in Mumbai was special in more ways than one. It was the first international fleet review to be held in the sub-continent to mark the golden jubilee of the Indian republic and had as its theme "Building bridges of friendship". Of the 70 ships that took part, 25 were foreign warships belonging to navies of 19 countries and in all there were 30 foreign naval delegations to join the associated activities. One of these activities was a seminar on "Maritime power-challenges in the 21st century".

The fact that chiefs of many navies personally led their delegations adds weight to the view that in the maritime community, the event drew worldwide attention. Contrary to the official view that China withdrew because its ships were due to call later, chances are that China by its refusal was conveying its own concern on a future clash of maritime interests in the Indian Ocean. For obvious reasons, Pakistan was not invited.

From accounts in the media it is evident that the hard work put in by the Indian navy was duly rewarded by the wide international representation and the excellent organization of a major event such as this. Comments on the event, however, have varied widely. While some have dubbed the event as mere extravaganza, others have called it a diplomatic event shorn of military significance. There are those that have commented that the Indian navy has come of age and this was its way of flexing its maritime muscles and putting on show its power-projection capabilities.

Such diverse comments do not do justice either to the Indian navy or indeed to the foreign participants. Senior military brass, and more so at chiefs levels, do not have the luxury of time to spend days gracing military ceremonials in far off lands or seas. Indeed, exchange visits are selective and planned with meticulous care to derive maximum benefits. Undoubtedly, just beneath the surface of naval pomp and pageantry there was the far more subtle and strategic import of the event, that of India's maritime capability, intentions and future direction.

Foreign delegations would have been keenly interested in understanding the Indian navy's perception of its role and capabilities to determine how this would have an impact on the interests or responses of their re-

The author is a retired air marshal of the Indian air force

spective navies and governments. The Indian navy, on the other hand, was interested not only in externally showcasing its own hardware and capabilities for due deterrent or co-operative efforts on the international seas, but also to internally highlight its prolonged neglect at the hands of successive governments.

Why, one could ask, this sudden interest in Indian maritime capability and potential? In fairness to the Indian navy this has been its long-standing demand.



"Maritime dimensions of India's security" in early January. The foundation is an organization of naval officers established for the revival of maritime interest in the country and to generate awareness of the role and importance of the navy. The following quote from the defence minister's inaugural address at the seminar must therefore have been music to the organizer's ears. "India's sea borders are an open invitation to subvert India's security. The national

It is an undeniable fact that India has a coastline of 7,600 kilometres, an exclusive economic zone covering 3 million square km within which lie vast commercial assets like oil, fisheries and minerals and island territories both in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. Vast amount of trade passes through searoutes in India's maritime backyard introducing problems of piracy, illegal arms and drug trafficking and the very security of these lanes.

Historically, had India been a strong maritime power, European countries would not have found it easy to enter India and later colonize other littoral states. Viewed in this background, K.M. Pannikar's observation that "whoever controls the Indian Ocean controls India" merits attention by national security planners. Not surprisingly, there are countries that prefer not to call the Indian Ocean by this name because of its Indian connotation!

As a prelude to the IFR, the Navy Foundation organized a seminar titled

“The fleet review signals India's maritime capability, intentions and future direction”

leadership in the country has shown callous indifference to the issue in the past. It is a shocking revelation that threats from the seas had not figured in the nation's leadership even once in the 50 years of our freedom... While the army and air force had received some degree of national attention, the navy's profile was beyond the imagination of the people. The navy has always got the 'Cinderella treatment'."

In his book, *Defending India*, published in 1999, the then deputy chairman, planning commission, and now the foreign minister, Jaswant Singh, had said, "Today, the Indian navy faces a crisis in terms of its rapidly declining force

levels, lack of sufficient funding and limited warship construction programmes, all of which directly affect its operational preparedness".

Navies and perceptive security planners of the world, many of whom were present during the IFR, are not oblivious to the maritime challenges facing India and the continued neglect of both the Indian navy and the poor Indian maritime infrastructure of ports and shipbuilding. What interests them is how Indian security planners propose to respond to these challenges, because no matter whether these responses are positive or negative, they will have a corresponding impact on their own maritime interests and responsibilities.

It is fortunate for the future of our maritime interests that two senior cabinet ministers, both members of the cabinet committee on security and the national security council (which also seems to have been put in cold storage), have highlighted the neglect of the Indian navy in terms of force levels, modernization and budgetary support. But in all fairness to previous governments, the neglect has not been due to what one commentator has described as the unfamiliarity of post-independence north Indian policy-makers with India's sea frontiers. On the contrary, it has been the perennial difficulty of sharing the limited affordable defence budget. With border disputes with both Pakistan and China, it has been expedient for the government of the day to give priority to the army and the air force.

The challenge dictated by demands of cost-effective defence is for Indian security planners to arrive at an integrated national security policy from which should flow integrated service doctrines, roles and missions. In the absence of such a policy and the corresponding institution of joint defence staff headquarters, the three services plan threats, responses and make their re-equipment plans largely in isolation. By attempting to prepare for force projection, sea control and sea denial within a limited defence budget, the Indian navy can only spread its resources too thin. The situation with the other two services is no different.

Far from the shores of Mumbai, if the message of the IFR percolating to security planners in Delhi is that with our present archaic higher defence organization and absence of integrated defence planning, there will continue to be Kargils and the Cinderella treatment meted out to one or the other service, then the IFR would have served the cause of national security. Foreign delegations compiling debriefs for their own security planners would no doubt reflect on these structural weaknesses before showering praise on the Indian navy's pageantry and organization.

THE TELEGRAPH

13 MAR 2001

George is a dove in Hawks' clothes, AJT deal may cost Rs 1,600 cr more

Continued from Page 1
 market. India is negotiating the outright purchase of 24 trainers and 42 are to be manufactured in collaboration with Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. Thus, if the unit price of \$15 million of the contemporary options, which India is ignoring, is taken into account, the UK deal, at the unit rate of \$6 million more, is dearer by \$396 million (Rs 1,617 crores). If the Australian price be the benchmark, then, by paying \$5 million more per trainer, India will end up paying \$330 million (Rs 1,551 crores) more for the 66 AJTs. The South African transaction has been mired in controversy. Signed by British Prime Minister Tony Blair, the contract has been taken up for scrutiny by the South African auditor-general's office last year after there were allegations that bribes had been paid to clinch the £3-billion defence deal. The Indian AJT deal,

too, has been under audit scrutiny in the past. Initiated as an "urgent requirement" in 1984, the first tender, floated in 1986, ran into audit objections because of the attempt to push through a single-vendor deal by negotiating only with the British firm.
 To circumvent this IAF negotiators invited bids from the French-German Dassault-Dormier collaboration Alphajet as well in 1986. The fact that the production line of this platform was being wound up in 1986 was ignored.
 There is a strange nexus between the AJT negotiations and the deal for buying 10 Mirages from France, concluded on September 19, 2000. Dassault, the manufacturer of Mirage, blinking at the stoppage of Alphajet production by their joint venture with Dormier, continued to play ball and thus facilitated the circumventing of the audit objection against

dealing with a single vendor.
 India has recently planned to float tenders for the 155 mm howitzer for the Army. (The 15-year collaboration with Bofors expires on March 24, 2001.) Nine firms round the world have been approached for negotiations of this tender. Strangely, in the case of the AJT, apart from Alphajet and Hawk, no other manufacturer has been approached though a number of them have sent written requests for discussions. The options in the market, available at \$15 million to \$16 million per unit, are:
 ■ Russian Mikoyan MiG-AT, a joint collaboration between MiG & French firms Sncema & Sextant (aircraft under development, delivery promised in 18 months).
 ■ Italian Aermacchi MB-339, under production, in service with the Italian Air Force. Immediate delivery of train-

ers on loan part of offer.
 ■ Italian Aermacchi M-346, originally a joint venture with Russian manufacturers Yakovlev and Sokol. Named Yak/Acm-130 (now fully Italian venture) and being projected as a future trainer for the Russian Air Force.
 ■ Brazilian Embraer AMX-T, which recently outbid the Hawk in a deal with the Venezuelan Air Force (also available are AMX fighters).
 ■ Czech Aero Vodochody L159 (company recently bought by Boeing).
 ■ US F-16s, lying cocooned in moisture-free conditions in Arizona's Mojave desert. These and the Czech L159 could be available conditional to the lifting of sanctions by the US. Apart from being a virtual single-vendor deal, the negotiations with BAE Systems have been proceeding at a time when the British media has been flooded with

reports about layoffs and closure of production lines in the BAE plant at Warton, near Preston, and Lancashire and at Brough, East Yorkshire.
 Apart from all this, there is a perception in the arms bazaar that a Bofors-related dealer based in London is playing a proactive role in the AJT deal as well. The connections of this dealer with the British establishment have been established beyond reasonable doubt in the recent past. The keenness of the British manufacturers to sell the Hawk AJT was all too evident when defence minister George Fernandes went to London last summer. On June 15, 2000, at a dinner hosted for him at the Portland Hotel, Mr Fernandes sat flanked by Sir Richard Evans and by BAE top brass John Weston and Sir Charles Maccfield. However, wary of the role of the Bofors-related arms dealers, Mr Fernandes did

not make any commitment.
 There is an urgency in finalising the AJT deal as a number of young pilots of the IAF have lost their lives in accidents due to the lack of a proper AJT in the fleet. The request for proposals have been revised but queries have been restricted to two vendors — BAE, whose Hawk is near the end of its marketable life, and the manufacturers of Alphajet, who have wound up their production line.
 On August 8, 2000, after the 50th MiG crash, senior parliamentarian and former Air Force pilot Suresh Kalmadi had wryly asked Mr Fernandes: "How many more pilots have to die?" The reply was that a decision was being taken on the deal in the "next few weeks." A few days later, Air Chief Marshal A. Y. Tipnis set the deadline of October 8, Air Force Day. The deadline has been

crossed many times thereafter. Due to some inexplicable reason, the IAF is unable to finalise the contract. As matters have been delayed over 15 years it may be worthwhile to review the negotiations and ensure that India does not end up paying Rs 1,600 crores more for obsolete equipment.
 Participating in Rajya Sabha Question Hour on August 9, 2000, speaking soon after Mr Kalmadi, Mr Sanjay Nirupam, quoting a CAG report, had said about the Sukhoi deal: "The manufacturer supplied old, used and unserviceable equipment."
 Despite Mr Kalmadi and Mr Nirupam's caution and the CAG's comment, the Mirage deal concluded in 2000 and the AJT negotiations seem to be proceeding with alacrity, ignoring norms and putting an additional burden on the exchequer.

THE ASIAN AGE
 13 MAR 2001

INVESTIGATION**AJT deal may cost
Rs 1,600 cr more****George
is a dove
in Hawks'
clothes**BY SHUBHABRATA
BHATTACHARYA

New Delhi, March 12: In opting for the BAe Systems' UK-produced Hawk 100 as the choice for the Indian Air Force's advance jet trainer, the National Democratic Alliance government is not only choosing 1970s-vintage technology while ignoring six modern variants available in Europe and in the Americas, but may end up paying over Rs 1,600 crores more.

The AJTs are needed urgently. The increasing number of accidents in the IAF have made the long delay in finalising the deal akin to a case of criminal neglect. The first request for proposal was floated by Air Headquarters way back in 1986. However, due to initial audit objections and later dilly-dallying by decision-makers, the acquisition process has been dragging on. The end result of this long-drawn tender is not cost saving but an overrun amounting to an astronomical sum. The arms bazaar is also abuzz with the possible role of a Bofors-related arms agent being active in pushing this overpriced contract from London.

Let the facts speak: South Africa bought BAe Hawks last year and Australia recently opted for a later version, Hawk-127. The price being negotiated in the Indian contract for Hawk 100, which is near the end of its marketable life, is higher than what the UK firm earned from these deals. The South Africans paid an equivalent of \$17.64 million per aircraft. The programme cost for the Royal Australian Air Force worked out to \$16 million per unit (fly-away cost minus equipment: \$10.5 million). The unit cost projected for the Hawk AJT to India is \$21 million. Thus India may end up paying \$5 million per unit more than Australia; \$3.36 million more than South Africa. This apart, modern versions of AJTs are available from Russia, Czech Republic, Italy and Brazil — and once sanctions are lifted, from the US — which cost in the vicinity of \$15 million to \$16 million per unit. US F16s, once offered on lease by a section of the Clinton administration, too may be negotiable in the near future. These too cost around \$16 million apiece.

By this reckoning as well, the BAe Systems unit price of \$21 million is higher by \$5 million to \$6 million than other options in the

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THE ASIAN AGE

13 MAR 2001

George Fernandes chases alibi to save himself from Mirage

Continued from Page 1

Mirage 2000-H/TH were mothballed and were lying in "cocoon" when the IAF projected a requirement in 1995 for "attrition aircraft" to refurbish its Mirage fleet, a squadron which had lost only three of the 49 platforms acquired under the original 1982 deal.

Meanwhile, manufacture of the Mirage 2000-H version was being phased out by Dassault. Using the escalation formula of the 1982 deal, the French placed the price of 10 "new" aircraft in July 1995 at 2,950 million francs.

(To retain continuity with the original deal, the aircraft were referred to as "10 additional Mirage H/TH.") The document signed on September 19, 2000, is therefore called "Additional Agreement No. 6.")

In September 1998, the French made a "best and final offer" of 2,700 million francs. In this and the "ultimate proposal" for the same sum made in August 1999, the paper submitted by Dassault Aviation read: "Proposal no longer valid: No longer feasible due to obsolescence of manufacture."

Thus these "old but never used"

Thus, by Dassault's own admission, the production line for Mirage H/TH had gone dry. The "ultimate proposal" based on "economic conditions" of 01/99, offered a few additional firmaments and placed the package at 2,182 million francs.

Later, in March 2000, negotiating with Mr Kanwal Sibal, India's ambassador in Paris, Dassault offered a rebate of 1.15 per cent.

An additional 0.5 per cent rebate was offered in a letter to Mr S.K. Mishra, additional secretary in the defence ministry, thus bringing the negotiated package to 2,146 million francs.

In their respective communications to Mr Sibal and Mr Mishra, Mr Pierre Chouzenoux, senior executive vice-president of Dassault, and Mr J.P.H.P. Chabriot, vice-president, Asia Military Sales, indicated that the package included 84 line replaceable units, which were described as "already manufactured but never-used items."

Thus, while indicating "obsolescence of manufacture" and offering "already

manufactured but never-used items," the secondhand aspect of the offer was clearly not hidden by the French. Yet defence ministry officers had briefed Mr Fernandes that the 10 aircraft were "new."

Preoccupied as he is with firefighting within his Samata Party and in the NDA, apart from dealing with Bihar-related developments involving fellow Cabinet minister Ram Vilas Paswan on one hand and RID-supremo Laloo Prasad Yadav in the Opposition, the defence minister could perhaps not verify all the details and chose to rely on official briefings before he spoke in the Rajya Sabha on November 29, 2000.

Summary of the Mirage scam, which calls for parliamentary scrutiny
On September 19, 2000, India signed a deal worth 2,146 million French franc for 10 second-hand Mirage 2000-H/TH aircraft. The weighted average unit price worked out at 214 million FF, as against the offer of 122 million FF made in 1992.

In 1992, spares were offered free. In

2000 the French put a fee of 416 million FF for the package, which included "already manufactured but never-used items."

Arms bazar sources say that a discount of 40 per cent asked for by some Indian officials in the price negotiation committee was fully justified because of the Jordanian tinge. Instead of getting this discount, India ended up paying almost 75 per cent more than the price offered for the "Jordanian Mirage 2000s" to Mr Sharad Pawar in 1991. The extra 926 million francs paid, at the prevailing official exchange rate of 0.68, work out to an additional burden of Rs 630 crores on the Indian exchequer.

The Cabinet Secretary, Mr T.R. Prasad, who was defence secretary while the negotiations were on, had taken the abundant caution of asking for a bank guarantee before approving the first tranche of payment. No bank guarantee was forthcoming from the manufacturers. As diplomatic channels had also been activated, the French government took the extraordinary step of pro-

viding a "Sovereign French State Guarantee."

Around that time ambassador Kanwal Sibal was being mentioned in dispatches as the possible next foreign secretary of India. Thus arrangements worked out by the embassy in Paris carried extra weight in New Delhi's corridors of power.

Market sources say that while a bank guarantee is enforceable, there is no precedent of enforcing a "sovereign state guarantee" in a commercial deal in the annals of public international law.

In any case, the deal with a commercial firm abroad should fall in the realm of private international law — thus making the French guarantee indeed unique.

A reason for Mr Prasad insisting on guarantees could have been that Serge Dassault was about to step down from the chairmanship of Dassault Aviation, a firm founded by his father, Marcel Dassault, and instead of Olive Dassault being his successor, the mantle was passing on to Charles Edilston.

The Dassault family stake in the firm is

being diluted and thus the change of guard. In the meantime, commitments made by Serge and Olive Dassault to consultants (agents?) have not been honoured.

Thence the cause of action by Keyser Inc. in the Paris Commercial Tribunal. Sources say that Keyser Inc. is not the only party feeling disgruntled with the deal after it has been signed; that there are others who were forgotten after the ink dried on the agreement.

The following need to be probed:

■ Did India pay Rs 630 crores more for the 10 aircraft?

■ Were these aircraft and the spares paid for by India "new"?

■ Was there a role played by an agent (or agents) in a deal which, as per Indian stipulation, has to be bereft of commission payments?

■ Was the office of the defence minister kept fully informed about the transaction?

■ **TOMORROW: The AJT rip-off**

THE ASIAN AGE

12 MAR 2001

George chases alibi to save himself from Mirage

BY SHUBHABRATA BHATTACHARYA

New Delhi, March 11: Defence minister George Fernandes is understood to have made discreet enquiries from senior officers about the antiquity of the 10 Mirage-2000-H/TH aircraft for which a deal was signed with France on September 19 last year.

Arms bazar sources say that the minister, aghast over reports that the aircraft were secondhand, is also taking a close look at the negotiations for the acquisition of the Advanced Jet Trainer for the Indian

Air Force which are now going on with BAe Systems of Britain.

The reason for the defence minister pushing the caution button is that the negotiations for the AJT, like the Mirage, are not restricted to the defence ministry and officers of the armed forces. Diplomatic channels too have been activated, thus involving personnel over whom Mr Fernandes may not have any administrative control.

It is believed in knowledgeable circles that while India could have effected savings to the tune of Rs 630 crores in the Mirage deal, it may

end up paying over Rs 1,600 crores more for the BAe Hawks, which, though newly manufactured, will be equipment based on 1975-vintage technology, acquired on a virtual single-vendor tender.

Thus, while there is talk of a Vision 2020 for the armed forces, India may end up paying over Rs 2,230 crores more for acquiring for the IAF platforms of 1970s and '80s technology. After acquiring the non-existent Su-30s from Russia, these two deals have made India a laughingstock in the international arms bazar.

Mr Fernandes' query emanated in the aftermath of a report in this newspaper on February 26 that a Panamanian-registered firm, Keyser Inc., had filed a suit in the Commercial Tribunal of Paris seeking payment from Dassault Aviation for the services rendered by it in clinching the Indian deal. This development threw up two startling facts — one, that agency commissions had been promised in the transaction; and, two, that among the services for which Keyser Inc. was asking to be paid was firefighting to stave off the allegations about

the 10 Mirages being "second-hand."

The Keyser complaint could not be taken up on the assigned date, February 28, as the French tribunal was hit by a strike. The matter may come up now only after March 27, according to sources in Paris.

A factor necessitating Mr Fernandes' query, apart from probability, could be the fact that on the basis of information supplied by his officers, the defence minister had told the Rajya Sabha during question hour on November 29, 2000 that the 10 Mirages were "new."

The projection for additional Mirage aircraft was made in 1995, after it was widely known that Jordan had refused to go ahead with a deal with the French due to financial problems and the resultant pressure from the World Bank.

Ten Mirage-2000 H/TH were offered to the then defence minister, Mr Sharad Pawar, by General Thiery, sales director of Sncma, the manufacturer of engines for French military aircraft, in late 1991 for a total cost of 1,220 million French francs. This offer was confirmed in a

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THE ASIAN AGE

12 MAR 2001

Beijing reacts cautiously to India's Agni capability

BEIJING: China has reacted cautiously to India's decision to induct Intermediate Range Ballistic Missile (IRBM) Agni-II while expressing Beijing's concerns on an arms race in South Asia.

"China as well as the whole international community hopes to maintain peace and stability in South Asia," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said.

"We do not wish to see any kind of arms race in this region," Mr Zhu said when asked to comment on India's decision to deploy the Agni missile. Mr Zhu declined to comment when asked whether China was concerned with the induction of Agni-II as the IRBM was capable of striking many Chinese cities.

Defence minister George Fernandes told the Rajya Sabha on Wednesday that the government has decided to induct the AGNI-II.

The Agni-II IRBM had achieved operationalisation stage with its successful second test on January 17, the same day when senior Chinese leader Li Peng concluded his official goodwill visit to India.

Meanwhile, Chinese president Jiang Zemin has urged the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) to speed up defence combat effectiveness under high-tech conditions.

Mr Jiang, who is also the general secretary of the ruling communist party, made the remarks on Friday at a panel discussion of PLA deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC), China's parliament, which is in session here. The Chinese president lauded the PLA for its excellent performance in major military exercises, flood relief and the assumption of defence responsibilities in Hong Kong and Macao.

He called on the 2.5 million-strong PLA to make new contributions to China's modernisation during the 10th five-year plan period from 2001 to 2005. "The PLA must have a clear understanding of its historic mission in safeguarding national security, unity and social stability," Mr Jiang said.

At the same time, he asked the officers and soldiers of the PLA to subject themselves to the absolute leadership of the communist party and speed up military modernisation.

To accelerate the pace of military modernisation, Mr Jiang said the PLA must give priority to developing defence technologies. "The enhancement of the PLA's combat effectiveness should rely mainly on progresses in science and technology," he said.

China hiked its defence spending this year by 17.7 per cent over last year to nearly US\$17 billion citing "drastic changes" in the military situation in the world. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

12 MAR 2001

HPD-13

GoM for revamping defence manag

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, FEB.26. The Group of Ministers (GoM) — headed by the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, — today submitted to the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, its recommendations for revamping the national security establishment.

The 137-page report was presented by an inter-ministerial group which also included the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, and the Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha. The GoM was set up following the recommendations of the Kargil Review Committee. According to highly placed sources, the GoM has made sweeping recommendations to revamp the defence management, the national intelligence architecture, internal security and border management.

It has approved the creation of the post of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and has recommended the formation of an integrated National Intelligence Board, headed by the National Security Adviser. The CDS will serve as the "single point" military adviser to the Government. He will also command the country's nuclear forces.

The CDS will be the tri-service head of the nuclear forces which include delivery systems based on land, air and the sea. This decision dovetails with the draft nuclear doctrine which has recommended the creation of a



The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, with the report on the national security system, presented to him by the Union Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, the Defence Minister, Mr. George Fernandes, and the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, at Parliament House in New Delhi on Monday. — Photo: S. Arneja

"minimum" but credible nuclear triad based on land, sea and air.

The CDS will be assisted by a tri-service Vice-Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS). The office of the VCDS will become the hub which will undertake studies related to short and long term threat perceptions and recommend relevant integrated plans accordingly. The existing Defence Planning Staff (DPS) is expected to merge with the VCDS's office.

Sources pointed out that the concept of "theater commands"

has not found favour with the GoM. As a result, the conventional forces will be headed by the Chiefs of the Army, Air Force and the Navy. Consequently, the relevance of the three service chiefs is unlikely to be undermined by the new recommendations. According to analysts, the concept of theater commands has worked well for countries with "global responsibilities" such as the United States. In such cases, theater commands headed by powerful theater commanders are created

for various regional trouble spots. Such conditions, however do not apply to India.

The GoM is understood to have favoured the creation of a tri-service Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA). The DIA will be headed by the three star General or his equivalent in the other two services. It will also receive surveillance data from National Technical Means such as satellites. The responsibilities of the DIA, according to sources, will go beyond the services. It will be rep-

THE HINDU

27 FEB 2001

Security forces debating Kashmir ceasefire

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, MARCH 6. The recent attacks by the Lashkar-e-Taiba have resulted in a fresh debate within the armed forces which continue to remain one of the principle advocates of the Kashmir ceasefire.

According to highly-placed sources in the Government, the attacks have been executed after detailed planning. These attacks claimed the life of a Colonel and left a Brigadier injured. Fifteen Jammu and Kashmir policemen lost their lives while a battalion headquarters is reported to have been targeted.

The systematic attacks, mostly in the area under the Nagrota-based XVI corps, have galvanised a new round of internal debate on the ceasefire initiative. A senior Lieutenant General of the Army visited Nagrota late last month and met the corps commander, Lt. Gen. A.S Khanna, and the troops operating in the area. During his visit, a review of tactics for handling the ground situation was stressed.

The Army, while backing the three-month extension of the ceasefire had directed its troops to selectively target the Lashkar-e-Taiba on the basis of hard intelligence, while generally adopting a 'softer' disposition towards the local Kashmiri militants.

The visiting General's less-than-positive observations of the ground situation in the

Poonch-Rajouri area have already been conveyed at the highest level in the Government.

Sources pointed out that the collation of recent inputs show that infiltrations in the Poonch-Rajouri belt have risen during the last month. Another trend which has been observed is that the militants are targeting "informers" to throttle the flow of credible intelligence.

According to sources, while the ceasefire has resulted in a drop in firing along the Line of Control (LoC) as well as the Siachen glacier area, a matching political initiative to take advantage of the military restraint is yet to show up.

The absence of political momentum has had two key implications. First, the pressure on the security forces to hold fire in the wake of provocations has been mounting. Second, in the absence of tangible political package, the positive disposition of the local population towards the ceasefire cannot be taken for granted.

Already, the killing of Mr. Jalil Ahmad, who was not a 'jehadi' but belonged to the local Jammu and Kashmiri Liberation Front, by the Special Operations Group of the Jammu and Kashmir Police has soured the "atmospherics" at the grassroot-level. The insurgents have taken advantage of this and have projected the killing of 15 policemen belonging to the Jammu and Kashmir police as a "legitimate act of revenge".

THE HINDU

GoM for revamping defence management

By Atul Arneja

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It has approved the creation of the post of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and has recommended the formation of an integrated National Intelligence Board, headed by the National Security Adviser. The CDS will serve as the "single point" military adviser to the Government. He will also command the country's nuclear forces.

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"minimum" but credible nuclear triad based on land, sea and air. The CDS will be assisted by a tri-service Vice-Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS). The office of the VCDS will become the hub which will undertake studies related to short and long term threat perceptions and recommend relevant integrated plans accordingly. The existing Defence Planning Staff (DPS) is expected to merge with the VCDS's office. Sources pointed out that the concept of "theater commands"

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resented on the National Intelligence Board (NIB). The Chiefs of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) and the Intelligence Bureau (IB) Chief will be its key members. Inputs from the paramilitary forces will also go into providing "integrated" intelligence to the NIB.

With a view to systematise border management, the GoM is understood to have recommended that the army should be the overall incharge of managing "disputed" borders. A border management force which will include the Border Security Force (BSF) and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) is likely to form the core of this force will be deployed along "settled" borders.

In revamping the internal security set up, the GoM is has earmarked the Rashtriya Rifles and the Central Reserve Police Force for this task. The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) is also expected to acquire a higher profile under the new set up.

The GoM has made its recommendations on the basis of the advice rendered by four task forces. While the task force on higher defence management was headed by the former Minister of State for Defence, Mr. Arun Singh, the Jammu and Kashmir Governor, Mr. G. C. Saxena, headed the committee on intelligence. The former Defence Secretary, Mr. N. Vohra, presided over the group on internal security and the task force on border management was chaired by the former Home Secretary, Mr. Madhav Godbole.

Advani shuts Hurriyat out of truce talks

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, March 7: Emboldened by muted criticism from the Opposition, L.K. Advani today had no hesitation in admitting in the Rajya Sabha that the ceasefire had not really checked the killings in Jammu and Kashmir.

The home minister said the government had plans to hold talks with militant groups and, without going into details, dropped enough hints that the All-Party Hurriyat Conference was still part of its agenda.

Advani took advantage of the fact that the proposal to extend the

truce had earlier been ratified in all-party meeting. He made it clear that the Centre had done nothing that was not discussed with Opposition parties.

Even its ally, the Shiv Sena, which has a known critical standpoint on the ceasefire, lacked punch as Sena MP Sanjay Nirupam did not try to put the government on the mat.

The home minister, who did not have to broach the embarrassing subject of lack of intelligence inputs, blamed Pakistan for sponsoring cross-border terrorism.

"We want Pakistan to exert pressure on militant groups to stop the sponsorship of terrorism in

Kashmir," he said.

Advani ruled out the possibility of any tripartite talks to end the violence. He insisted that the Hurriyat could at best play the role of a broker and that Pakistan and India — if and when they sat down for dialogue — would only face each other across the table.

Putting forward his arguments for the ceasefire, Advani said that during the truce period, militant raids may not have decreased but there had been hardly any shelling across the international border and the Line of Control.

When asked whether international considerations had out-

weighed other factors, he parried the question.

The home minister argued that before each declaration of ceasefire, views of the military establishment had been both sought and carefully considered. The happiness or the unhappiness of the army had been taken into account before going ahead with the ceasefire strategy, he maintained.

Besides, the army still retained its powers to go out and strike at targets if they feared being attacked. Advani said, adding that it was not as if the army had been disarmed.

With House members agreeing across the political spectrum that

Kashmiris themselves had welcomed the ceasefire policy, Advani said the people of the state were hardly involved in the current military operations. It was the mercenaries who were behind the recent raids and planning and executing them, he said.

The home minister said as many as 370 incidents had taken place this year which had resulted in the death of 38 security force personnel, 74 civilians and 78 militants.

In 169 incidents of militant attacks in February, as many as 20 security force personnel, 50 civilians and 54 militants were killed, he said.

THE TELEGRAPH

- 8 MAR 2001

Army rethink on Kashmir ceasefire

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, March 6

THE SUDDEN spurt in militant attacks on security forces in Jammu and Kashmir this month has set off a debate within the military on the ceasefire.

Formation commanders have questioned the merits of the ceasefire - or, non-initiation of combat operations option - forcing the Army top brass to weigh it against the option of

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The attack on Brig Bikram Singh and Col JP Janu in Anantnag, the killing of 17 police personnel in Rajouri and the attacks on Rashtriya Rifles camps in Baramulla and Poonch this month show that the militants have been able to mount planned and coordinated operations against the security forces. They also prove that the militants' morale is high and, having infiltrated in large numbers, they can now strike audaciously and at will.

The Anantnag attack seemed to show up the holes in security, for the two officers were shot at by a terrorist disguised as a beggar. Col Janu fell dead, riddled by seven bullets, while Brig Singh, who took four, was grievously injured. The attacker had managed to sneak close to the road though the area had been screened by road-opening teams.

Since the ceasefire was announced, the security forces have stopped cordon-and-search operations and the frisking of civilians in public. Had the "beggar" been searched for a weapon, perhaps Col Janu would be alive.

The other nagging worry is the systematic killing of the security forces' informers. The Army claims that it has been able to strengthen its surveillance grid, but Intelligence inputs don't bear this out.

The formation commanders in J&K have reportedly conveyed to the Army top brass that the ceasefire process could go awry if immediate steps are not taken to counter the jihadi agenda. No militant group comes to the negotiating table unless it is under pressure, they argued.

Fidayeen attack repulsed

THE ARMY repulsed an attack on its camp by a suicide squad, killing two Lashker-e-Tayyeba militants at Surankote in Poonch on Tuesday, while ultras fired rockets at an administrative base in Udhampur. Three foreign mercenaries attacked the camp at Jaran Wali Gali around 1.30 am. In the shootout, a Fidayeen militant was killed while another militant was also gunned down.

PTI, Jammu

initiating counter-moves against the terrorists on the ground. One such review of the Kashmir situation took place in South Block on Monday.

Some senior officers feel the Army should offer a ceasefire only to those interested in promoting peace in Jammu and Kashmir. As for jihadi groups such as the Lashkar-e-Tayyeba, Harkat-ul-Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Mohammed, the troops should resume operations against them.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

- 7 MAR 2001

Bleach threatens hunger strike



PETER BLEACH

Sailen Sil
Kolkata, March 5

BRITISH NATIONAL Peter Bleach, serving a life sentence in the Purulia arms drop case, has threatened to go on an indefinite hunger strike if the British Government fails to secure his release on remission within the next two weeks.

Bleach said, "Bernie Andrews of the British Deputy High Commission in Kolkata visited jail on February 24 last and was unable to give me any convincing or credible assurance that British diplomats in Delhi would pursue my case or press Foreign Secretary Robin Cook's request to the

Indian Government for his release".

Cook wrote to the Indian Government on December 4 asking them to treat Bleach on par with the Russian crew and release him. "But there has been no response from the Indian authorities whatsoever, not even an acknowledgement came as yet," Bleach said in a hand-written statement from his prison cell on March 3.

"Under Article 14 of the Constitution of India, as read with Article 21, my continued detention in jail is discriminatory and became illegal the moment the Russian crew were released," Bleach said adding, "I have now

been in jail for more than seven months for no reason other than the fact that I am a British citizen".

Bleach said, "Therefore, I found that I had no alternative but to inform Mr Andrews that if the British authorities fail to secure my release on remission in accordance with Mr Cook's request within two weeks, I shall observe indefinite hunger strike". Bleach and five Russian crew were arrested from Sahar International Airport, Mumbai, on December 22, 1995 on the charge of dropping a huge cache of arms and ammunition at seven villages of Purulia district on December 17 in the same year.

Later, Anandamargi, Vinoy Singh, was also arrested on the same charges.

After a trial of over two years, Bleach and five Russian crew were sentenced to life imprisonment by a city court. But Singh was acquitted for lack of evidence on the charges against him. Bleach and the Russian crew had moved the court challenging their sentence. By the middle of 2000, the sentence of Russian crew were, however, remitted by President K R Narayanan following a request from his Russian counterpart, V V Putin. The revision petition of Bleach is pending before the court.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

16 MAR 2002

HD. 13
6/3 Akash test
9/3/01
put off

NEW DELHI, MARCH 5. The crucial serial test of the indigenously-built medium range surface-to-air missile, Akash, could not be held in Balasore today because of bad weather, Defence sources here said. The multi-target missile was last test fired on March 2 from Chandipur-on-sea and was due for its last tests before the serial production begins. But because of rain in the test range area, it was put off today, the sources said. — UNI

THE HINDU

- 6 MAR 2001

Developing the LCA

By S. R. Valluri

FIGHTER AIRCRAFT such as the LCA (light combat aircraft) are to be designed to respond to the specific needs of the Air Force, normally expressed as Air Staff Requirements (ASR). The primary requirements are to carry a defined war load into enemy territory to a stipulated distance and to have the ability to engage the enemy in combat. The ASR defines some crucial manoeuvrability parameters. First is the time it takes for our aircraft to accelerate from 0.8 to 1.2 Mach — i.e. from about 900 Km/h to about 1400 Km/h — at a particular altitude. The shorter this time is, the more quickly it can approach the enemy aircraft. Second is the rate of turn. For example, the 1950 Vintage MIG-21 has a rate of turn of about 9 degrees per second. It will take about 40 seconds for it to make a full turn. This is too slow nowadays. Third is the rate of climb. Without a high rate of climb, the aircraft cannot engage the enemy flying at high altitudes.

Though the first flight of the LCA this January is a giant step for the HAL/Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and some R&D labs, it is but a small step towards self-reliance. Even, if the Air Force eventually decides not to induct the LCA for squadron service because of the inordinate delays, the Government should still support these organisations to achieve the objective of meeting the ASR. If not, the Rs. 3,000 crores that has apparently been spent so far will end up as wasteful expenditure. The ASR are the result of the Air Force assessment of potential threat scenarios at the time the LCA is expected to enter into service. If the aircraft is too long delayed in its development, it becomes a questionable proposition for the Air Force to clear the LCA for production. The LCA was cleared by the Government in July 1983 with expectation that its first flight would be in 1991, and subsequently over a three-year period six LCAs would be put through test flights to establish the ability to respond fully to the ASR. Production was to start around 1994-95. As it turned out, there has already been a ten-year delay.

At the first meeting of the ADA general body in July 1984, presided over by the then Defence Minister, Mr. P. V. Narasim-

ha Rao, Mr. V. P. Singh, then Finance Minister, wanted to know the estimated cost of development of the LCA. I stated that if the first flight took place by 1991 as planned, the actual cash outflow would be Rs. 1,250 crores and that every year of delay would entail an additional expenditure of Rs. 150 crores to Rs. 175 crores. The cost over-run due to the ten-year delay is thus Rs. 175 crores a year so far. At least four years of this delay could be attributed to the decision of the then Scientific Adviser to ease out the late Raj Mahindra. His crime was that his wife was British and not an Italian. At that time, he was the only person with hands-on experience in the design of any jet aircraft. I informed Mr.

The LCA project paid a heavy price, by way of inordinate delays and escalating costs, for the lack of vision of policy-makers.

Narasimha Rao that no serious harm would result if I left the position of DGA-DA, but if Mr. Mahindra was eased out, it would have serious repercussions. There was no other person down the line who had hands-on experience to take over the responsibility without loss of time. I estimate that the loss to the nation resulting from this unfortunate decision to be at least Rs. 700 crores. Errors in judgment at that level do not come cheap. While seeking Mahindra's resignation as desired by the Scientific Adviser, as a matter of principle, I too resigned.

The feasibility study phase saw some surprising developments. I must first place on record the unstinted support given by Air Chief Marshal J. Lauri, then Chief of the Air Staff, to the LCA programme. Without his visionary support, the project would have been a non-starter. Sanction of the LCA programme found the following facts. The HAL management had let the Design Bureau get gradually decommitted over the years. Instead of having about 1000 engineers and designers typical of such institutions, it had only about 400, of which about 150 have to be written off. HAL did not have any corporate R&D worth speaking. It was comfortable with licensed production. What saved the sit-

uation was that due to the innumerable feasibility studies taken up over the years to respond to the multitude of ASR released over the years by the Air Force, the Design Bureau continued to keep abreast of the conceptual designs of advanced technology aircraft. We found this when we compared our studies with the proposals made by our foreign consultants. What we did not have were the technologies to implement such ideas. For example, when I made a proposal to the HAL Board that an HF-24 aircraft should be converted into a fly-by-wire (FBW) flying platform, it was summarily rejected by the South Block representative. It was the lack of appreciation for forward technology devel-

opment that separated the aircraft industry from the Space and the Atomic Energy Departments. We now know that after the May 1998 nuclear explosions the U.S. held us for ransom for the release of FBW technologies. The fact was that there was enough intrinsic capability in the country to develop such technologies. But time was not on our side, due to the ignorance of policy makers about the areas in which forward-looking R&D should be taken up in anticipation of future tasks such as the LCA. The LCA project paid a heavy price, by way of inordinate delays and escalating costs, for the lack of vision of policy-makers.

At the request of Rajiv Gandhi, I was periodically briefing him about the LCA development before he became the Prime Minister. I was rather surprised by one of his questions at our last meeting in 1983. He wanted to know if it was possible for us to collaborate with the Italians. The fact of the matter was that we had invited the Italian team also for a presentation but found that it did not have the necessary technologies and that it was already collaborating with Brazil in developing a subsonic aircraft called AMS. He left it at that. The Russians were not too keen to help us, as the LCA would have replaced the

MIG-21 aircraft.

Finally a word about engines. No matter how good an aircraft designer is, he is helpless if he does not have a proper engine. It is the combination of the aircraft and a suitable engine that assures the performance of the aircraft. At the time the feasibility studies for the LCA were going on, the Rolls Royce RB 199 was a prime contender as an improved version of it (XG 40) was on the drawing boards. This would have provided improved performance of the LCA at a later stage. At a presentation I made in July 1985, the Defence Minister asked me if there was any other suitable engine. I informed him that the older generation GE 404 (with no further stretch potential) would satisfy the LCA's minimum requirements. The Minister instructed the Scientific Adviser to look into the matter. Choosing the GE 404 would appear to be a political decision designed to establish working level relations with the U.S. At the time, the GTRF's Kaveri engine was not even on the drawing boards. To be of any use when developed, the Kaveri engine's performance should be at least as good if not better than that of the GE 404. This is a tall order as the design of an advanced technology gas turbine is even more complex than the design of the LCA aircraft.

We are a long way away from realising the full potential of the LCA. Nevertheless, the programme must go on to enable our aircraft and engine designers to learn what it means to build advanced technology fighter aircraft and engines. In spite of the delay, Dr. Kota Harinarayana has done a commendable job as the LCA Programme Director. It is a regrettable that the Government did not recognise his contribution in a tangible manner. It is to be noted that the development of a fighter aircraft with 10 to 15 independent systems operating perfectly and simultaneously is more complex than designing a Prithvi or Agni missile. It would appear that the Government needs to evolve rational policies to recognise significant contributions from scientists and technologists.

(The writer is former Director-General, Aeronautical Development Agency, Ministry of Defence.)