

HD-16

Abuse of power?

29 | 7

IT IS not the first time that interns are hitting the headlines in Washington; and given the track record of this city that plays host to politicians, it is not going to be the last time either. The Chandra Levy case has turned the spotlight once again on the sleaze in Washington politics.

Mr. Gary Condit, the Conservative Democrat from Modesto, California is not Mr. Bill Clinton by any stretch of the imagination. But both got into trouble, not for having affairs with interns young enough to be their daughters; but for not facing matters upfront when the news made the front pages.

After angrily denying having had sexual relations with "that woman, Ms. Lewinsky", Mr. Clinton finally not only admitted to that fact but was impeached by the House of Representatives but acquitted in the Senate.

Mr. Condit, too, thought he could ride out of the whole thing by pretending that the 24-year-old former intern at the Bureau of Prisons, Ms. Chandra Levy, was no more than an acquaintance.

Ironically, when Mr. Clinton was in the midst of the Lewinsky scandal, the California lawmaker was making the point that the President must be forthcoming.

The California Congressman should have followed his own advice. Only in the third questioning did he admit to having an affair with Ms. Levy who is now missing for close to full three months. And Ms. Levy has not been the only "other woman" in Mr. Condit's life.

Some will argue that Mr. Condit's personal life is his business, but others will make the point that elected officials are subject to a different level of scrutiny. And if the media has been focussed on Mr. Condit it is not because the summer season is generally dull.

It is because of the kind of games Mr. Condit and his staffers have been up to. This includes warning former 'friends' of his not to speak up or say something that would fall short of the truth.

The Chandra Levy case has turned the spotlight again on the sleaze in Washington politics, says Sridhar Krishnaswami.

missing, but that he did not square up to the authorities from day one.

For the Levy family in California, there is the traumatic experience of having to get on daily without news of or from their daughter. And Conservatives in Modesto, California, are convinced that



Gary Condit... obstructing justice?



Chandra Levy... the victim.

All of this is enough to interest federal authorities to check if there was obstruction of justice. Add to this the feeling in law enforcement circles that the polygraph test taken by Mr. Condit himself with a private analyst is not worth the paper the results are printed on.

Perhaps the only thing going for Mr. Condit is that authorities have not named him a suspect. In fact, the whole case is still listed as 'missing person' even as the police are going all over looking for a body — parks, abandoned buildings, wooded areas and so on.

And the authorities are desperate to know the young lady's state of mind prior to the date she was seen last or reported missing.

If there is one thing Washington is good at, it is the blame game. And for now Mr. Condit is at the receiving end; and to some extent the authorities are too for not getting involved soon enough and for being too deferential to the Congressman.

If Mr. Condit is indeed being blamed for the mess, it is not that he was responsible or had an hand in Ms. Levy going

Mr. Condit's political goose has been cooked. The Conservative or the Blue Dog Democrat is facing some intense questioning not only from within his party but from Republicans as well.

There are many things that can be said or thought about as this tragedy continues. Many are convinced that Washington politicians are so corrupt that things like the Levy affair are just part of the routine. At the same time, some will make the point that this is not just a one way street — that many young female interns, with images of power and influence, are equally to blame.

And then there is the Levy family. On the one hand, there is shock at what the Congressman did to Ms. Levy; and yet on the other hand there is also this quiet realisation that without the "Condit factor", Chandra Levy's case will not be getting all this attention, both of the authorities and of the media. What about the cases of all those hundreds of missing persons in the District of Columbia and of those thousands nationally whose cases have been tossed out for one reason or another?

THE FINCH



HFB 29/7

From bullet to ballot to bullet

Phoolan Devi was absolutely single-minded in her resolve to wrest the most out of life

FOR FIVE minutes that autumn morning in October 1993, we kept the TV camera running in a secluded area of the Gwalior Central Jail, because I didn't want to miss the entry shot of Phoolan Devi, prisoner of 11 years. As we fretted about the camera battery running low, she appeared suddenly — a petite woman flanked by 10 male jailors and one female attendant. Phoolan was an arresting sight in her *barfi* pink blouse, a printed white and green nylon sari, and an oily ponytail.

Just then, Phoolan shattered the media image of the imperious bandana-crowned, khaki-uniformed Queen of the Ravines. She stopped in her path and bowed, hands folded in a prolonged and ingratiating '*namaste*'. Eleven years in prison had apparently tamed the bandit. It would sound incredible now, but till that day, Phoolan had not faced a TV camera at close quarters. As she squinted at the lens, it was obvious that she trusted the police personnel more than us, and that an unexpected camaraderie existed between them. She insisted that they monitor the TV interview. We shot seven 20-minute cassettes, probably the only footage of Phoolan in jail.

We had taken the early morning Shatabdi from Delhi to Gwalior because the Supreme Court was expected to pronounce judgement that day on a petition seeking her release. Ram Jethmalani was appearing for her. We wanted to capture Phoolan's first reaction to the news of her release or, otherwise, her continued detention.

But as we spoke to her, it was clear that she was clueless about the fact that the Supreme Court could set her free that day (eventually, the Court adjourned the matter that day, and the judgement to transfer her to Delhi's Tihar Jail came two days later, and she was finally released on parole on February 18, 1994).

Phoolan was very polite and flatly denied her alleged exploits. "I don't know what a gun looks like. I don't know its front from its back-side," she claimed. As she spoke of the rape, her eyes welled up.

Recovering quickly, she said, "Don't show this bit about the rape. Promise me." I didn't promise anything and an edited 17-minute version went out on *Newstrack*, the video magazine then in vogue. But her request continued nagging my conscience.

After her release from Tihar, Phoolan summoned me on the telephone. She was a media star already, and befittingly an attendant ordered, "*Line par rahiye, Phoolanji aayengi.*"

"You have not bothered to see me after Gwalior. Umed and I want your advice about this '*behooda*' film they have made on me." In fact, Phoolan artfully obstructed the screening of the *Bandit Queen* in India. As the Capital debated animatedly whether the film amounted to Phoolan's exploitation, producer Farookh Dhondy of UK's *Channel Four* was trying his best to turn her around. He thought, mistakenly, that she would heed me. Phoolan and her husband Umed agreed to come to my house the next day.

Looking attractive in a red-gold sari, Phoolan was already adorned with gold chains, and she and Umed made a couple you could run into on a UP Roadways bus, seemingly innocent, but armed with sharp survival skills.

Phoolan sat at the edge of the sofa, body inclined at an angle of 30 degrees, ready to take off against her 'exploitation' by *Channel Four*. "Phoolan, I hear that Farookh Dhondy wants to give you something. Do you want to take it and let him release *Bandit Queen*?" I asked, naive and foolish in the negotiator's role.

"How dare they offer me money?" Phoolan thundered, "I'm fighting for my self-respect. They are showing me raped and naked." Umed muttered weakly about '*izzat*'.

"If you feel so strongly, you stand firm and oppose the film," I advised. Phoolan talked excitedly about the film, about Mala Sen, about a French writer who had faked her autobiography, and the minutes rolled into hours. It was lunch-time now and Phoolan pecked disinterestedly at the pot-luck fare. But she wouldn't leave. "If that's how you feel, you're right in spurning *Channel Four*'s money," I repeated, summarising the discussion and suggesting the end of the meeting. Throughout the meeting, Phoolan and Umed emphasised their togetherness, and yet, Phoolan didn't look once at



FAREWELL TO ARMS: A file photo of Phoolan Devi surrendering before the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Arjun Singh in February 1983

Umed even once, even as her eyes kept darting furiously from the food to the carpet, to the desk back to the food.

And then, just as I thought that the meeting was over, Phoolan looked at me and then at the carpet, and after all the thunder and lightening, quietly suggested that she was game as long as the money was right. "If they give me a few hundred, do you think I'll talk to them?" she said, testing the ground.

"Ten lakhs ... or should it be twenty lakhs?" I asked, getting to the point immediately. "They are going to earn crores. They should be ashamed of (even talking about such) a small sum," hectored Phoolan. It was clear that she was now going to suggest a price. "At least forty lakhs," she declared. She didn't look at Umed. Her voice had ardour, agitation, wistfulness, melancholy, triumph.

Bravo, Phoolan, I thought, you know how to humble UK's *Channel Four*. And why shouldn't you have a share of the money made from the story of your humiliation?

Farookh Dhondy was in touch with her, and he would know what amount of money exchanged hands to let the *Bandit Queen* be released in India. If money was paid, it was only because of Phoolan's robust common sense and resolve.

But our TV team witnessed the same steely resolve in UP's Behmai village, where Phoolan and her gang massacred 22 Thakurs one fiendish night 20 years ago.

There lives a young woman, paralysed waist downwards. She was the one-year-old baby Phoolan had allegedly snatched from the arms of her father and flung to the ground, smashing her ribs, as she pumped bullets into the man's body.

The paralysed girl is now grown up, but a dwarf. When Phoolan's case came up for hearing in Kanpur Dehat in 1997, our team went to Behmai.

This young woman's words burnt holes in our ears: "Every night I pray that Phoolan dies such a death that her dreams are also shattered."

From the bullet to the ballot to the bullet, Phoolan's journey is over. Bitter irony that between gunning down vengefully, and being gunned down brutally, the circle of life was complete.

(The author is a television personality)

... USTAN ...
2001

EMERGENCY NO REMEDY

SR-4
22/12

Hi for Nepal

Nepal's Trial Should Be Resolved Through Dialogue

By JB LAMA

If anything, 2001 has turned out to be Nepal's most cruel year. The 1 June palace massacre wiped out King Birendra Bikram Shah, his Queen and his immediate line of succession, leaving the Himalayan kingdom stunned — especially the rural folk whose love for their monarch elevated him to the level of being one of Nepal's best rulers ever. And even as they closed their ears to whispered rumours and were recovering from the shock, King Gyanendra clamped an Emergency last month, aimed primarily at containing growing Maoist depredations.

What is disconcerting is that this curtails civil liberties and freedom of the press. The Emergency is to be in force for three months but there is no guarantee it will not drag on. However, since its ratification in Parliament requires the support of the Communist law-makers who are opposed to the move, the government may face a stormy debate.

Relevant laws

Communists with a socialist philosophy, the Opposition Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist-Leninist) is a force to reckon with, their representatives drawn mostly from Maoist-affected areas. At a time when Soviet Communism was crumbling, the UML made history in December 1994 by forming the world's first Communist government (although a minority) under the constitutional monarchy.

They and other mainline Communist parties can play an important role in persuading the Maoists to give up their armed struggle and join the democratic process. Their suggestion for relevant laws, long overdue, to fight insurgency, instead of Emergency makes sense. The police also seem to echo this sentiment, arguing that in the absence of any such laws they are forced to take repressive measures. This corroborates the Maoists' claim that their cadres constituted the majority of those killed over these past six years. The police feel the existing laws are not stringent enough, that those detained manage to get themselves freed within a few days.

Both the Communists and the Nepali Congress opposed the Lokendra Chand government's bid to introduce an Anti-Terrorist Bill in 1997. After taking over in July 2001, Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba had the government-sponsored Anti-Insurgency Armed Police Force Bill endorsed by the lower house of par-

The author, who was on the staff of The Statesman for 42 years, contributes regularly.

liament. Even the CPN(UML) supported this after initial hesitation and the Bill was said to be awaiting the approval of the upper house and the King. One wonders at the delay. If this bill is pushed through, it would give the police the cutting edge they say they lack. Nepal is hamstrung by lack of police personnel, the present strength of which is estimated at 46,000 for a country with a population of 23.11 million.

It would be a mistake to suggest that the government was caught offguard by the Maoists' sudden unleashing of violence, arson and looting on 24 November. That

the local administration was not a bad idea but this was sooner said than done. Apart from indulging in bloodshed, the Maoists have destroyed communication towers worth crores of rupees, forcing government to deploy army personnel to protect them. Development activities have been affected. Some road construction projects have had to be entrusted to the army after local contractors pleaded their inability to complete the job because of rebels harassing them for explosives meant for blasting rocks. What is worse, the Maoists have forced local unemployed youths to join



this happened soon after they pulled out of the peace talks and the ceasefire shows to what extent they have organised themselves even in the urban areas. When the Maoists first struck in February 1996 killing six in two remote districts, they had already crippled the administrative machinery in 24 of the 75 districts. At the time, Deuba headed a three-party coalition but was too preoccupied manoeuvring to stay in power than give much thought to the subject. In any case he could not have taken a major decision to nip the menace in the bud since he was a mere pawn in the hands of his mentor, GP Koirala.

Divided loyalty

The successive governments, mostly coalitions, could do nothing to check the spread of Maoist influence to other districts. They are now said to control as many as 40 districts. Koirala's view that insurgency must be fought by strengthening

their ranks, as a result of which many have fled their villages.

Maoist insurgency is the result of a sorry agronomy, of a poor people's shattered hopes and dreams and unbalanced regional development. Something the late King Birendra strove hard to rectify. While the valley may be prosperous, poverty is deepening in the inaccessible areas. How justified their sense of grievance is can be gauged from the fact that the poor gained nothing under years of Rana rule nor from the experimental parliamentary democracy from 1950-60. Their economic condition during the 30-year panchayat system was no better. The ushering in of multi-party democracy in 1990 kindled hope, but frustration set in soon after because of the continued political instability and corruption permeating all spheres of the administration. The Nepali Congress, which now rules the country, is far from being a cohesive entity with loyalty divided among

top leaders.

It is said that more than 50 per cent of the population hardly manage two square meals a day. Some describe armed insurgents as hungry poor and not Maoists, and argue that since they are merely registering their protest against economic deprivation it would be unfair to kill them by branding them terrorists.

Analogy

Nepal's Maoists are said to draw revolutionary inspiration from Peru's Shining Path which came into being in that Latin American country in 1965. This supposedly clandestine and subversive organisation maintained a low profile during the 11-year military dictatorship, but when the generals reduced the already poverty stricken people to abject penury, the Peruvians were fired by dreams of democratic change. The country went to the polls on 19 May 1979 to elect a president. Curiously, on the eve of the election the Shining Path made their first assault. In four years of civilian rule they made the country so ungovernable that the army was ultimately called in to suppress them.

Though no analogy is intended, Nepali politicians should learn from the Peruvian example and ponder the dangerous implications of a continued reliance on the army for internal security. What cannot be ignored is the significant shift in the Maoists' stand on the monarchy. Having all along demanded royalty's removal and a republican state, they did a turnaround before the last round of peace negotiations and set up a 37-member "People's Revolutionary Government", giving rise to the suspicion that there was more to it than met the eye. It also needs to be emphasised that the Royal Nepalese Army is loyal to the King.

No one knows what the future holds for the Maoists. What is clear, however, is that they are being aided and abetted by outside agencies without which they cannot sustain themselves. That they call themselves Maoists is an insult to Mao's principle that peasants should not be harassed. The government may enact draconian laws and deploy troops but in the long run there is no alternative to dialogue for a lasting solution. The root cause of the uprising must be discerned if the goal is to restore normalcy. By shutting the door on negotiation, Deuba finds himself faced with a dilemma of his own making. Perhaps he can regain the initiative by offering a general amnesty. Nepal's mainstay is tourism and any delay in finding a solution will have a devastating effect.

THE STATESMAN

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Turmoil in Nepal

wide angle

SALMAN HAIDAR



Nepalese villagers and Maoist rebel fighters, some as young as 11, are seen at Piscar, a remote mountain village, 200 km east of Kathmandu. The ideology and the actions of the Maoists have become Nepal's biggest-ever challenge, and Nepal in crisis can only mean trouble for India. — AP/PTI

United Liberation Front of Asom and Bodo formations which are so strong as to be able to resist attempts to bring them to heel.

Nepal's Maoists look to groups like the Maoist Communist Centre and the People's War Group in India for support and succour.

One can expect that the present decision to proscribe the MCC and the PWG will have a practical effect and convey a proper message to Nepal.

We certainly do not orchestrate the activities of these groups and are in no way responsible for their actions, yet the manner in which we handle them, which can be inconsistent, resonates loudly in the smaller countries across our border.

Our relationship with Nepal is close and has many sensitive features. The two countries share intimate ties of culture and religion, and their age-old historical association has given a particular complexion to their links.

The 1950 Treaty between them sets out the features of their unique relationship, and even though Nepal is no longer comfortable with some aspects of it, the existence of the treaty underlines the big stake each has in the other.

For one thing, there is an open border between them and citizens of each country have special privileges in the other — this has begun to look like an anachronism in these days of extreme sensitivity in border management.

Such openness presupposes perpetual friendship and an assurance of goodwill at all times. India cannot be blind to any unfriendly external power gaining a foothold in Nepal, nor to any anti-India subversion being launched from there: both of these have been witnessed in past decades, to our considerable alarm. Similarly, Nepal can look to India to assure its abiding interests.

In these circumstances, there is every reason for India to give its full and unreserved backing to Nepal in its present emergency.

There are a number of nitpicking issues between the two countries and we have on occasion felt that the government of that country has been insufficiently responsive to our concerns. No doubt, similar feelings have surfaced in Kathmandu.

Moreover, India's announced readiness to help has drawn criticism from political groups in Nepal that are predisposed to attach suspicion to virtually any Indian action towards their country.

But such considerations must not weigh in the balance at this stage. Nepal has decided to confront the Maoists in the field. For a successful operation, considerable assistance from India is indispensable. This should be provided in full measure.

(The author is a former Foreign Secretary.)

Mounting trouble in Nepal has reached a climax with the declaration of Emergency and crack-down on Maoist rebels. Normal governance has been suspended.

The extreme measures that the beleaguered Nepalese government has been obliged to adopt are a gauge of the seriousness of the situation.

Repeated insurgent attacks on government establishments have inflicted heavy damage, and measures to check them appear to have been largely ineffective.

The strength and boldness of the attacks have been on the increase. The death toll has escalated alarmingly.

In parts of the country, something resembling a parallel government has been established. These are very dangerous developments with a potential to disturb and unsettle not Nepal alone but also some areas of India.

Matters have not been helped by the unending sense of crisis in Kathmandu. There has been a quick succession of governments that have been rapidly bogged down in day-to-day preoccupations about their own survival.

Short-lived administrations have been

unable to devise any long-term strategy to deal with the Maoists. Their approach has tended to waver between confronting the armed insurgents and conciliating them, and lack of a clear plan has only encouraged the rebels.

All this is not dissimilar to India's own dilemmas and practices. Nepal's problems have been exacerbated by its difficult constitutional transition from monarchy to democracy; the proper role and limits of the different authorities within the state have tended to become the subject of damaging controversy and discord.

On top of this came the massive blow of the royal killings which have tainted the Palace and weakened one of the principal props of the political structure.

And beyond all that lie the poverty and mismanagement that are the unhappy lot of South Asia. These are conditions that favour the insurgents and they have taken full advantage of them.

The conflict in Afghanistan has tended to obscure the seriousness of the developments in Nepal. The world's attention is fixed on Islamic fundamentalism and the terrorist actions that have come to be associated with it.

For India, however, there is this other, equally immediate and dangerous concern on our doorstep.

The ideology and the actions of the Maoist group have become Nepal's biggest-ever challenge, and Nepal in turmoil can only mean trouble for India.

The insurgents take their name from Chairman Mao but little else. There is nothing to suggest that the successors of Mao in his own country have anything to do with them; perhaps modern China, having left behind its revolutionary past, will find it mildly embarrassing to come across Nepalese groups laying claim to the legacy of Mao.

But India's problem is more real. It has to handle the fact that there are linkages between Nepal's Maoists and similar groups in different parts of India. We see ourselves, rightly, as victims of terrorism, and are deeply aware of the actions of our neighbours in exporting violence across our borders.

At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that others among our neighbours have to cope with the activities of hostile groups based on Indian soil.

Bhutan has suffered inroads from the

Emergency a sad decision, say King Gyanendra, PM

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, December 10

AS NEPAL continues to debate on the future of democracy, King Gyanendra and Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba have described the imposition of emergency as "a sad decision taken because there was no option".

King Gyanendra, in an interview to Naya Sadak, a local daily, said, "I never wanted the emergency. It's sad that the Nepalese are killing each other. Now, there is no option for the Army but to disarm them (rebels)." He rued "excessive politicisation" of the society and slammed politicians for their inefficiency.

On his relationship with the people, he remarked, "No Nepali

should ever think that I would leave them." Deuba echoed a similar feeling about the emergency at a National Union of Journalists-sponsored workshop this morning. "Circumstances compelled us to use the Army, which will operate till the Maoists are crushed and disarmed," he said.

Deuba promised to be "transparent" on the Government's action against the rebels. He said: "The emergency is directed against the Maoists and care will be taken that innocent people do not suffer because of this."

Communist Party of Nepal (Marxist-Leninist) general secretary and former deputy Prime Minister Vamdev Gautam used the occasion to focus on threats posed by "fake encounters."

"The Nepal Congress should know that it may not remain in power if it retains the emergency for a long period," Gautam said. He added that innocent people were shot dead in Dhanusha, Dang, Nuwakot and Kaski districts since the imposition of the emergency.

Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist Leninist) leader K P Oli said the emergency alone could not help the Government overcome the crisis. He said: "Let us get to the root of the crisis like poverty and unemployment."

Congress general secretary Sushil Koirala said his party was not in favour of prolonging the emergency. "But, we must not forget that the Maoists have always worked against democracy here".

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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Maoists under pressure in Nepal

KATHMANDU, Dec. 9. — Nepal's army was continuing its campaign against Maoist rebels today, with 60 killed in clashes with troops in overnight raids, according to media reports and a defence ministry statement.

A press release said today that one rebel was killed by troops in south-west Nepal late on Friday after he refused to surrender.

The *Kathmandu Post* daily, meanwhile, reported today that four more rebels were killed in Nuwakot district, 90 km of Kathmandu. "At least four Maoists were killed and dozen others arrested in a search operation carried yesterday by security forces in Chogate village of Nuwakot," the newspaper said.

"The arrested have been taken to the district headquarters," it said, adding Chogate is a Maoist stronghold. The ministry added that the security forces arrested more Maoists in Gorkha and Chitwan district. The Nepal government has deployed military personnel across the country last month after emergency was declared following Maoist attacks in different parts of Nepal that claimed scores of lives, mainly army and police personnel.

A Reuters report says at least 50 Maoists and four army men were killed in an overnight battle at an army post in western Nepal.

THE STRATEGICAL

1 1 101

Nepal Leftists step up heat on Deuba Govt

Rajiv Bagchi
Kathmandu, December 7

THE LARGEST Left outfit in the country, the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), that is now trying to negotiate peace between the Government and the Maoists, would fire its maiden salvo against the Sher Bahadur Deuba regime tomorrow, when a delegation of party MPs will meet the Prime Minister demanding credible information about the ground situation in the troubled districts.

"So far we have supported the Army action against the rebels. But the Government has not taken us into confidence. We

understand that classified security details cannot be divulged but what we are demanding is basic information.

Now, the party is depending on newspapers for the details. This is sad," said Bharat Mohan Adhikari, MP and a Standing Committee member of the CPN (UML).

As the realisation that going along wholeheartedly with the Government decision to suspend the fundamental rights of the people could be disastrous for poll prospects have begun to sink in, mainstream Left parties are working overtime to negotiate a truce between the Government and the Maoists now battling the

leadership just cannot afford to be seen as dumping their "some-what misguided comrades".

Efforts are now geared towards first, bringing all Opposition parties on a common platform over the issue, and then exerting pressure on the Deuba regime to go that extra mile and re-negotiate with the Maoists.

As a first step, most Left parties have met on their own and passed resolutions condemning the violence, but appealing to the Maoists to re-start the failed talks.

"Our stand has been that the Emergency should be lifted as soon as possible. We also ask the Maoists to lay down arms and

end to the Army action".

The Left dilemma is understandable. Most of the 70-odd CPN (UML) MPs have been elected from areas where the Army is operating and the party is one of the few mainstream political outfits that still runs units in the districts where the Maoists are strong. The party

Nepalese Army in the hills.

The moral responsibility for kick-starting this process has fallen on the CPN (UML). Though publicly the party maintains that the Maoists are only getting a taste of their own medicine, away from the public glare, its leaders are silently working towards what they call "a speedy

start talking once again. Hiranya Lai Shrestha, chief ideologue of the CPN (ML), said,

"But the Maoists must indicate their willingness," said Adhikari, adding, "Then we can ask the Government to respond. If it doesn't, we will raise the issue in Parliament."

Such rumblings should worry Deuba. Three months from now, the proclamation of Emergency will come up before Parliament. "We could tighten the screws on the Government. With the strength that the CPN (UML) has in Parliament, we could well block moves to extend the Emergency," Adhikari said.

No empty threat this.



SHER BAHADUR DEUBA

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

7 DEC 2001

Nepal troops arrest 300 rebels

Kathmandu, December 3

HT 4/12
Himalaya ka Nepal

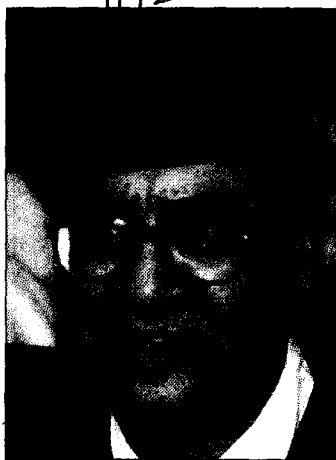
THE NEPALESE Government said today it had made inroads into Maoist-held areas, neutralising the rebels' ability to strike back, amid reports that 300 more Maoists had surrendered and troops had surrounded the Maoist supremo. Two bombs went off around Kathmandu this evening, killing at least one person.

"Police and Army personnel have effectively launched their anti-Maoist campaign, striking secret training camps and meeting places the Nepalese authorities never thought existed," a Defence Ministry official said.

The official said the recent decline in the number of Maoist ambushes was a sign of the Government campaign's success.

Several Nepali newspapers said the Army had surrounded the Maoists' top leader Pushpa Kamal Dahal, alias Prachand, and his right-hand man Babu Ram Nhatrai in a northwestern rebel stronghold.

Government officials refused to confirm the reports, citing state censorship on reporting details of



SHER BAHADUR DEUBA

the anti-Maoist campaign.

Home Ministry officials said security forces had penetrated rebel-dominated parts of northwestern and northeastern Nepal to seek out and corner the Maoists.

At least 20 Maoists had been arrested in the "search-and-corner" campaign while 100 Maoist activists had defected, the officials said.

Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba said today a "successful Army operation will go on until the Maoist problem is controlled."

A Home Ministry spokesman said 308 people linked to the Maoists' 'people's government' had surrendered today in the northeast and west of the country.

The rebels broke a four-month truce on November 24 by launching a string of attacks on the Army and police. Officials have said some 430 people, mostly rebels, have since been killed.

Three rounds of peace talks have failed to produce a breakthrough, with the Maoists insisting that Nepal scrap its constitutional monarchy. Meanwhile, the country's main parliamentary Opposition party, the Nepal Communist Party-United Marxist and Leninist (NCP-UML), has lodged protested against the three-month state of Emergency and the tough anti-terrorism Ordinance.

NCP-UML leader Mahdavi Kumar Nepal said Leftist parties would tell Deuba "not to misuse" the measures.

Agencies

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

2001

Palace & Maoists: A love-hate relationship

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, December 3

HC 10

A DEBATE is raging over the Maoists' inconsistent stand on the Palace, which ultimately led to the promulgation of Emergency in Nepal. Major political party leaders allege that the rebels modified their stand on republicanism in keeping with their ever-changing relationship with the Palace.

A senior Opposition leader said, "One can never understand why the Maoists kept on changing their views on the Palace. But this has certainly diluted their own demand for a republican state. Now with the Maoists on the run and the Army out in the streets, the Palace will become

more assertive."

He regretted that Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba relied on Emergency provisions to use the Army though he could have done it under normal circumstances as head of the National Defence Council.

Shortly after the June 1 massacre, Maoist chief Pushpakamal Dahal, aka Comrade Prachand, hailed the late King Birendra as "a great patriot who was ready to play the role of Prince Norodom Sihanouk in Nepal". He also claimed to have held negotiations with Prince Dharendra (the slain monarch's youngest brother who also died in the massacre) on this.

Dahal's deputy Baburam Bhattarai went a step forward to claim "the birth of

4112

a republican state with the end of traditional monarchy following King Birendra's assassination".

In some quarters, these remarks led to suspicion that the Palace had been using the Maoists to keep the elected Government under pressure.

The Maoists toned down their opposition to King Gyanendra, who ascended the throne on June 4, after the Royal Nepalese Army allowed safe passage to their cadres in Rolpa district's Hollar village on July 12. The incident led to the ouster of Prime Minister G P Koirala.

Soon after Deuba replaced Koirala, the insurgents agreed to hold talks with the Government. Amid this, the King proclaimed his controversial son Paras the

Crown Prince on October 26 without much opposition even as the Maoists were holding talks with the Government over the fate of monarchy.

Out of power, Koirala, who is also president of the Nepali Congress, retaliated by accusing the Palace and insurgents of working hand in glove.

As a result, the ruling party is confused about the Palace-Maoist relationship though it is dead against abolition of monarchy.

This became evident after the party supported the Emergency last week. Some key leaders feared that granting of sweeping powers to the Army would finally go to the Palace's advantage. The Army is still fiercely loyal to the King.

Schools closed in Nepal for fear of attacks by Maoists during strike

KATHMANDU: All schools and most major shops were closed on Friday in Nepal's capital for fear of attacks by Maoist rebels, who called a general strike following their resumption of attacks on the government.

Education officials said schools were shut down in fear of attacks and not out of solidarity with the strike called by the Maoists, who are trying to topple Nepal's constitutional monarchy. *At G. Nepal*

Shops in Kathmandu's main markets were closed, although stores in most other parts of the capital remained open. "The shops are closed not because we support the Maoist-called general strike but out of fear of attacks by the Maoists", said Ram Prasad Shrestha, a shopkeeper who closed his store.

Most buses stayed off roads in Kathmandu. Many people used cars during the morning rush hours, but most government workers walked to their offices. Military armoured cars patrolled the city and armed soldiers frisked vehicles. Witnesses said gun-toting police and soldiers were marching through the city.

Security was tight around the Prime Minister's office, Parliament and the ministries with the army helping local police. "We will not allow the general strike to be successful or the use of force to impose the strike," said information minister Jayaprakash Gupta.

"There is vigorous patrolling by

security forces and the situation is quite normal", home ministry spokesman Gopendra Bahadur Pandey said. Police said they had received no reports of violence as the strike began, but were taking no chance because activists have attacked vehicles and shops in previous strikes.

The Maoists had called for the general strike after breaking a four-month ceasefire November 24 with a string of attacks on the army and police. More than 430 people have since died, according to official estimates.

The strike is the first called since King Gyanendra declared a state of emergency on November 26. The government has banned publication of news about the rebels, including the general strike called by them.

The U.S. state department on Wednesday cited the strike call as a reason for U.S. citizens to avoid travel to Nepal, warning of the "possibility of further intimidation by Maoists leading up to" the strike.

More than 2,100 people have been killed since the Maoists launched their "people's war" in 1996. Led by commander Prachanda — whose real name is Pushpa Kumar Dahal — the guerillas have been fighting in remote mountainous areas to abolish constitutional monarchy and create a socialist republic. The Maoists model themselves on Peru's Shining Path guerrillas.

(Agencies)

NEIGHBOURS IN TURMOIL

India to help Nepal in jungle warfare

Jaideep Mazumdar
Kolkata, November 30

A NUMBER of officers from Indian infantry regiments are likely to go to Nepal soon to train their counterparts in specialised counter-insurgency (CI) operations and jungle warfare. The two countries, it is learnt, are currently working out the details of the programme.

Defence sources here said Nepal has requested India to ensure that only Gorkha officers are sent as 'trainers'. This has put New Delhi in a bit of a fix since acceding to the request

would mean pulling out commissioned, junior and non-commissioned Gorkha officers from various infantry units across the country and sending them to Nepal. This is likely to meet with some amount of resistance from the defence establishment.

New Delhi is thus thinking of tapping into the large number of Gorkha officers in the Assam Rifles. "The Assam Rifles, though a para-military force, specialises in anti-insurgency operations and jungle warfare. It is in the vanguard of such operations in the North East and is a fine fighting force. It also has a large number

of Nepali-speaking officers, including JCOs and NCOs," a top-ranking officer told *Hindustan Times*. "The Assam Rifles would thus be best suited to send Gorkha officers to Nepal. This force has a large number of them. Of course, we have Gorkha regiments, too, that have a large number of Gorkha officers. But it is the Assam Rifles that would be the best," he added.

Nepal's strange request, analysts feel here, is understandable. "There is an anti-Indian feeling among a substantial section of the people in Nepal and the media there has been blaming India for

harbouring Maoist insurgents. The Government there has to be sensitive and presence of Indian army officers on Nepal's soil could spark protests and attract charges of the Government becoming dependent on India. Hence, to minimise the risks involved, Nepal wants only Gorkha officers to train its army in CI and jungle warfare," explained an analyst.

Officers and JCOs from Nepal have been undergoing training at the Counter-Insurgency & Jungle Warfare School (CIJWS) at Vairangte in Mizoram. "But Nepal wants entire battalions to

be trained to meet the Maoist threat. It is not possible for Nepal to send entire battalions to Mizoram. So the only option is for our officers who have undergone training at the CIJWS and have field experience in CI and jungle warfare to go there and train the Nepalese army," said the army officer. This would not be a very long-drawn affair.

"It would not take very long to train the army. We are looking at imparting the same sort of training that our infantry units undergo at Vairangte before being inducted into the North-east," he said.



A policeman keeps vigil at the damaged coke unit in Kathmandu.

Maoist rebels strengthen base with ethnic support

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, November 30

THE EMERGENCE of western Nepal as the main target of Army attacks has brought into focus how deep Maoist insurgents have penetrated into the homeland of the famed Gorkha soldiers who serve in the Nepalese, Indian and British armies.

Since the promulgation of emergency, the Royal Nepalese Army has launched relentless attacks to break Maoist strongholds in Rolpa, Syangja, and Salyan. Other districts including Pyuthan, Baglung, Parvat, Myangdi, Kaski, Gorkha, Palpa and Tanahu and Rukum come next on the line of fire.

These districts are the home of Magars and Gurungs, the two Mongoloid groups specially preferred by Nepal, Britain and

India armies, a practice started by King Prithvinarayan Shah, founder of the Hindu kingdom, about 250 years ago.

Interestingly, the Maoists have not only kept this tradition alive but have also become the first Communist party to win the support and confidence of a sizeable number of Magars and Gurungs. Their chief military strategist is Ram Bahadur Thapa Magar, who studied Atomic Engineering in Russia. Other top leaders include Man Bahadur Thapa Magar, Dev Gurung, Suresh Aley Magar and Ek Bahadur Tamu Gurung.

This apart, the region has a sizeable number of Kshatriyas and Thakuris (the King's caste) of Aryan stock who form the bulk of officers in the Nepalese Army. According to reports, the Maoists initially pressured their families to ask their kin not to fight for the Government.

In recent months, the Maoists have made inroads into eastern Nepal, the home of the martial Rais and Limbus, who are also mongoloids. Barring Gurungs and Magars, they outnumber all other ethnic Nepalese groups in the armies of Nepal, India and Britain. The rebels have demanded autonomy for them, an issue with the groups for a long time now.

The rebels have taken the government by surprise by attacking security posts in Rai and Limbu dominated districts like Tehrathum, Ilam, Taplejung, Sankhuasabha, Bhojpur and Chainpur last week. These communities are in a majority in neighbouring Darjeeling and Sikkim also.

Earlier, Brahmins and Newars, who are not preferred for military service, dominated the Left movement.



Police check vehicles at the Central Secretariat gate in Kathmandu.

Northern Alliance ends 'dark days' in Afghanistan

Kabul, November 30

THE NORTHERN Alliance, now in control of Kabul, today lifted all religious restrictions imposed by the hardline Taliban in Afghanistan, saying the "dark years" are over.

Religious Affairs Minister Ataulha symbolically chose a 532-year-old Hindu temple in Kabul on a Friday, the Muslim holy day, to make the announcement. "The dark years have gone. We are ready to give all rights to every religion," he said, blaming past atrocities on the Taliban and the Pakistani Government, which supported it.

Hindus and Sikhs, who account for about 500 families in all of Afghanistan, were forced by the Taliban to wear distinctive yellow markings to set them apart from Muslims.

The men were required to wear yellow turbans, were not

allowed to display any sign of their religion outside official temples, and Hindu traders were ordered to close their shops during the daily Muslim prayers.

Breaches of the Taliban order were punished with instant beatings. "You suffered much under the Taliban, but they were bad people, they were not good Muslims," Ataulha said.

"You don't have to wear yellow any more. It is as before, we want to have contact with you. We are ready to help you." "As you had rights before, you can again have anything regarding your religion. You are free," he said.

His speech, to about 100 people in the temple, was frequently interrupted by chants from the Hindus invoking the names of their religious leaders.

His audience including many women now venturing outside for the first time in five years wearing their traditional saris.

Rawinder Singh, a Hindu in Kabul, said although they were tolerated by the Taliban they were not welcome. "The Taliban did not like other religions, we were under pressure from the Taliban," he said. "They told us to wear yellow, the turban is yellow, we had to close our shops (during Muslim prayers) and Hindu and Sikh ladies could not go to other bazaars."

Although Hindu and Sikh women were not ordered to stay indoors, most in the temple said they were afraid to go outside during the five years of Taliban rule which collapsed on November 13. "They would hit us, so we stayed at home," one woman said. The few who did venture out, dressed in the detested all-encompassing burkha which the Taliban ordered all women to wear, said they were for bidden to buy brightly coloured material.

AFP

Bonn agrees on rights for women

Bonn, November 30

THE PREDOMINANTLY male delegation at the Afghan peace talks in Bonn yesterday agreed a package securing the rights of women to education, work and a role in politics.

The handful of Afghan women at the talks welcomed the commitment, which will be included in the final communique, even though it fell short of full rights. Fatima Gailani, an adviser with the delegation representing the former King Zahir Shah, said she was satisfied with this for the time being. "We do not want things that will lead to a backlash. I just want these three things: education, work and politics. If we have these we can build on it."

For the past five years under the Taliban, women were banned from appearing in public without a burka, and were denied the right to education or to work.

The record of the Northern Alliance was also poor when they were in power between 1992 and 1996. Mindful of this, women in Kabul have remained cautious about going out without a burka.

The need for caution was confirmed by German TV grab this week showing alliance soldiers beating up women.

Afghan women from Germany's large exile community of 90,000 protested outside the Bonn conference against the alliance. Najia Helmand, a former Afghan



Member of the Rome delegation and women's rights activist Sima Wali at a Press conference in Koenigswinter, Germany on Thursday.

lawyer working in a fast-food restaurant in Frankfurt, claimed that the only reason the alliance had included a woman in their delegation was to please the west. The involvement of women will be necessary to secure western aid. Countries such as Britain would not help fund education projects that were for men only. Gailani, who has not been in Afghanistan since 1992 and lives in Rhode Island, said she favoured a quota system for

women to ensure they would participate in the political system - but the quota would just be for five to ten years. "We do not want charity," she said.

After Bonn, the talks will move to Kabul and then on to a meeting of the Loya Jirga, the traditional meeting of ethnic groups and other Afghan leaders that is normally an almost exclusively male preserve. But Mrs Gailani said that her delegation was putting forward the names of 12 women

to attend the Loya Jirga. Like all the other Afghan women attending the talks, she wore a veil.

Ansia Ahmadi, 52, a former doctor now working as a domestic help in Hamburg after being forced to flee Afghanistan eight years ago, is an adviser with the alliance delegation. She said: "I wear the veil because I want to, not to please the men round the table."

Reuters

Miss Afghanistan '72 kicks off New York meet

New York, November 30

MISS AFGHANISTAN — the first and last woman to hold that title, won in 1972 — has kicked off a conference in New York on the role of Afghan women in their country's future.

"We must breathe life back into the mothers and daughters of Afghanistan by giving them back the gift of life and the gift of knowledge," Zohra Yusuf Daoud said in a keynote address yesterday opening the two-day conference at the City University of New York Graduate Center.

The discussions were organised by women for Afghan women, an organisation founded in April this year to promote Afghan women's human rights that will include leading US feminists, including MS magazine founder Gloria Steinem.

Daoud's participation in the forum helped to underscore the fact that many, but not all, women once enjoyed the advantages of a progressive and open society in which they could become doctors, politicians and "yes, even beauty queens," she said.

Now the host of "24-hour voice of Afghanistan," a talk radio show in Malibu, California, Daoud said that she had lived a "reasonably charmed life" in Afghanistan before her family fled the Soviet invasion of 1979. "I was the product of a mother who never wore a veil except perhaps to funerals," she added with pride.

AFP



A disabled Afghan man prays at a Kabul mosque from his wheelchair after the Northern Alliance lifted all religious restrictions.

Osama spent huge amount on Taliban

Washington, November 30

OSAMA BIN Laden lavished money on the Taliban regime to gain complete freedom for his al-Qaida in Afghanistan, a former Taliban official told the *Washington Post*.

"There wasn't anybody who had power over Osama. He did whatever he wanted," said former Deputy Interior Minister Mohammed Khaksar, who defected when the Taliban pulled out of Kabul. Khaksar said Osama carried \$50,000 to 100,000 in cash and generously distributed it among Taliban leaders. "He had money in his pocket. Any time he wanted, he would just pull it out and give it to them."

Sometimes, Osama would gift fancy cars and other valuables, or provide transport for the movement of Taliban troops. In exchange, Osama gained freedom to operate the al-Qaida without interference. "Al-Qaida was very important for the Taliban because they had so much money. They gave a lot of money. And the Taliban trusted them," Khaksar said. US Intelligence calculates that Osama gave the Taliban some \$100 million in money and military assistance since his arrival in Afghanistan in 1996. Khaksar said he told his Taliban colleagues that he was against Osama's presence in Afghanistan.

London, November 30

MULLAH MOHAMMED Omar has promised Afghans blood money for the murder of western journalists.

With the roads of Afghanistan becoming ever more perilous for the huge international media presence in the country to report the war, the Taliban leader announced a bounty of \$50,000 to any Afghan gunman who shoot a western journalist.

The chilling incentive to murder came shortly after incidents at opposite ends of the country, with the killing of one European journalist in the Northern Alliance-held north and the kidnapping and reported torture of a North American journalist in the south, near the Taliban and

Omar stronghold of Kandahar.

Mullah Omar's offer was coupled with his attempt to rally the dwindling ranks of his Taliban hard core into standing and fighting the Americans who are increasing their firepower at an air base outside Kandahar.

Government officials in Tajikistan, the main point of departure for journalists trying to enter Afghanistan, and European diplomats said they were taking the Taliban leader's offer seriously and viewed it as an ominous sign.

"It's getting more dangerous and unpredictable," said a European ambassador. Senior officials at the Tajik defence ministry echoed that view.

While the allied forces' casualty count from almost two months of war is one death, eight jour-

nalists have been killed in Afghanistan in three weeks.

Mullah Omar's incitement to murder came as the corpse of Ulf Strömberg, a Swedish television journalist robbed and shot dead in the middle of the night in the northern town of Taloqan on Tuesday, rested in a Dushanbe morgue on Wednesday awaiting transfer to Stockholm.

Scores of journalists based in Taloqan beat a hasty retreat to Dushanbe shocked by the killing and to register protest with the victorious Northern Alliance commanders who failed to guarantee security.

General Rashid Dostum, the Uzbek warlord whose forces have vanquished the Taliban in the north, refused to offer security assurances for departing media

convoys on the increasingly lawless roads and made veiled threats against the journalists seeking to leave Taloqan and Kunduz which fell to his forces this week.

If Mullah Omar's reward offer was mainly directed at loyal Taliban gunmen in a part of the country where the media presence is thin or non-existent, parts of the north under Northern Alliance control are increasingly bandit-infested and lawless, hampering the badly-needed delivery of aid.

One passenger in a United Nations aid vehicle was wounded on Tuesday when six gunmen opened fire on the car beyond Jalalabad east of Kabul. "Security on the roads inside Afghanistan remains a huge problem," said the UN refugee agency. Northern

Alliance officials in control of Kabul are resisting pressure for international peacekeepers in Afghanistan, arguing that the situation is secure.

But more than 100 US army troops have just been deployed from neighbouring Uzbekistan to Mazar-e-Sharif in the north for security patrols and the UN spokesman in Kabul, Khaled Mansour, said Ulf Strömberg's killing demonstrated that the situation in Afghanistan was "too dangerous for the media and aid workers to do their jobs."

He singled out Northern Alliance-controlled Mazar-e-Sharif and Kunduz in the north as well as the last Taliban bastion of Kandahar as being particularly plagued by banditry.

The Guardian

92 rebels die in Nepal raids

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

Kathmandu, Nov. 30: Nepal's Cabinet today formed a committee and five sub-committees to coordinate the functioning of the government during emergency imposed earlier this week.

The army killed 92 terrorists during operations against the Maoists rebels in encounters at various parts of the country while there were unconfirmed reports of terrorist leaders surrendering to the authorities.

The Emergency Management and Coordination Committee will be headed by minister for physical planning Chiranjivi Wagle. The minister was the government's chief negotiator with the Maoists.

The committee, which will be the umbrella body for other sub-

committees, will be responsible for management and coordination of events of the government.

The committees were formed during a Cabinet meeting called by Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba today to streamline the administration.

Defence sources confirmed that at least 22 terrorists were killed in encounters at Kalikot and Surkhet districts while the state-run *Gorkhapatra* daily quoted the Military News Department as saying that 70 terrorists were killed in Salyan last night.

Reports from Syangja said that the Maoists today killed a Nepali Congress worker.

In Dang, a man died on the spot and another was injured when police opened fire on them for reportedly violating curfew orders.



Nepal army personnel patrol in Kathmandu on Friday. (Reuters)

Six districts are under dusk-to-dawn curfew. The home ministry issued a notice to inform the people about the Maoists.

Due to clampdown on the media, the flow of information from far-flung districts of the country has thinned compelling mainstream papers to rely on official versions.

India proposed to Nepal to ex-

tend the 1996 Nepal-India Trade Treaty by three months, high level sources said.

Government sources said Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in a made the proposal during a conversation with Nepal Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba.

King Gyanendra, who ascended the throne after a June palace massacre, deployed the army on Monday for the first time against the rebels after a weekend of the bloodiest guerrilla violence since the uprising began in 1996.

Gyanendra also announced sweeping search and detention measures on the government's advice and authorities have imposed dusk-to-dawn curfew on areas where the worst violence occurred.

The government has told the media to show restraint when reporting rebel activities.

THE TELEGRAPH

1 DEC 2001

Deuba rules out Himalayas 81 Nepal truce with rebels

Troops shoot dead 81 Maoists

Keshav Pradhan
Kathmandu, November 30

THE NEPALESE Prime Minister today declared that there would be no truce with the Maoists amid reports that the kingdom's Army had stepped up its offensive, shooting dead 81 rebels.

Sher Bahadur Deuba's tough-talking came hours after he spoke to A. B. Vajpayee, his third contact with the Indian Prime Minister since last weekend.

"I will never again hold negotiations with the Maoists who have betrayed me and the Nepalese people," Deuba said when asked whether he would reopen dialogue if the rebels, now under attack from the Army, called a truce.

He said that because of his peace efforts his friends and detractors had earlier accused him of being soft on the rebels. He would now crush the Maoist revolt "with an iron hand".

The security forces had killed at least 81 Maoist rebels in encounters over the past two days in western and south-western Nepal, state-run daily *Gorkhapatra* said today.

About 70 were shot by the troops last night in Salyan district, 250 km west of Kathmandu, while trying to plant landmines, the daily quoted Defence Ministry officials as saying.

Deuba suggested that India and Nepal step up security to check cross-border movement of arms and terrorists. He was reacting to reports that the Maoists were operating from India.

The Nepalese Prime Minister admitted that he had sought support from India. Declining to go into the details, he said, "it could be anything from military expertise to equipment."

He said he had not thought of seeking such help from China. "Our Army can crush the revolt. They are well-trained in mountain warfare and have faced guerrillas as UN peacekeepers in different parts of the world," he added.

Prime Minister Vajpayee today conveyed to Kathmandu Delhi's decision to extend the Indo-Nepalese trade treaty by another three months. It expires on December 5.

On the prospect of having a national government as proposed by some Nepalese politicians, he said, "We may have to do it if things do not improve. At the moment, I do not see any need for this, because the situation is improving. The Army is penetrating into Maoist bases."

He assured that Emergency posed no threat to democracy. The US yesterday deplored the Maoist attacks in the King-



REUTERS PHOTO

Soldiers keep vigil on Kathmandu's streets on Friday.

dom. It said it would supply Kathmandu with non-lethal weapons and provide development assistance to improve living conditions in rural areas.

"We have in the past, and will continue to condemn attacks like these and to call on these Maoists to pursue their goals

peacefully within the democratic framework established by Nepal's Constitution," State Department deputy spokesman Philip Reeker said.

"We might provide non-lethal equipment to Nepal, based on request submitted before these current Maoist attacks took

place. And we are also considering plans to provide Nepal with development assistance directed toward immediate high-impact job-creation programmes that will promote development and improve living conditions for Nepalis in rural areas," he added.

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10/11

RESOLVING THE FOOD RIDDLE

gndia

FOODGRAINS MANAGEMENT, BY the Centre, has unquestionably led to monstrous absurdities in recent years. Food procurement, at minimum support prices, has reached mountainous scales, making a mockery of buffer stock norms intended to ensure food security for the vulnerable sections. Currently the stocks with the Centre are estimated at 62 million tonnes while the official reckoning of maximum storage capacity of reasonable quality is less than 30 million tonnes. That, in the absence of a prudent and firm policy correction, the food stocks could exceed 75 million tonnes by February 2002 is enough to jolt the policymakers from the customary leisurely habit of pondering over possible lines of action.

The Union Food Minister, Mr. Shanta Kumar, addressing editors on the social sector on Thursday, broached a new policy framework gradually to unwind an increasingly unviable policy of centralised procurement of foodgrains in an obviously altered context of food surpluses or, at any rate, of widening mismatches between procurement and off-take from the Public Distribution System. The contradictions in the inherited policy matrix are well-known. Food subsidies which are supposed to benefit the poor mainly nourish the byzantine public sector Food Corporation of India in its vastly overextended procurement, storage and logistics operations. The concept of the MSP, originally intended to protect farmers against the contingency of farm price crashes, has largely helped the well-to-do among the farmers in Punjab, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh, sell wheat and rice without effort and not to look upon value-added crop diversification as a national opportunity. Above everything else, centralised procurement anchored in a politically-manoeuvrable MSP system, has distorted the constitutionally-designed sharing of functions between the Union and the States un-

der which agriculture and food belong to the domain of the States.

What is the vision of the new brave world which Mr. Shanta Kumar has now outlined? First, the Centre will do away with what is widely perceived as its obligation to procure foodgrains at MSP, thus leaving the farmers to market the produce on their own, fetching prices which the market will offer. Does this mean automatically that the Centre will save its large subsidy bill, estimated at around Rs. 21,000 crores a year? Not necessarily. The Government's commitment to the farmers in terms of MSP will continue to operate in the sense that the Government (Centre or States?) will compensate the farmer for the shortfall of the market price received in relation to the MSP announced. Given the certainty that market prices will vary among the diverse regions in the country, a policy of actual cash disbursement to the farmers will entail enormous administrative hassles. Yet Mr. Shanta Kumar's point that the system of MSP and procurement based on it, at present, benefits largely the producers in Punjab, Haryana and Andhra Pradesh, accounting for 80 per cent of procurement of foodgrains in the country, and that the alternative proposed, would benefit every farmer in the country, is indeed specious given the fact that the MSP and marketable surplus with the farmers are necessarily correlated.

Buffer stocks for food security and PDS for consumer protection from the inequities of the market will evidently continue but under the responsibility of the States. That, over a period, the FCI will have to be downsized and that the determination of the MSP will itself be taken outside the purview of the political establishment are the necessary ingredients of the new food policy adumbrated. Imperative as the reforms are, who will bite the bullet?

THE HINDU

10 NOV 2001

Using the food mountain

By M. S. Swaminathan

The huge grain stocks afford uncommon opportunities for eliminating endemic hunger, strengthening ecological security, reducing school 'push outs'.

10-10
10/11

THE PRIME MINISTER and the Government of India are to be commended for three important recent initiatives for dealing with the mounting grain stocks in a socially and environmentally meaningful manner. First, the Prime Minister announced on August 15, the initiation of the Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana with an initial allocation of 5 million tonnes of foodgrains for organising food-for-work programmes. Second, a million tonnes of foodgrains have been offered to Afghanistan, through the World Food Programme, the largest assistance of this kind given by any nation to a people in deep distress. Third, the Government has decided to launch a Grain Bank Scheme (GBS) in tribal areas, with an initial allocation of one million tonnes of foodgrains and Rs. 66 crores in cash for meeting the transportation costs.

India is home to the largest number of poor in the world, judged by the World Bank's poverty line of per capita income of one dollar or less a day (i.e. about Rs. 48 per capita a day). Food stocks are growing, while chronic protein-energy under-nutrition caused by poverty, hidden hunger resulting from micro-nutrient deficiencies, and transient hunger triggered by natural calamities such as drought, still prevail to an unacceptable extent. A famine of income, which in turn arises from a famine of jobs or sustainable livelihood opportunities, is currently our major food security challenge. This is where the huge grain stocks afford uncommon opportunities for eliminating endemic hunger, strengthening ecological security, reducing school "push outs" who are victims of unfavourable economic and social circumstances, and minimising the incidence of diseases such as tuberculosis and leprosy where complete cure needs prolonged treatment.

While the manner of use of the foodgrains offered to Afghanistan is not in our hands, we can shape the impact of the Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana and the tribal food and health security programmes in a manner that both econom-

ic development and ecological regeneration are accelerated. This will, however, call for a community centered and controlled food bank movement. The term "food bank" is preferable to grain bank, since in many tribal and rural areas, tuber crops serve as life-saving foods. Local crops, such as ragi, samai, bajra and several other millets are more nutritious than wheat or rice and they along with other life-saving crops such as tubers can also be purchased and distributed once the community grain banks are established with the initial grant of grain offered by the Government of India. The community grain banks should not be conceived as an emergency operation, but should be structured in a manner that they become the hubs of a sustainable and replicable community nutrition and ecological security system.

The community grain banks can perform multiple functions depending upon local needs and opportunities. In the area of health, the control of tuberculosis and leprosy can be speeded up if foodgrains can be given to those whose economic circumstances do not permit taking drugs regularly over many months. The Tuberculosis Research Centre at Chennai is initiating an imaginative programme in collaboration with the U.N. World Food Programme, for using foodgrains to encourage the regular intake of the needed drugs. Similarly, in the area of education, economic and social conditions prevent many children, belonging to the category of child labour, as well as adolescent girls, from continuing their school education. By introducing carefully-designed food for education programmes, substantial progress can be made in reducing the prevalence of such school push-outs.

Another area of nutrition security which can be strengthened through community grain banks is the introduction of

a whole lifecycle approach to overcoming malnutrition during various stages in one's life, ranging from pregnant mothers and infants to old and infirm persons. This will help bring down speedily the incidence of low birth weight children and infant and maternal mortality rates. This will call for steps which can foster the integrated implementation of numerous on-going nutrition intervention programmes.

Strengthening ecological security will be another lasting benefit from the use of grain for the conservation and enhancement of natural resources. The new tribal area grain bank programme should be structured in such a manner that foodgrains are used to establish field level gene banks to conserve local agro-biodiversity, seed banks and water banks. Community grain banks can then promote concurrent progress in achieving desirable goals in conservation, education and nutrition. The storage bins can be designed according to local climatic conditions and separate bins can be fabricated locally for different grains. The Save Grain programme of the Government of India can be used for training and capacity building in storage methods. The Rural Godown Scheme can be integrated with community grain banks.

Grain banks already exist in different parts of the country, set up and operated by both Government and non-governmental agencies. The Madhya Pradesh Government has institutionalised the grain bank (called Anna Kosh) programme. The Government of Rajasthan is planning to integrate the community grain bank initiative with the ongoing Gandhi Gram Yojana, which has several social and ecological objectives including local level water security. The available experience stresses the need for community control and involvement to ensure

sustainability and replicability. Otherwise, the grain banks will vanish when Government support ends.

Community grain banks should become central to community-managed nutrition and ecological security programmes. Only then will transaction costs become affordable and the programme replicable. Community grain banks provide opportunities for achieving convergence and synergy among the numerous yojanas initiated in recent years, including Annapoorna and Antyodaya Anna Yojana. The time is opportune for unifying all of them under the supervision of gram sabhas into a community nutrition security system based on a whole lifecycle approach.

In continuation of the present policy to use the surplus grain stocks in a manner that lasting benefits accrue to the people and to the nation, I would suggest the immediate allocation of one million tonnes of grains and some cash amount for strengthening the ecological security of coastal areas and the Lakshadweep and Andaman group of islands. This will help restore the degraded mangrove ecosystems, control sea erosion and revitalise the habitats of migratory birds, in addition to promoting sustainable capture and culture fisheries. Similarly, a separate allocation of 2 million tonnes of foodgrains for the eco-restoration of hydrologic and biodiversity "hot spots" in the Himalayas (including the Northeast), and Western and Eastern Ghats regions will confer several invaluable long term and down-stream benefits. Cherapunji in Meghalaya, which has a very high annual rainfall, will then no longer remain "thirsty" during summer months.

Thanks to the impressive grain stocks, which may go up to 100 million tonnes next year if consumption capacity of the poor does not improve, we have for the first time in the history of Independent India an opportunity to leapfrog in achieving freedom from poverty-induced hunger, illiteracy and ill-health. I hope we will not miss this opportunity, since it may not come again.

10 NOV 2004

Governance and security

By P.R. Chari

119-10 811

THE DRAMATIC events following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon have completely deflected attention from the inadequacies of our governance processes in grappling with the perennial threats to our national security. The linkages between governance and security, or, in obverse, misgovernance and insecurity, however, remain unclear. Governance can be equated with "ruling" and exercising the police powers of the state. Among its synonyms the "manner of governing" captures much better the role of governance in democratic and plural societies, but this does not encapsulate its fuller dimensions. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Security (OECD) believes that: "The concept of governance denotes the use of political authority and exercise of control in a society in relation to the management of its resources for social and economic development. This broad definition encompasses the role of public authorities in establishing the environment in which economic operators function and in determining the distribution of benefits as well as the nature of the relationship between the ruler and the ruled".

This brings us to the issue of security. Increasingly, the restriction of security to its military aspects, and equating it with the protection of the state's territorial integrity from external assault and internal disruption is being recognised as too narrow an understanding of this term. The end of the Cold War era, growing egalitarianism in the international system with a diffusion of the democratic idea, and globalisation of the world economy have forced rethinking on a limited conception of security. It is appreciated now that the non-traditional sources of insecurity such as demographic movements due to political or environmental or economic reasons, and environmental degradation constitute serious threats to national security. So are transnational threats such as international terrorism with its seminal links to arms and drugs smuggling, money laundering and organised crime; they provide a context for regional and international cooperation to ensure na-

India's ruling elite is bound together by a common faith in a militarist approach to national security and a 'realist' foreign policy paradigm... It is dismissive of the linkages between security and governance.

tional security. Above all, human security or the security of the individual, in contradistinction to the security of the state, has acquired a new significance, necessitating larger resources to be allocated for socio-economic development.

The linkages and interactions between governance and security across Asia was the theme of a major conference held recently in Singapore between scholars from Northeast Asia, Southeast Asia and South Asia. It soon became clear that their understanding of these issues was quite dissimilar. For one, the approach to governance and its problems was different in countries that had authoritarian regimes and those at different stages of democratic working. The approach to the security issue was also dissimilar. In general, the greatest sensitivity to the human and non-traditional sources of security obtained in Southeast Asia, less so in Northeast Asia, and least in South Asia.

The indifference in India to the problems of non-traditional and human aspects of security is explicable from the nature of its ruling elite. Otherwise designated "strategic enclaves", it comprises an amorphous collection of retired civil and military officials, defence correspondents, right wing politicians and scientists in the nuclear and defence establishments. They are bound together by a common faith in a militaristic approach to national security and a 'realist' foreign policy paradigm. Their influence outside the Government feeds a natural propensity within the governing structures to emphasise the military and dismiss the non-military and human aspects of security as well meaning, but naive and unrealistic. This mindset in New Delhi's ruling elite predisposes it to be equally dismissive of the linkages between security and governance. There is also an intriguing paucity of documentation of what exactly constitutes the ruling elite's

understanding of the threat to national security. Apparently, the National Security Advisory Board has prepared a Strategic Defence Review; wisely, however, the Government has not published it for discussion after its bruising experience with criticism of the Draft Nuclear Doctrine.

The manifestations of poor governance are plainly apparent in India; they are exemplified by the wasteful use of scarce resources, an unresponsive administration at its cutting edges, pervasive corruption at all levels and, of moment to this discussion, little policy coherence to address the problems of national security. These manifestations of misgovernance include the lack of devolution and decentralisation of powers, unimaginative dealing with minorities of all descriptions, decay of institutions and a ruling elite basically interested in self-aggrandisement. Only the trappings of democracy, therefore, obtain in the country, not its substance, resulting in a patrimonial form of governance that reflects the feudal character of its governing classes. Indeed, the growing crisis of governance in India is evident from the steady crumbling of its democratic institutions, the increasing alienation of its minority populations from the state and the nexus that has encrusted between the corrupt elements in politics, bureaucracy and business with organised criminal elements. With the state machinery for maintenance of law and order becoming politicised, the citizen's personal security is prejudiced; assuring this remains the state's primary duty.

Why have governance and security deteriorated so rapidly in India over the years? The systemic answers are a growing polarisation of society along several divides — caste, class, community — which has affected both governance and security adversely. An externally inspired pattern of development has conspicuous-

ly failed, but has exacerbated these divides. This has spawned a greater centralisation of power, though the need of the times is greater devolution and decentralisation of administrative and financial powers to the periphery for successfully working the federal principle in India. All this is occurring simultaneously with an information revolution that has enabled the print and electronic media to reach vast segments of the population, spurring the associated revolution of rising expectations, increasing resentments and resultant violence. Above all, the steady criminalisation of politics and the politicisation of crime deserve far greater notice. In a recent conference, police officers spoke of their trauma in having to salute and provide guards of honour for Ministers with criminal records. More disconcertingly, the nexus between station house officers and politicians ensures that these basic units of police administration are not under the control of the Superintendents of Police in the districts. The criminalisation of politics has thus eroded the systemic capacity of the state to maintain law and order but permitted the entry of organised crime into its governance processes. Naturally, this corrodes the ability of the state to provide security, but creates a milieu propitious for low intensity conflict and high intensity crime.

Two issues need immediate redress if this dismal state of affairs is not to deteriorate further. First, a greater understanding needs promotion that India's essential genius lies in its tradition of tolerance, recognising multiculturalism as an operating principle of governance, which provides the context for a greater sharing of state authority with the people. Second, the compulsions of coalition and divisive politics wear away political will, flagging the need for some minimum consensus being sought by political parties on recognising the national interests. Addressing the reform of the deeply-flawed electoral financing process is urgent, around which this consensus could be garnered.

(The writer is Director, Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi.)

RECEIVED

3 NOV 2001

11-12 Sectarian Scapegoats 20/10

It is perhaps a truism to say that the world has become a far more dangerous place post-September 11. This is — contrary to the noises emanating from official America — not because humanity is suddenly confronted with a menace that it didn't know before, namely, global terrorism. Outside the American mainland, nations have learnt to coexist with the scourge of terrorism for a long time. The real dangers of September 11 go deeper. Ultimately, they have to do with the unprecedented levels of chauvinism and prejudice which Terror Tuesday has injected into the body politic across the face of the globe. In these columns a few weeks ago, we took issue with one manifestation of this tendency: the growing belief that the terrorist attacks on America represented nothing less than a global clash of civilisations between a Christian-dominated West on the one hand and Islamic societies on the other. Apart from focusing our attention on the West, we had implicitly hinted at the unthinkable repercussions of something similar erupting in our own backyard, especially given the intense political contestation over the meaning of nationalism in this country for the last decade or more. The events of the past several weeks have brought home to us the dangers of that omission. Far from exercising caution or restraint, sections of the ruling coalition — notably the BJP — have seen in the present global crisis an opportunity to further their own narrow and divisive political agenda.

This is especially so in UP where the party is facing an imminent assembly election. Having performed poorly in elections to five state assemblies in April this year, the outcome of the UP polls is crucial not just to the future of the party but the very survival of the ruling coalition at the Centre. It is no secret too that on current form the party's prospect of a creditable performance in the coming polls are, at best, uncertain. It is this growing sense of desperation which explains the BJP's thinly-veiled attempts to use the current global anxiety about terrorism to unleash an anti-minority sentiment in the state. From the partisan banning of SIMI to the large-scale deletions of minority names from the electoral rolls in UP, from the vandalism of the Taj Mahal by activists belonging to the party's youth wing last week to the storming on Wednesday — in flagrant violation of Supreme Court orders — of the disputed structure in Ayodhya by VHP leaders, there have been any number of recent signs which betray the party's gameplan of upping the communal ante. Needless to say, this course is fraught with serious implications not just for peace and security at home but also for our image and standing in the eyes of the international community. Now more than at any other time in our recent history, there is an urgent need for political parties, cutting across the spectrum, to demonstrate a bipartisan approach to sensitive issues of national security. This responsibility is even greater in the case of the BJP because of its prominent position in the ruling coalition. The BJP has long prided itself on its nationalist credentials. It is time, the party learnt to walk this talk.

Fare Deal

THE TIMES OF INDIA

20 001 2001

India says it has long-term stakes in Afghanistan

HO 13
12/10

By Atul Aneja

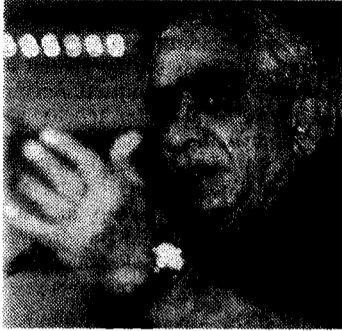
NEW DELHI, OCT. 11. India today announced it had a long-term political stake in Afghanistan, even as it ruled out "hot pursuit" against terrorists who had infiltrated Jammu and Kashmir.

Addressing a press conference, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, said he did not visualise a possibility of launching "hot pursuits" against extremists, despite the recent provocations such as the October 1 suicide attack on the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly.

Government sources said Mr. Singh was attempting to defuse anxiety in some foreign capitals that India might not exercise restraint vis-a-vis Pakistan after the suicide attack on the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly. Even the Russian President, Mr. Vladimir Putin, during his telephone conversation with the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, on Monday, discussed India-Pakistan relations in the backdrop of the Assembly attack.

India was ready for a discussion on Jammu and Kashmir with the U.S. Secretary of State, Gen. Colin Powell, when he visits New Delhi shortly, Mr. Singh said. India is likely to impress upon Gen. Powell that while it exercised restraint, it would expect Islamabad to rein in terrorism in Kashmir. Besides, India would want Pakistan shed its fixation on Kashmir and accept a broad-based dialogue with New Delhi.

Mr. Singh, citing his preoccupation at home, said his visit to Islamabad was not on the cards.



The External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, addressing a press conference in New Delhi on Thursday. — Photo: Sandeep Saxena

Besides, Pakistan had not yet formally invited him.

Declaring that it is a player in the post-Taliban political settlement of Afghanistan, Mr. Singh indicated New Delhi might not be inclined to accept the imposition of the former King, Zahir Shah, as the country's leader. The transition from the existing theocracy to democratic rule in Afghanistan "rather than personality-based should be process-based", he said.

Flagging off its interest in Afghanistan, India is sending one million tonnes of wheat, tents, blankets and quilts and expanding its medical services for its northern neighbour. India, the minister said, would continue to remain involved in Afghanistan's future development, including the rehabilitation of its war-torn infrastructure.

India has big security stakes in Afghanistan. Pakistan, according to sources, has shifted some of

the Kashmiri training camps on its soil to Afghanistan. Not surprisingly, Mr. Singh pointed out that the destruction of training camps in Afghanistan benefited India directly.

India's interests in a post-Taliban settlement of Afghanistan would be better served by a rapid advance by the Northern Alliance on the ground, the sources said. In case the Northern Alliance, which India along with Russia and Iran supports, recaptures larger portion of territory, it would improve its position in negotiating a power-sharing deal with the Afghan opposition later.

But, the Northern Alliance's advance seems to have been retarded as U.S. planes have so far not targeted Taliban's heavy weaponry, including tanks and artillery. "The U.S. strikes have not hit forward positions but targeted reserves in the rear", Mr. Singh said.

According to analysts, the U.S. may not yet be prepared to see a Northern Alliance rapidly advancing towards Afghanistan's strategic hubs of Mazar-e-Sharief in the north, Herat in the west and Kabul in the centre. Washington, on the contrary, may want to accommodate the Taliban, without its extremist elements, in a future political arrangement in Afghanistan. But this is not possible unless the Northern Alliance's advance on the ground is slowed down and controlled. A Northern Alliance sweep over the country, on the contrary, may not suit the U.S. as it could hamper the formation of broad-based and a regionally acceptable government in that country.

THE HINDU

12 OCT 2001

Indian air farce: 'Hijack' has nation on edge

PM appoints high-level committee to probe incident

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: A drama that arose out of misunderstanding or a serious hijack attempt which was foiled? Despite the happy ending to a harrowing night, there is still confusion and an air of mystery about what exactly happened aboard the Alliance Air Mumbai-Delhi flight.

On Thursday evening, nearly 18 hours after the incident, the authorities were tying themselves in knots to explain how the drama turned into a mid-air farce.

It has led to much embarrassment for the government, with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee ordering a high-level probe into the incident, replacing within hours another committee appointed by civil aviation minister Syed Shahnawaz Hussain. The decision came after the PM expressed displeasure over the episode. The government had earlier announced a three-member committee headed by H.S. Khola, director general of civil aviation.

Announcing the PM's decision, civil aviation secretary A.H. Jung told presspersons that the new committee would be headed by S.B. Mohapatra, special secretary in the home ministry, and would consist of Mr Khola, Hassan Gafoor, director security, Air-India, and a representative of the home ministry.

Mr Hussain had earlier stated that the incident was the outcome of a communication gap between the Ahmedabad air traffic control (ATC) and the pilot of the aircraft. But the Delhi police has turned the incident on its head. They insisted on registering a case of hijacking and kidnapping, besides detaining two persons who, they indicated, could be charged with these offences.

The drama began innocuously on Wednesday with

the Alliance Air flight taking off from Mumbai at 11 p.m. bound for Delhi. At 11.22 p.m., the Alliance Air office in Delhi received a phone call warning that the flight might be hijacked.

The call was taken by a senior supervisor, who promptly informed his seniors. Messages were flashed to the Ahmedabad ATC and they, in turn, advised the pilot, Ashwini Behl, to lock the cockpit and take all precautionary anti-hijacking measures.

Shortly after, Mr Hussain went on the air, confirming that the aircraft had been hijacked and even suggesting that some basic steps had already been taken. His secretary, A.H. Jung, even gave details—that the hijackers spoke broken English and had brought the plane to Delhi for further negotiations.

Police and commandos of the National Security Guards stormed the plane but found no one in the cockpit except for the two pilots, according to Mr Hussain.

In a final twist to the farce—two passengers, I.K. Sharma and Sushil Jha, whose movements inside the aircraft were interpreted by an airhostess as shifty and suspicious—were detained by the police and commandos and grilled.

This has raised a host of questions as to whether the whole event was the fallout of a misunderstanding between the ATC and the pilot, or whether it was part of a mock drill that went awry.

The police, on their part, maintain that the FIR registered only states the offences but does not name anyone. "Even an intent to cause an offence can be registered as an offence. We have checked with legal experts. The FIR simply means it is a report based on the first information we get and the involvement of the two men is still being probed," an officer said.



NIGHT FLIGHT TO PANICISTAN



A shocked family (top left) that faced the hijack drama on the Alliance Air Boeing 737 flight comes down to earth in more ways than one at Palam Airport in New Delhi early on Thursday morning even as relatives of other passengers keep in touch at the airports in Delhi and Mumbai (bottom right).

Gautam Singh/Hemant Shrivastava

HIGH-LEVEL PROBE ORDERED

PM upset over handling of 'hijack' episode

By Our Special Correspondent *J. R. A.*

HD-1
5/10

NEW DELHI, Oct. 4. With embarrassment writ large on its face over the so-called hijacking of the Alliance Air flight from Mumbai to Delhi late last night, the Government today ordered a high-level probe, headed by the Special Secretary in the Home Ministry, Mr. S. B. Mahapatra, into the incident. The level of the inquiry was upgraded (it was initially to be headed by the Director-General, Civil Aviation) after the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, expressed his displeasure at the way things were handled and the top administrators, including himself, kept on their toes till the wee hours of the morning.

In fact, Mr. Vajpayee was reportedly awake till 4 a.m. and the Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, was at the Rajiv Gandhi Bhavan where the Crisis Management Group was monitoring the situation. Other top officials, including the Prime Minister's Principal Secretary and National Security Adviser, Mr. Brajesh Mishra, were also huddled together for the better part of the night.

An elaborate explanation was put out by the Civil Aviation Ministry saying there was a mistake in understanding the message which suggested that the flight from Mumbai "is going to be hijacked." It was received by the Operations Department of Air Alliance and passed on to the officials concerned and the Air Traffic Control (ATC). Since the plane was airborne, instructions were sought from the Commissioner of Security of Civil Aviation, Mr. Veeranna Aivalli, who suggested that the pilot be asked to lock the cockpit and take all possible precautions. These

instructions were passed on to the ATC, Ahmedabad, as the plane was flying over the city.

Once the Captain locked the cockpit door, he gave instructions to the passengers over the intercom to fasten their seat belts but did not reveal anything. He was in touch with the cabin crew on the internal phone and asked them to look for suspicious passenger movement. The crew deactivated the toilet adjacent to the cockpit. According to the Ministry version, a passenger insisted on using the toilet. He became aggressive when he was asked to use the one at the rear. He demanded to see the Captain and, on being denied the request, became fidgety and constantly searched his handbag. At this stage, (around 12.25 a.m.) a message was passed on to the Delhi ATC that there seemed to be a hijacker on board. Explaining why such heightened activity took place late in the night, the Civil Aviation Ministry said that after the September 11 attacks in the U. S., there was a spate of inputs from various agencies which indicated a possibility of hijacking taking place in India. Numerous calls to this effect were being received in different airline offices, ATCs and elsewhere. Therefore, the standard procedures and contingency plans were immediately activated.

Once the plane landed in Delhi and was isolated and surrounded by commandos, it gradually became clear, by 3.30 a.m., that there had been no hijack. Yet, two passengers were detained for questioning and later let off. Neither any arrest was made nor an FIR lodged.

A farce, says Pak.: Page 15

[Faint, illegible markings]

Flight from Mumbai flies into 'false alarm', passengers freed

FROM SUJAN DUTTA AND AGENCIES

New Delhi, Oct. 3: An Alliance Air Boeing 787 flight from Mumbai to Delhi was hijacked late tonight, civil aviation minister Shah Nawaz Hussain said, only to declare three hours later that it was a "false alarm".

As the "crisis" ended as mysteriously as it had begun, the passengers were allowed to leave the plane around 4 am.

The minister had said earlier that a hijack distress call had been received by the air traffic control in New Delhi where the plane landed around 1 am.

Some passengers said over cellphone they have not seen the hijackers and they have been told that there was a technical problem. This, along with the absence of sky marshals aboard, had sparked speculation that it could be a mock exercise or a false alarm.

The "hijackers" are said to number two. The number of passengers, including the hijackers, on the flight (No. CD7444) was put at 46 and crew six, taking the total number of people on board to 52. Initial reports said they knew "little English".

Unconfirmed reports said the cockpit seemed to have been sealed. The pilots have radioed for "one or two" engineers to come on board.

A message from the plane to air traffic control had sought details of the weather in Lahore. The hijackers are communicating with the pilots through the cabin crew. The hijackers are also believed to be in touch with ATC officials over the cellphone.

Three of the passengers are women. The Shiv Sena MP from Aurangabad, Chandrakant Khairi, and Union minister Sumitra

Mahajan's brother Arun Sathe were among those on board. The plane was under the command of Captain Ashwin Bahal.

A passenger who identified himself as Gulshan Grover called his brother Manoj Kumar Grover, on his cellphone twice.

The first call was at 1.15 am. He said: "Main abhi baat nahi kaar sarkta hoon. Tum abhi gadi main baithe raho. (I can't talk to you now. You remain in the car)." He called again 30 minutes later to say that they were being asked to switch off their cellphones.

At 2.15 am, Ajay Golcha, another passenger, called his brothers Rajesh and Ashok and said there was a technical snag.

But when his brothers told him that it seemed to be a hijack, Ajay mumbled that he could not talk much more.

Later, The Telegraph called Ajay on his cellphone.

"Are you comfortable?"

"Yes," Ajay said.

"Do you know what has happened?"

"Bahar se suna hai."

"Are you having difficulty talking on the mobile?"

"Haan ji."

Civil aviation secretary A. Jung said that according to the crew, hijackers have "something in their hands". But sources said they are unlikely to have guns with them.

The Prime Minister has been informed and the aviation minister has reached the airport. Home minister L.K. Advani has started a crisis management meeting with top security and airport officials. The group is considering two options — storming the plane or "talking down" the hijackers.

The plane took off from Mumbai at 11.15 pm. The first information about the hijack was received at 12.15 pm through a distress call from a passenger. The plane is parked on Runway 27.

A fuel truck has been placed in front of the plane to prevent it from taking off. Officials working on contingency plans indicated that an effort might be made to blow up the tyres to prevent any take-off like a hijacked Indian Airlines flight did from Amritsar after being refuelled in December 1999.

That plane had been commandeered from Kathmandu to Amritsar and to Dubai before being taken to Kandahar. Alliance Airlines is a subsidiary of Indian Airlines.

Commandos of the National Security Guard had surrounded the aircraft. A crisis management team has started functioning at the airport. Initial report said all the passengers are safe. Civil aviation minister Hussain said soon after the flight had taken off from Mumbai, an anonymous call was received that the flight was going to be hijacked. A little later, the pilot had radioed to air traffic control about the hijack.

Chilling alert

Calcutta, Oct. 3: Airports across the country had been told to tighten security on Sunday after a reported threat by the Jaish-e-Mohammad that it would hijack a flight within two days.

"The alert was in force since Sunday," an official said. An intelligence alert report, sent to all senior security officials in Calcutta, read: "A fundamentalist group has plans to hijack a flight from our country within two days."

THE TELEGRAPH

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4-8 WAR GAMES 26/9
North Block should get back to work

CII's mid-fiscal year survey has been rendered somewhat obsolete by 11 September's terror. Most of the bad news is liable to get worse in the near future. For example, 40 per cent of exporters reported decline in business to CII surveyors; American troubles will severely affect garments and textiles, gems and jewellery, and IT services. The coming October-December quarter, which usually registers a seasonal peak in many exports thanks to festival and holiday shopping, will produce much less cheer this time, or even a business catastrophe for some. In that context, RBI's reducing interest rates on export credit is a bit of a non-starter. Financial incentives are of little use when the problem is inadequate demand produced by a non-economic shock. Inadequate demand is a major problem in the domestic market too. But here it is the result of serial economic mismanagement. Specifically, official apathy in the face of a long-observed decline in business and consumer tempo. Now the apathy even has an excuse — the war-like environment in India's neighbourhood. In the face of such grave geopolitical conundrums, issues like falling sales and investment — more than 30 per cent of the 129 sectors surveyed by CII reported such decline — are thought to be puerile. This is, needless to say, absolutely absurd and the Prime Minister must tell his finance minister that his job is not to, or not only, to make contingency planning for conflict situations.

Rather, Sinha should notice that rainfall data over the last month or so indicates that monsoon may not act as an aperitif for rural appetite for manufactured goods. If that turns out to be the case, more monetary sops — cuts in the bank rate and the cash reserve ratio — may not do the trick. The PMO is placing great emphasis on rural earning generation programmes. But as the cruelly ironical video conferencing with starving Orissa villagers showed, it is easy to get one-time telecom links to benighted parts of India. Putting in place a delivery mechanism for rural jobs and incomes is difficult to the point of being impossible. In any case, all investments in upgrading the purchasing power of villagers and infrastructure in villages will not yield results quick enough to make a difference to economic performance in the last six months of 2001-2002. The same benefits lag holds if the government implements some big ticket reforms. This has provoked some analysts to suggest a short-term boost via consumption, American style. The most favoured remedy is a cut in excise rates which, it is argued, will boost sales of white goods and other consumer durables and provide some second order positive effects on general business confidence. Bear in mind though consumers have ignored price and non-price sops offered by manufacturers. So, there are some doubts whether a government-induced price decline — assuming manufacturers pass on the excise duty cut — will work very well. Given the portents, though, this is an idea North Block may want to consider, provided it can tear itself away from the excitement of war.

THE STATESMAN

26 SEP 2001

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9/8

Hunger in a land of plenty gndin

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KASHIPUR BLOCK of Orissa's Rayagada district is a drive of nearly 500 km from Bhubaneswar across a region of idyllic green and brimming water bodies. But the picture-postcard surroundings hide a harsh reality. Hunger.

Even as a controversy rages over the alleged starvation deaths in the area, what is clear is that the plight of the people, mostly tribals, has only worsened over the years. The Government godowns are overflowing with grain but the people have no money to buy it. They have no money because they get no work. Health care facilities too are almost non-existent.

Since June-July this year, when the monsoon struck, the people have gone without work. The tribals supplemented their meagre rice supplies with mango kernels, ragi and tamarind seeds.

The deaths began to be reported from the region. Since the last week of July, over 20 people have died in Kashipur. While the State Government maintains food poisoning, fever, and dysentery were the causes, its critics blame it on food scarcity and the resultant starvation.

Why do the people in Kashipur eat mango kernels? The authorities claim it is part of the tribals' traditional diet. The tribals, however, are divided on the issue. While a section says it is a traditional food source, another says the food shortage forces people to boil mango kernels and drink the soup.

The District Collector of Rayagada, Mr. Bishnupada Sethi, maintains no one has died of starvation in Kashipur. "By no stretch of imagination can these deaths be called starvation deaths."

Of the 21 deaths that took place between July 27 and August 28, Mr. Sethi claims the first of the seven deaths in Panasguda village were due to food poisoning and the four deaths in Bilamal village were due to consumption of poisonous mushrooms. Four deaths in Pitajodi village were also due to food poisoning, and six in Badamaribhatta, Tikri-Jhadia, Upar Jhiri and Tala Jhiri villages were due to various diseases, he says.

Asked if people would eat mango kernels if they had enough food, Mr. Sethi says this was being consumed by the people in other parts of Rayagada and the neighbouring districts as well. About 64,000 of the one lakh-odd people of Kashipur were covered under various social security schemes, and food-for-work programmes had started in as many as 65 villages, claims Mr. Sethi, adding that there was no question of anyone dying of starvation in his district.

The Chief Minister, Mr. Naveen Patnaik, who visited Kashipur a few days ago, says that there was no shortage of food in the area and that PDS rice was readily available. He said that those who died in the region had collected their quota of PDS rice.

Maintaining that the deaths were due to food poisoning and diseases, Mr. Patnaik says the charges of starvation deaths were politically motivated. "Truth will always come out," he says.

A medical team from the MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur, which visited Kashipur and investigated about 15



THE PRICE OF A GOVERNMENT'S SLUMBER: This child went into coma after eating mango kernels gone bad.

deaths, also concluded that the deaths were due to food poisoning, according to the State Government.

But the fact remains that Kashipur has only grown poorer over the years. Out of the 31,321 households in the block, the number of families living below the poverty line has increased from 15,662 in 1992 to 24,482 in 1997. The State Government has so far not been to issue BPL ration cards to the 8,000-odd families added to the BPL list in 1997. This is because the State-level list of 1997 is yet to be given a final shape.

It is said the authorities are delaying the implementation of the list due to shortage

Even as a controversy rages over whether there were starvation deaths, what is clear is that the plight of the people of Kashipur in Orissa has worsened over the years. Prafulla Das reports.

of funds. The State Government is already spending over Rs. 53 crores a year towards subsidy in providing BPL rice at a cheaper rate to the people in the tribal-dominated areas of the State.

But food insecurity looms. And the tribals of Kashipur, with little work in hand, are increasingly getting vulnerable. Their rugged

terrain together with the near total absence of irrigation in the district have made the going worse.

The scantily-clad, ill-fed children scampering around the tiny hamlets are proof that little has changed for Kashipur's tribals though there has been a lot of hue and cry over their plight. Rajiv Gandhi as

Prime Minister visited Kashipur in 1987 after reports of alleged starvation deaths in the area. His visit had led to the launch of the Orissa Tribal Development Project in Kashipur in 1988. Though a sum of Rs. 60 crores was spent, no perceptible improvement is visible.

The State Special Relief Commissioner (SRC), Mr. Hrushikesh Panda, says the project has failed to achieve its primary objective of increasing the income level of the people, particularly the tribals. The project, implemented during 1988-97, had created a large number of contractors who made easy money with the help of some

dishonest bureaucrats and engineers. In many cases, it was found that the works had been executed without a tender and the contractors had been hand-picked by the project authorities. There was not a single tribal among the contractors. Only recently has the State Government asked the Vigilance Department to investigate the matter.

As charges and counter charges fly on the question of starvation deaths, the truth lies somewhere in between. Critics of the Government insist the tribals eat mango kernels out of compulsion. Others feel it is more a part of their traditional eating habits, developed over decades to cope with persistent food scarcities. Now the State Revenue Minister, Mr. Biswabhusan Harichandan, has announced that the tribals can exchange mango kernels for rice.

Mr. Panda says "the eating of mango kernels is not the issue, because they are eaten by almost all families in this area." He says hygiene is poor in the Tribal hamlets and that appears to be the most likely reason for infection/food poisoning.

Significantly, the Congress leader and Rayagada Zilla Parishad president, Mr. Bijay Gamang, also feels that the recent deaths have nothing to do with starvation. "The deaths may have occurred due to contamination of food."

The tribals form 65 per cent of Kashipur's, one lakh-odd population. Another 20 per cent are Scheduled Castes. There are quite a few rich households in Kashipur, but none of them are tribals. Many Government posts lie vacant. The block was without a BDO for five months. Many posts of doctors and health workers were vacant for long and were being filled up only now.

No one seems to have been able to grasp Kashipur's myriad problems in totality as yet. In the case of the Government, the policies have been more or less the same for the past few decades. Worse, the welfare programmes have been hampered by irregularities in their implementation. The less said about the politicians the better. Congressmen had always denied starvation deaths in the State in the past. They are now claiming that the recent deaths in Kashipur were due to starvation. Maybe those in the power now too are behaving like those in power in the past.

Some of the voluntary agencies, right now trying to generate funds in the name of the hapless tribals by attracting international donor agencies, too may take it easy once the money starts flowing in and the heat dies down. How the money is spent will largely remain under wraps.

Accountability is the key to solving Kashipur's woes. The one thing that could save Kashipur is that the Government officers posted in the area should be made answerable to the people and there should be social audit of the Government's work at regular intervals. For, why should anyone in the country go hungry?

"We will leave no stone unturned to solve the problems of the poor tribals," says Mr. Patnaik. Let us hope the promises will be kept this time at least.

✓ 'IDENTIFY BPL PEOPLE IN TWO WEEKS'

Prevent starvation deaths, says SC ^{9/19}

By Our Legal Correspondent

^{9/19}
^{10/1}
NEW DELHI, SEPT. 3. The Supreme Court today directed 16 States which had not identified the people living below the poverty line (BPL), to do so within two weeks to enable the Governments to distribute food to them under the public distribution system (PDS).

A Bench comprising Mr. Justice B. N. Kirpal and Mr. Justice Ashok Bhan gave this direction during a resumed hearing on a PIL filed by the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) alleging that starvation deaths were taking place in many States despite godowns of the Food Corporation of India overflowing with foodgrains.

In response to the notice, the Attorney-General, Mr. Soli Sorabjee, appearing for the Union Government, informed the Bench that the Centre passed orders on August 31 asking the States to identify the people living below

the poverty line so that they could be provided food under the "Antyodaya scheme".

Mr. Sorabjee said that the Centre had issued necessary orders for speedy supply of foodgrains from the FCI godowns to the PDS being operated by the States. He, however, said this was not successful as many States were yet to identify the BPL families.

Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Goa, Manipur, Nagaland, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Tripura, Uttaranchal, Arunachal Pradesh and the Union Territories of Delhi, Pondicherry, Chandigarh and Lakshadweep had not yet identified the BPL families. The Bench then asked the States to complete the exercise within two weeks.

The Bench expressed anguish over the manner in which the State Governments had handled the starvation deaths and wondered why only 25 kg of food-

grains a month were provided to BPL families despite a provision to supply 73 kg of foodgrains under a Government regulation.

The Bench noted that the primary task of the Governments was to prevent any more starvation deaths in the country. At the same time it suggested that the Governments move in such a way that these people were made competent to take up work. The Bench asked the petitioner to suggest ways and means to overcome the problem.

The Bench, which also issued notices to Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Rajasthan, identified by the petitioner as drought-prone, asked them to respond within a week what steps were taken in their States to alleviate the condition of the BPL families.

See also Page 11

SEP 11 2001

- 4 SEP 2001

Full granary, empty pocket

Minister blows surplus myth

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Sept. 3: The government today admitted the sordid truth: the country's grain silos are overflowing — creating a false sense of food security — because a large number of people simply don't have the money to buy rice and wheat.

Agriculture minister Ajit Singh said the food surplus would not have been created if people had the money to buy the grain.

The country's grain mountain has swelled to 616.71 lakh tonnes of rice and wheat against a minimum food buffer stock requirement of 243 lakh tonnes (100 lakh tonnes of rice and 143 lakh tonnes of wheat). This has created a surplus in the central pool of 373 lakh tonnes of rice and wheat.

It isn't one of the biggest surpluses — a few years ago it had swelled to almost 500 lakh tonnes, and the grain had rotted in the open silos where the government stores most of it.

Statistics lend a different perspective to the chilling reports about the alleged starvation deaths in Orissa — where people have been chewing on mango kernels to try and keep body and soul together.

But there are no bleeding hearts in the government: in fact, the Centre has been aggressively in a denial mode claiming that reports from the state administration and Central teams that toured the worst-hit Kashipur area in Orissa did not support these claims.

With around 36 per cent of the population living below the poverty line, the government has handed out only 36 lakh BPL (below the poverty line) ration cards (each card covers a family of five). That

still leaves a large number of people outside the ambit of the ration card system.

Several states are yet to identify all the people living below the poverty line. A shocked Supreme Court today asked many states, including Orissa and West Bengal, to start enumerating those living in acute poverty. The court also wanted government schemes to be implemented by officials with the right "spirit, inclination and drive". (See Page 7)

Even those who have the cards cannot buy the ration-shop grain because they are deterred by the Central issue price of Rs 4.15 per kg for wheat and Rs 5.65 per kg for rice.

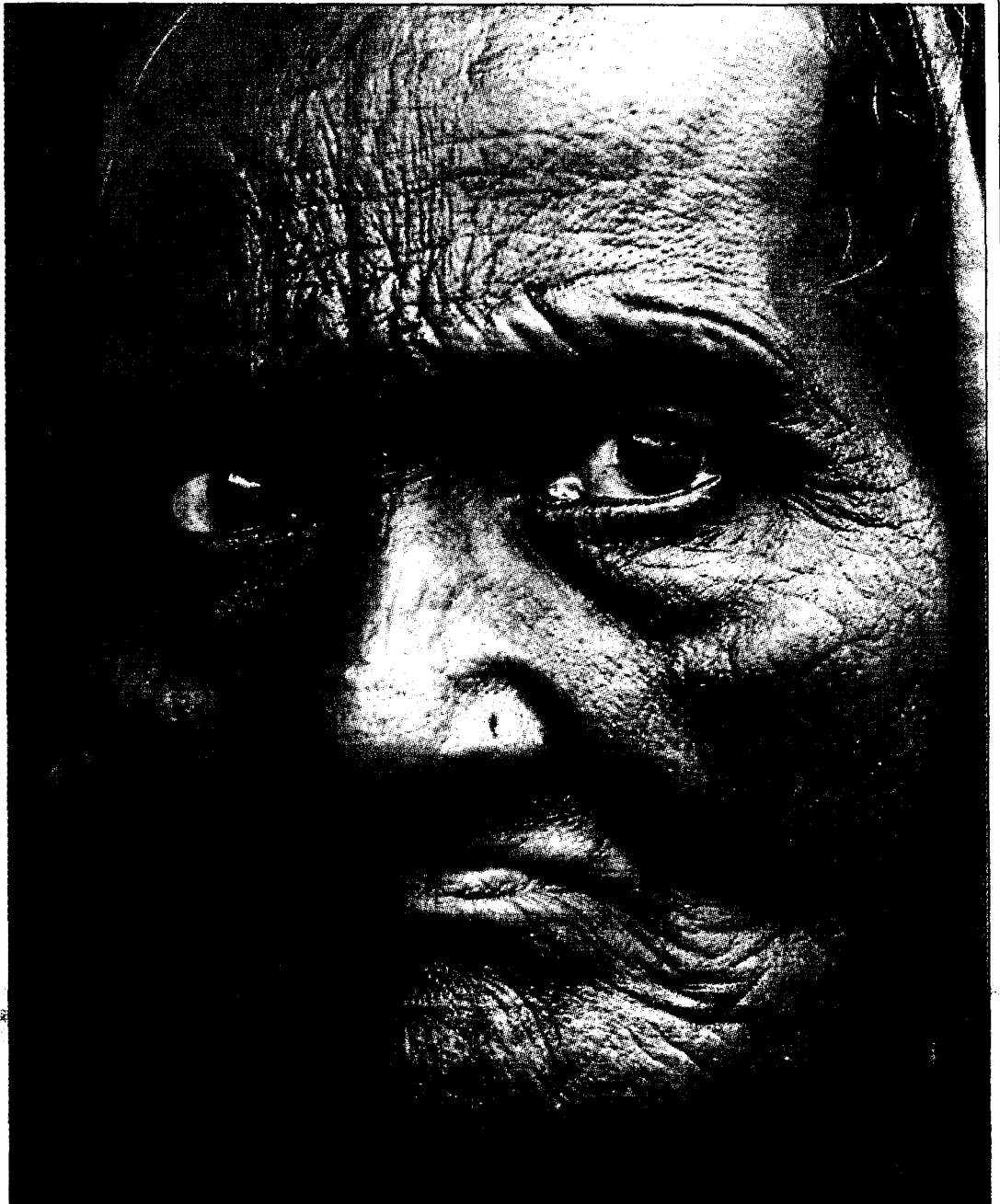
J.N.L. Srivastava, agriculture secretary, said: "The public distribution system (PDS) has to be beefed up. The agriculture ministry cannot send the grain directly to the states. That's the job of the food and PDS department."

Sources in the food and civil supplies department said the Centre had been making grain allocation to the states but the problems had been created because of the poor offtake by the states.

The government had told Parliament last week that in the case of Orissa, foodgrain allocation in 2000-01 in the BPL category was 10.52 lakh tonnes but offtake had been just 6.60 lakh tonnes.

"There's an inherent inefficiency in the system. The problem arises because of vested interests who either do not lift the grain from godowns or siphon it off into another channel. It's not just a simple case of poor offtake by the states. We hire a lot of private godowns and vehicles to transport the grain there. They are at the root of the problem," said a former agriculture secretary.

Apart from providing subsidised food to BPL families, the



ORISSA IN DELHI: A woman seeks alms in the capital. (Reuters)

government also runs the Antodaya Anna Yojna, where each family gets 25 kg of foodgrain at highly subsidised rates — wheat at Rs 2 a kg and rice at Rs 3 a kg. The scheme involves a subsidy of Rs 2,315 crore.

"Indian agriculture is starved of capital. And, in recent times, the public, government and private investments have been going down," Ajit Singh told a seminar to discuss the role of the private sector in agricultural marketing.

The rate of growth of food-grain production is lower than the population growth but the granaries are still overflowing as people do not have the wherewithal to buy the grain, the minister said.

THE TELEGRAPH

- 4 SEP 2001

out of the Prime Minister's residence
on Sunday. — Photo: V. Sudershan

Rabri, Laloo brief PM on flood situation

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2. The Bihar Chief Minister, Ms. Rabri Devi, and Rashtriya Janata Dal president, Mr. Laloo Prasad Yadav, met the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, this evening along with a number of RID MPs to place before him the grave situation in the State as a result of floods.

It seems that Mr. Vajpayee listened to them patiently and assured them that he would look into the case. However, it was indicated that some relief may be

given only after a proper assessment of the situation.

Ms. Rabri Devi had earlier tried to organise an all-party delegation from Bihar to meet Mr. Vajpayee to impress upon him the need for calamity relief for Bihar. However, the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Samata Party refused to cooperate on the plea that Ms. Rabri Devi had not called an all-party meeting in the State to discuss the issue and the details of the demands which would be put before the Prime Minister.

THE HINDU

Centre gets tough with States on PDS

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 2. Against the backdrop of starvation deaths in some parts of the country, the Centre today made it mandatory for States to identify all families below the poverty line (BPL) within three months, issue them ration cards, check irregularities, regulate distribution and monitor the Public Distribution System (PDS) to ensure that they received the foodgrains meant for them.

The directive, issued under the Essential Commodities Act, calls for accountability, fixing responsibility and invoking punitive measures against shirkers.

Announcing this at a press conference here today, the Minister for Food and Civil Supplies, Mr. Shanta Kumar, said that the subsidy and allocation of foodgrains would depend on utilisation by States. This was to increase off-take and ensure proper distribution. In view of the BPL and Antodaya beneficiaries, ration shops should be asked to distribute foodgrains once a week, instead of once a month.

"The order, which has punitive provisions for violation of guidelines, has given a legal shape to the directives given to States by the Centre from time to time to plug irregularities in the PDS system and make ration shops accountable."

The punishment for violations of the order vary from imprisonment between three months and seven years and a fine. At the same time, there is also a provision to award shops and panchayats which work well.

Mr. Shanta Kumar said only 19 States had identified Antodaya

yojna for the poorest of the poor; under the new directive, it was mandatory for all States and Union Territories to do so within three months. Most starvation deaths have occurred in States which are yet to complete the identification of the poorest of the poor for providing wheat at Rs. 2 per kg and rice at 3. About 5 crore people will benefit under the Antodaya scheme.

The Minister said the order would strengthen the hands of the States for weeding out bogus ration cards and for dealing with ration shops which do not display stocks and send data on the receipt and distribution of foodgrains every month to a district officer. The districts would collate the statistics and furnish them to the Centre for a country-wide position of the availability of foodgrains.

It would be on this basis that the next allocation would be made and in case of detection of any diversion, the allocation would be put on hold.

All these provisions were already present in the Act; only, the Centre has decided to enforce them now.

PTI reports:

The Centre had decided to hold talks with States on a "one to one basis" to persuade them to accept the decentralised foodgrains procurement (DFP) proposal and zeroed in on Karnataka, Bihar and Assam, Mr. Shanta Kumar said.

The Food Secretary, Mr. R. D. Kapur, said meetings would be held with the Chief Secretaries of these States here on September 15 to discuss the possibility of DFP "to some extent".

Union govt. will get tough with PDS offenders

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: In a bid to contain the rampant diversion of foodgrains from the public distribution system (PDS), ensure the availability of foodgrains to all beneficiaries, and force state governments to lift what is allocated to them, the Centre has issued a PDS (Control) Order, 2001, under section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.



Shanta Kumar

The order provides for penal action, including imprisonment for a minimum period of three months and a maximum of seven years, for those ration shop owners and officials found guilty of violating clauses 3, 4, 6 and 7 of the order.

Giving details on Sunday, Union minister of consumer affairs and public distribution Shanta Kumar hoped that the order would help address the numerous problems that plague the PDS by providing legal backing to the Centre and the states. He

added that the new arrangement would help in strengthening the arms of the state governments and improve the PDS network in the country.

But the order isn't merely an attempt to help state governments improve the PDS. It now provides for the Centre to "give such directions as it may deem necessary to state governments for execution of all or any such provisions of this order and the state governments shall comply with such directions."

The new order also holds out a threat to those state governments that fail to lift or distribute the foodgrains allocated to them: "Future allocation of foodgrains to states shall be linked to the receipt of

regular reports from the respective states and furnishing of utilisation certificates by them within a period of two months from the month for which allocation is made."

The minister warned that, "Only after verifying that the foodgrains allocated have been distributed will the next allocation be made. Else, there will be a cut in the allocation or subsidy."

FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD

- All those eligible for a ration card should be given one within the next three months
- State govts. urged to identify BPL families and the poorest of the poor within three months
- Those running PDS outlets have to furnish monthly details to the district authorities regarding their foodgrains position
- State governments told to ensure regular monitoring of PDS outlets

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 3, 2001

HD-12
209
FOOD FOR WORK
India (u)

THE REPORTS OF starvation deaths in western Orissa have catalysed the Central Government and political parties into examining how to mitigate rural malnutrition. It should not have taken these deaths — about which there has been an appallingly callous exercise in semantics of whether they were the result of starvation or malnutrition — for such a discussion to suddenly take place, especially since the pile up of 62 million tonnes of cereals so obviously shows that the means to mitigate malnutrition are available in abundance. But belated as the realisation has been, some useful ideas have been thrown up in recent weeks, foremost among them being the renewed emphasis on the role of food-for-work programmes which has been articulated in some detail by the Congress(I). On Independence Day, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, did also announce a new and expanded food-for-work programme, but the silence since August 15 suggests that the proposed Rs. 10,000-crore Sampoorna Gramen Rozgar Yojana (SGRY) could go the way of the many schemes that surface only as announcements on special occasions.

What makes food-for-work programmes especially relevant today is, of course, the mountains of cereal with the Food Corporation of India. But, in general, such programmes have an extremely useful role to play in providing food security, supplementing the income of unskilled labour and in creation of rural economic and social infrastructure. While they work best during the lean agricultural season when rural labour needs work the most, they could be an important source of income for labour in the dry areas of the country where rural employment opportunities are inadequate throughout the year. The challenges in administering most rural employment schemes apply to food-for-work schemes as well; the most important of these is the checking of corruption, monitoring the payment of minimum wages and ensuring the quality of assets created. However, none of these challenges are insurmountable and are

usually just excuses to give short shrift to such schemes. Today, the availability of huge food stocks removes one constraint on financing a large-scale food-for-work programme, but the other — a shortage of funds with the State Governments — has prevented its widespread implementation. Contrary to what its name implies, a food-for-work programme involves a cash component of more than 50 per cent in the total outlay since wages have to be paid partly in cash and there is the expenditure on materials that has to be incurred, both of which are largely the responsibility of the States. The lack of funds or the unwillingness of State Governments to find the cash resources has meant that even when cereals are given free by the Centre, the implementation of the food-for-work programmes has been extremely tardy. Over the past year, for example, less than two-thirds of the 2.2 million tonnes given to food-for-work programmes in eight drought-affected States was utilised. There is therefore a need to develop a new funding mechanism for these schemes, involving partially or entirely additional funds from the Centre. At this stage the proposed SGRY looks like it will be organised as in past similar schemes — with cereals from the Centre and funds from the States — and this could doom it to failure at the very beginning.

The overflowing granaries have brought food-for-work programmes back into focus. But as the Congress party delegation which met Mr. Vajpayee pointed out, such a programme should not be an annual fire-fighting exercise but should be an integral part of a medium-term plan for food security and employment. It is not impossible to devise food-for-work programmes which even in the absence of food mountains with the FCI would channel government-procured grain to activities that guarantee work to at least one adult member of every family. Last but not least, it should not be forgotten that a large-scale national programme will also help revive growth in rural India after a decade of neglect.

THE HINDU

Subject **NDC MEET / CALL TO END CRISIS OF INVESTMENT** *10-8*

gndia (u) **Economic revival must be priority: PM** *219*

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, SEPT. 1. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today told the Chief Ministers that revival of the economy should become the collective priority of the Centre and the State Governments.

Addressing the 49th meeting of the National Development Council (NDC), Mr. Vajpayee said the Centre and the States would have to take steps to end the crisis of investment — both public and private — and announced that the Centre would accelerate large-scale public investments in the infrastructure sector.

"You are aware of our recent initiatives in highways and rural roads. We are now determined to initiate long-pending reforms in the functioning of the railways. We have already announced a Rs 17,000-crore Railway Safety Fund to be spent in the next five years. We shall soon flag off a major investment package for the early completion of many critical and remunerative projects," the Prime Minister said.

It was also announced that the Centre proposed to take up 100 of the 461 projects being closely



The Prime Minister, Mr. A. B. Vajpayee, with (from left) the Union Home Minister, Mr. L. K. Advani, the Planning Commission Deputy Chairman, Mr. K. C. Pant, the Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha, the External Affairs Minister, Mr. Jaswant Singh, and the Disinvestment Minister, Mr. Arun Shourie, at the National Development Council meeting in New Delhi on Saturday. — Photo: Anu Pushkarna

monitored by the Department of Programme Implementation. Since these projects could be completed in a short time, the required investment would be suitably provided for, Mr. Vajpayee said.

Referring to his Independence Day address, the Prime Minister

said he had announced that the coming year would be the "year of implementation." Towards this end, he called upon the Chief Ministers to do the same in their States, to set up new standards of implementation, monitoring and follow-up, which alone could guarantee achievement of the challenging objective of achieving eight per cent growth per annum in the Tenth Plan period.

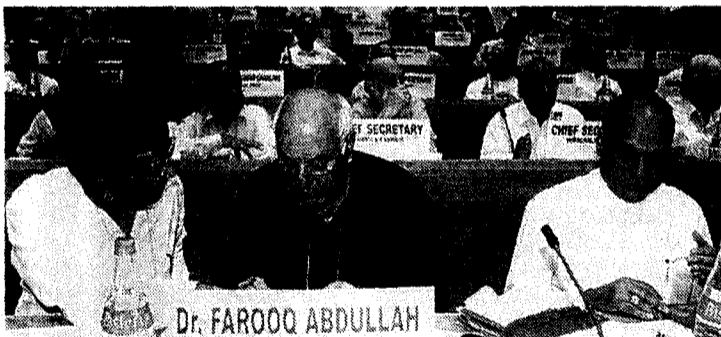
Mr. Vajpayee also focussed on the health of the banking and financial systems and cautioned that many economies had got into serious trouble because of the bad debts which had led to the failure of the banking and financial institutions. "We have enough warning signals and much sobering experience to go by".

The Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Mr. K.C. Pant, drew the attention of the Chief Ministers to the delicate fis-

cal situation of the Centre and the States.

Pointing out that the States had a positive balance from their current revenues up to 1990 and that the situation was manageable till 1997-98 (when the Fifth Pay Commission award came in), he said at the aggregate level for both the Central and the State Governments, the deficit from current revenues had gone up from Rs. 5,000 crores at the beginning of the 1990s to a staggering Rs. 90,000 crores at present.

Asking the Chief Ministers to urgently initiate hard but unavoidable decisions, Mr. Pant said the consequences of inaction were too serious to contemplate. Not only would growth falter and unemployment rise, but the situation could well threaten the cohesiveness of the country's social fabric. "We cannot afford to fail," he warned.



The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Dr. Farooq Abdullah, and the Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. P. K. Dhumal (right), at the NDC meeting in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

2 SEP 2001

'Centre to blame for starvation'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 30. The Opposition in the Lok Sabha today criticised the Centre for failing to feed the poor and the hungry despite surplus foodgrains due to poor management and inefficient public distribution system.

Participating in a late evening debate on "problems caused by non-availability of foodgrains", almost all opponents of the ruling NDA coalition said the Centre could not absolve itself of its responsibility by blaming the States for poor offtake of foodgrains and faulty delivery system.

Almost all parties demanded that the Centre discuss hunger-related deaths in the coming meeting of the National Development Council. The Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, has convened a meeting of the NDC on September 1 to discuss the Draft Approach Paper to the 10th Five-Year Plan.

Leading the attack, the Congress leader, Mr. Shivraj Patil, said instead of blaming it all on the "50 years rule of the Congress" or on State

Governments, the Centre should carry the States along with it and find a solution.

He said it was nothing but the failure of administration and management of the system that a nation that was self-sufficient in foodgrains was unable to feed its poor and hungry. What was required was political will, vision and leadership.

Mr. Patil said hunger had no face and starvation deaths could not be compensated. Deaths had been reported from various parts — Orissa, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, North-East and Jammu and Kashmir. He said the profit and loss criterion should not be applied when it involved the question of providing two square meals to the people, which was the Constitutional obligation of the Government.

Mr. Roop Chand Pal (CPI-M) said there was something terribly wrong with the system that despite surplus stocks, people were dying of hunger. He said the Centre had tried to put the blame on State Governments, whereas the wrong policy decision to remove the above

poverty line people from the system had introduced distortions in the PDS resulting in poor offtake of foodgrains.

He made a strong plea for the Government to go in for decentralisation of procurement, storage and distribution and to go in for setting up foodgrain banks at the grassroots as suggested by the agriculturist, Dr. M.S. Swaminathan. "Women should be out at the centre of foodgrains management."

Earlier initiating the discussion, Mr. Bikram Keshari Deo, BJP MP from Kalahandi, bemoaned that despite all around development starvation deaths were being reported from all parts of the country. He blamed the past Congress Governments for the present situation and demanded adequate central funds for long-term plans to eradicate poverty in the Kalahandi region, Bolangir and Rayagada district.

Mr. Deo said that there were no proper figures of people below the poverty line and there were conflicting identification which came in the way of proper implementation.

ORISSA DEATHS / COLLECTOR DENIES STARVATION CHARGE

Abject poverty comes into focus

By Prafulla Das

BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 30. The raging controversy over the "hunger deaths" in Orissa's Rayagada district has gathered steam with the Collector denying categorically that anyone in the district died of starvation.

The issue, however, has brought into focus the backbreaking poverty of the region's hapless tribals, and the fact that there has been little improvement in their condition despite implementation of a series of welfare programmes by successive governments and voluntary organisations.

The opponents of the Biju Janata Dal-Bharatiya Janata Party alliance Government have been extremely vocal in the past few days, alleging that people were starving to death in Kashipur block of Rayagada.

The people were forced to eat mango kernels and other non-food items as they did not have money to buy food, the State units of the Congress and the CPI(M) alleged.

The tribals, most of them landless, were not getting any work and there was no sign of any food-for-work programme in the area.

The Rayagada Collector, Mr. Bishnupada Sethi, has denied the charge emphatically. In a press statement late on Wednesday night, Mr. Sethi said as per the information available with them, 19 deaths occurred in the Kashipur area since July. However, "by no stretch of imagination can they be called as starvation deaths".

About the death of seven persons in Panasguda village, he said Mr. Biswanath Majhi, a resident of the village, hired some labourers to work in his field and provided them food. Seven persons, including three members of Mr. Majhi's family, died after eating the food, the Collector said. "When one is employing the labourers, it is absurd to talk of starvation."

In Bilamala village, Mr. Sethi said, four persons died "after consumption of poisonous mushroom by mistake. Mushroom was used as a curry/supplement and not as

main item of food." The death of four persons in Badamaribhatta and Tikri-Jhadia Sahi locality due to disease, "is also being branded as starvation deaths," he added.

Four people also died in Pitajodi village, Mr. Sethi said. "As per the medical opinion, these deaths took place due to food poisoning."

Claiming that the administration was quite responsive to the situation, he said a series of developmental works had been initiated and all possible steps taken to help the people.

Referring to the food habits of the area's tribals, Mr. Sethi said they lacked a proper sense of hygiene and personal care. The tribals were used to eating mango kernel but the preparation tended to become poisonous as they stored it for a long time, he said.

Predominantly inhabited by Kondh tribals, Kashipur is one of the poorest blocks in the State. Allegations of hunger deaths have haunted it even in the past — when the State was under Congress rule in the 1980s.

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THE HINDU
3-11-2000

DASMUNSHI MAY BE EXAMINED

CBI sends 'forged' letter to forensic experts

HO-1
26/8

By Our Special Correspondent *Jandri*

NEW DELHI, AUG. 25. The Central Bureau of Investigation has sent the "forged" letter purportedly written by the Cabinet Secretary to the Prime Minister, Mr. T.R. Prasad, opposing Air India disinvestment to its Central Forensic and Scientific Laboratory (CFSL) for examination.

The CBI spokesman, Mr. S.M. Khan, told *The Hindu* tonight that the Bureau had registered an FIR based on a complaint and on the "reasonable suspicion that the letter is forged." He said this was obvious since the person who had purportedly written the letter had denied it.

The CBI would also seek legal opinion whether it could examine the Congress MP, Mr. Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi, in this regard.

The controversy about the "forged letter" erupted after Mr. Prasad, informed the Government that he had not written the letter which was quoted by Mr. Dasmunshi in the Lok Sabha last Thursday while participating in a debate on disinvestment.

Well-placed sources in the CBI said that apart from sending the letter to the CFSL, the bureau could, if necessary, ask the Examiner of Questioned Documents to analyse it. At present, handwriting experts in the CFSL would peruse the documents to establish its genuineness.

The CBI would also seek legal opinion whether it could examine Mr. Dasmunshi in the case registered against "unknown persons" by the CBI under section 466 and 471 of the Indian Penal Code. The CBI's special crimes unit is carrying out the probe. The case was filed after a complaint from the Cabinet Secretariat on Friday.

Incidentally, while the Government had instituted a CBI probe into the "forged" letter, the CPI(M) said the matter should have been referred to the privileges committee in Parliament. The matter was also raised in the Rajya Sabha on Friday with the Disinvestment Minister, Mr. Arun Shourie, making a mention of it while replying to a calling attention on disinvestment.

THE HINDU

24 AUG 2001

CENTRE, STATES SHOULD ACT

Food must reach the starving, not rot: S.C.

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, AUG. 20. Expressing serious concern over the starvation deaths in some States, the Supreme Court today observed that it was the primary responsibility of the Central and State Governments to ensure that the foodgrains overflowing in FCI godowns reached the starving people and not wasted by being dumped in the sea or eaten by rats.

A three-judge Bench, comprising Mr. Justice B.N. Kirpal, Mr. Justice Santosh Hegde and Mr. Justice Brijesh Kumar, made this observation during the resumed hearing on a petition filed by the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL) bringing to the court's notice reports on incidents of starvation deaths though the Food Corporation of India godowns had stocks of over 50 million tonnes of foodgrains.

The Bench, which had earlier ordered notice to the Centre and six States, said the court's anxiety was that the poor, destitute and weaker sections of society should not suffer from hunger and die from starvation. Mere schemes without implementation were of no use and what was important was that food should reach the needy, the Bench said.

It adjourned the hearing till September 3 for passing interim directions.

Govt. affidavit soon

PTI, UNI report:

The Attorney-General, Mr. Soli J. Sorabjee, contended that as far as interim directions needed to address the issues were concerned, the Centre would file an affidavit soon.

At one point, the Bench observ-

ed that "even if the foodgrains had to be given free, it should be done as no person should be deprived of food merely because he had no money."

Mr. Cecil Gonsalves, counsel for the petitioner, cited three Centrally-sponsored schemes — the Employment Assurance Scheme, the Mid-day Meal Scheme and the Integrated Child

Development Scheme and said the mid-day meal scheme had attracted a large number of children from the weaker sections to schools. During the hearing on July 23, the court asked Orissa, Rajasthan, Chhatisgarh, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh to take immediate steps to make closed PDS shops functional. Mr. Sorabjee termed it a

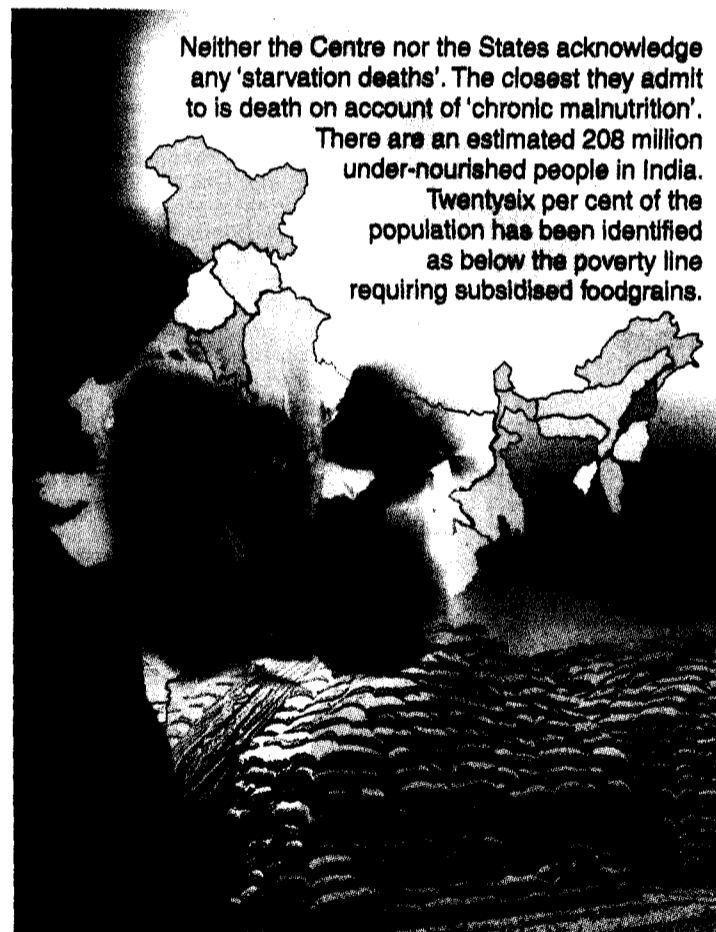
"horrendous state of affairs" adding there was something radically wrong with the system and sought time from the court for formulation of a mechanism to provide food to the destitute.

The petitioner raised three basic questions: "Does the right to life mean that people who are starving and who are too poor to buy foodgrains ought to be given foodgrains free of cost by the state from the surplus stock lying with the state particularly when it is reported that a large part of it is lying unused and rotting?"

"Does not the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution include the right to food? Does not the right to food, which has been upheld by the apex court, imply that the state has a duty to provide food especially in the situations of drought to people who are drought-affected and are not in a position to purchase food?"

The court was informed about the ineffective implementation of the food-for-work scheme. It was alleged that hardly 10 per cent of the total number of those who approached for work under the scheme, were allowed to work. Under the scheme, 50 per cent of wages were paid in foodgrains and the remaining in cash.

Mr. Justice Hegde said in Orissa, the FCI godowns had more grain stocks than actually required by the State and yet people were dying of starvation. On behalf of the FCI, it was contended that it had no powers to release foodgrains to States on its own. Foodgrains were released to the States on the basis of requisitions made by them after the allotment of foodgrains quota to them.



Graphic by Varghese Kallada

Elders' concern: Page 12

India signs defence deals with Israel

HO-11
16/8
By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, AUG. 15. India has signed contracts worth \$2 billion with Israel for defence equipment which will enable it to strike strategic enemy targets with pinpointed accuracy.

These deals, which were concluded after lengthy negotiations, will result in transferring to India sophisticated long-range surveillance equipment, night-fighting hardware and "smart ammunition". These will make it easier for the armed forces to strike high-value industrial and military targets, well behind enemy lines, with great accuracy.

The deals were concluded during the recent visit to Israel by the Secretary, Defence Production and Supplies, Mr. Subir Dutta. The Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Sushil Kumar, the former Vice-Chief of Air Staff, Air Marshal Vinod Patney, and the Vice-Chief of Army Staff, Lt. Gen. Vijay Oberoi, had visited Israel to clarify the requirements of the three services.

Discussions, however, were not confined to hardware needs alone. While recognising the differences in terrain and political environment, the two armies exchanged notes on counter-insurgency operations, highly-placed Government sources said.

Sources clarified that while negotiations had moved on a fast track, hiccups in the acquisition of the high-profile Phalcon early warning aircraft remained. Earlier, the Indian Air Force had placed a requirement for the state-of-the-art Popeye missile, which can be launched from air to

a distance of 150 km. on ground. Since, the weapons have significant American components, their clearance may have to await a further movement on the lifting of the post-Pokhran U.S. sanctions.

India has sought unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), including the highly-capable Heron. Eight pieces of Searcher-2 UAV, which can scan the ground and relay pictures even when flying in mountainous areas, have already been acquired. The Mirage-2000 planes are being equipped with Litening pods for spotting targets at night.

Besides, India is buying large quantities of hi-tech ammunition, which can be used for long-range strikes. Acquisition of low-level radars, which can spot low-flying fighter planes, is yet another thrust area.

These acquisitions have been guided by the doctrinal approach of the armed forces for undertaking offensive strikes to undermine the enemy's capacity to wage war. This can be achieved by attacking high-value targets, such as ballistic missile sites, so that the launch of these weapons can be prevented. Other significant targets include military headquarters, key communication centres and major airfields. Besides, the armed forces are emphasising air operations against "centres of gravity" which propel the enemy's industry, such as oil installations, so that the latter's war-waging potential is undermined.

Not surprisingly, India is emphasising the acquisition of surveillance equipment, including early warning planes and UAVs.

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REINFORCE CONFIDENCE

48

IN THE ONGOING crisis over the Unit Trust of India, both the Government and the Trust have won a reprieve. Last Thursday, an Opposition-sponsored motion censuring the Government for mishandling the UTI affair was defeated. The Joint Parliamentary Committee already probing the post-budget stock market shenanigans will now extend its reach and examine the UTI affair in its entirety. That should give the Government and the UTI another opportunity and some more time to fashion a revival strategy for the troubled institution. As for the UTI, the specific gain is that there have been no large redemption requests by the unit holders during the first three days of the start of the new repurchase scheme.

Important as those developments are, they cannot be viewed as anything more than short-term gains, a breather maybe, for attempting the far more difficult tasks on hand. The UTI must demonstrate that it has regained investors' confidence in a far more comprehensive fashion than now before it embarks on the tough and painful process of restructuring. That task will no doubt be facilitated if there is a broad political agreement on how the public financial institutions ought to be handled both in normal as well as in exceptional times such as the those faced by the UTI. Granting autonomy to all government-owned institutions is a desirable goal. Though aired from time to time it has been very difficult to be put into practice. As one particularly unseemly facet of the UTI episode shows, allegations of top level interference in normal decision-making will never go away. Experience in other countries has shown that key institutions can be made to retain their autonomy. However, in India this calls for a radical change in the way the Government interacts with the institutions it owns. It can be achieved only through consensus-building among political parties. The JPC can give a path-breaking blue print for what official policy should

be on core economic governance issues.

The acerbic nature of the parliamentary debate over the UTI shows how difficult such a task will be. The Finance Minister tried to fend off Opposition criticism by pointing fingers at a few controversial UTI investment decisions during the Congress era. The Government and the Opposition can do much better than apportion blame at this stage. The time has come to reinvent a more coherent strategy to safeguard the institutions and protect their investors and other stake holders. Clearly the initial inept handling of the UTI crisis has magnified the problem, but even now there could be valuable lessons for the political leadership to contain future crises. What is particularly worrying is that the loss of confidence in India's premier investment institution is threatening to engulf development financial institutions such as the IFCI too. And public sector banks, saddled with large non-performing assets, might well become the next target. That would be catastrophic for the country.

The Finance Minister has done well to explain that the UTI's problems have not occurred overnight. The US 64 Scheme is particularly flawed in that it has traditionally paid high returns while deploying its large corpus disproportionately in equities. The technology stocks were in every fund manager's purchase list last year. All the funds had bet wrongly and even the few widely touted private sector balanced funds have lost more than the UTI. Yet, because of its opaque structure, the Trust has been faulted more. However, recent inter-fund comparisons demolish the myth of the superiority of the private sector. Rather than search for inane solutions to the UTI imbroglio — such as handing it over to the private sector — the Government should by word and deed reinforce the confidence in the financial sector, where it is still the dominant player.

THE HINDU

6 AUG 2001

Reflections on an assassination

MANI TALK

MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

I must be among the select few to not think Seema Biswas when talking Phoolan Devi. For I never did get around to seeing the film. Mala Sen's biography had grabbed me, but I read Arundhati Roy's denunciation of Shekhar Kapur's pulchritudinous exploitation of oppression and decided that my personal contribution to fighting injustice would be to deny myself the indulgence of adding to the producers' humungous profits.

I need not have bothered. Posthumously, Nalini Singh (of Doordarshan's *Aankhon Dekhi*) recounts in last Sunday's *Hindustan Times* the delectable tale of Phoolan Devi visiting her for a free consultancy on how best to squeeze BBC's Channel Four and Farooq Dhondy for all she could get out of them. For the outrage of suggesting that Phoolan Devi took her clothes off before taking a bath. Bully for her, I say. No denying the artistic inspiration obtained by the BBC from being exposed to a spot of the real Chambal ravines.

In mid-1996, I went through the most traumatic experience of my life — my defeat in the Lok Sabha elections that year by the same impressive margin with which I had won five years earlier. It appeared then to be the end of the political road for me. And in my deep depression, I would occasionally wander into Central Hall to savour *les memoires d'antan* — the memories of a long-lost past.

One gloomy afternoon, deep in the dark, dank recesses of an almost empty Central Hall, I spotted a Bharatiya Janata Party acquaintance from happier days. I went up to him. "How are you?" he cordially greeted me. "Awful," I said, "I've lost - and you've won." "No, *yaar*, I've lost too," he confided miserably. "Really?" I said, surprised, "Who to?" He hesitated. Then shaking his head sadly almost whispered, "To Phoolan Devi." To lose was bad enough. But surely where the Old Testament talks of the seventh circle of hell, the prophets must have meant losing an election to Phoolan Devi. Not once. But twice.

Our urban middle class has been universally outraged by two events — the election of Phoolan Devi and the swearing-in of Jayaram Jayalalitha. Which, of course, shows how little our urban middle-class understands democracy. And why the danger to democracy comes not from the Phoolan Devis and Jayalalithas but the crass self-serving of the middle-class. Phoolan Devi won, not once but twice, because the electorate of Mirzapur wanted her to win. With open eyes, they preferred her to the BJP. And if that had been the choice before me, that is exactly the way I too would have voted. Fortunately, a happier fate has put me outside the pale of the Mirzapur voters' list.

That choice, of course, need not have been restricted to Phoolan Devi or the BJP if any of my shocked and disapproving readers had cared to take recourse to the obvious course open to them in our Constitution — which does not, contrary to popular belief, prevent those without a criminal record from standing in elections.

It is the virtual wholesale abandonment of their civic responsibilities by self-certified "responsible" citizens which accounts for the democratic choice being restricted to Phoolan Devi or the BJP. It is the abnegation of participation in the po-



Phoolan Devi always knew she would die. Yet, she never let her constant apprehension of brutal death come in the way of opening her doors to all, hundreds of thousands of uncounted others — and one assassin. There was not much difference for her between the Chambal ravines and Ashoka Road. It is courage of that order which is notably absent from our frowning middle classes

litical process by the voluble arm-chair critics of our democracy which spells the real death of our democracy.

A truly responsible *bhadralok* would surely have taken up cudgels against such a perversion of democracy by filing his own nomination in Mirzapur — at least as a token protest. Of course, the *bhadralok* would have been roundly defeated. And, of course, it is fear of defeat that makes him stay his hand. And thus it follows, as night the day, that if fear of defeat makes "sensible men of substantial means" stay their hand, then the choice before the electorate will be restricted to Phoolan Devi or the BJP. (The celebrated quote is from Walter Bagehot's 19th-century masterpiece, *The English Constitution*.)

The other great failing of our urban middle-class, the kind that read *The Telegraph*, is that they think democracy is about elections. It is — but only once every five years. In between, over five long years, democracy is about receiving in your home the detritus of society, those in real need, those, in short, who elected you — and serving those anonymous lakhs who have taken you to the crest of the wave. In that task, Phoolan Devi was superb.

She may not have quite known how best to help, but there was no doubting the sincerity of her desire to help. Nor of the absence of any affectation in her offer of her help. For she came from a much lower stratum of society than most of the lowest of the low who rang the bell at her door. Her sympathy was genuine. Her empathy welled up from instant identification with the masses who sought her help.

My biggest failing as an elected representative is my social and cultural alienation from those who sweep me to Parliament. My foreign education and flowing oratory is not what they have sent me for to Sansad Marg. They concede that it is part of my duties to deal with arcane exotica in parliamentary committees and debates on the floor of the house — but only if, at the end of the day, I turn to their concerns.

Phoolan Devi turned to their concerns not, like me, at the end of the day but at all times of the day. And at all times of the night. Her doors were never barred. Which is why the determined assassin could so easily worm his way into her confidence and her home. She knew she was under sentence of death. Her enemies, if we are to go by what her lawyer, Kamini Jaiswal, has told the press, began with her husband.

We have now seen the vulgar exploitation of her funeral by the odious likes of Mulayam Singh Yadav and Amar Singh, the brutal brushing aside of her family's desires by the political "family" into which her transparent innocence had been co-opted. Phoolan Devi always knew she would die. Yet, she never let her constant apprehension of brutal death come in the way of opening her doors to all, hundreds of thousands of uncounted others — and one assassin. There was not much difference for her between the Chambal ravines and Ashoka Road.

It is courage of that order which is notably absent from our frowning upper middle-classes. I salute the memory of one whose passing has left bereft many, many thousands more than will miss me when I am no more.

31 JUL 2001

THE TELEGRAPH

Phoolan Devi shot dead

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, July 25

AT 1.30 PM today, Phoolan Devi returned to her official residence at 44, Ashoka Road from Parliament. Three armed assailants wearing monkey-caps were waiting for her outside the gate. They walked up to her and shot her point-blank and the 'Bandit Queen' was no more.

The motive for the killing has not yet been established but several hypotheses are doing the rounds. One theory is that the killing was the result of a revenge attack orchestrated by the victims of the Behmai massacre in which she allegedly massacred a number of upper-caste antagonists. The second is that the attack was related to a criminal case in Kanpur in which Phoolan Devi was involved. Another hypothesis points to a political conspiracy hatched in Uttar Pradesh.

The three assailants shot the MP from Mirzapur outside her official bungalow from point-blank range five times - thrice in her head and twice in her shoulder. Phoolan Devi's personal security officer (PSO) Balwinder Singh was shot twice in the stomach. But the PSO managed to get up and fired a couple of rounds at the assassins.

The assailants, however, escaped in a green Maruti 800 car that was parked 10 yards from the gate of Phoolan Devi's bungalow. The murderers drove at breakneck speed toward Pant Marg, behind Ashoka Road, where an autorickshaw was waiting for them. The assassins switched vehicles and were last seen speeding toward the Central Secretariat roundabout.

"The entire operation was conducted fast," said a senior police official. The police said they had recovered the weapons



The body of Phoolan Devi lying at the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital in Delhi on Wednesday.

that had been used - one was a Webley Scott revolver, the other was unmarked. All six bullets had been fired from one revolver, while the other one was fully loaded.

The abandoned getaway car had two bullet marks - on the rear windscreen and the side window - from the shots fired by Phoolan Devi's PSO.

One of the assailants is believed to have been injured. There were traces of blood in the abandoned vehicle. The reg-

istration number of the getaway vehicle was found to be false.

An eyewitness on Pant Marg said, "Everyone noticed the getaway vehicle since it took a dangerous turn into the lane where the autorickshaw was parked. A couple of youngsters jumped out and whizzed away in the auto."

"The whole operation seems to have been meticulously planned. The assailants appeared to have followed the MP from Parliament House, knowing fully well that she was

hitching a ride with someone else. Add to it the back up by way of a waiting autorickshaw for changing vehicles, and what you have is a carefully orchestrated operation," a police officer said.

"They were aware of the MP's schedule which involved heading home for lunch at around 1.30 pm during the break between Parliament sessions. Today, adhering to her schedule, she arrived at her residence when they confronted her and shot her," the officer added.

The police were informed about the attack after the injured PSO picked himself up and ran inside the MP's official residence to get in touch with the police over the emergency line. Phoolan Devi was rushed to the Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital where she was declared "dead on arrival". Her PSO has been operated upon and is reported to be stable.

A red alert was sounded in the Capital, but as yet no arrests have been made.

Quiet celebrations in Behmai, gloom at Phoolan's village

Haidar Naqvi
Rajpur (Kanpur Dehat), July 25

BEHMAI ALWAYS wanted revenge. So when unidentified masked men gunned down Phoolan Devi today, this remote village wasn't shocked. Instead, there were secret celebrations. The fear of retaliation by the Bhim Mallah gang against her cold-blooded murder was what kept expressions of joy a private affair.

The Behmai villagers are also a bit disappointed as the 1981 massacre victims had vowed to eliminate her on their own just a couple of months back.

Though the district police have rushed forces from Rajpur to Behmai, many more are stranded at Rajpur. Vehicular movement is impossible due to water-logging and slush on the 10-km long stretch from Rajpur to Behmai. The police are apprehensive that the gunning down of the former Bandit Queen may renew the war between upper caste Thakurs and Mallah gangs.

As the news of the murder reached here this evening, village elders were anxious to get the latest. The men rushed to nearby Rajpur and Bhognipur to determine what happened in Delhi. But the youths, who grew up with the sole desire of seeking vengeance, secretly rejoiced. "At last someone did do what we wanted to do," said a relative of the 1981 massacre victim. No one in this village wants to disclose his name for fear of reprisal.

Some of the relatives of the Behmai massacre victims who met this correspondent at Rajpur were rather guarded in

their reaction to escape any police action. In fact, Behmai had been preparing to take revenge for the 1981 killings for more than a year. The children, who were witness to the carnage 20 years back, were even encouraged to seek revenge by their widowed mothers.

Babloo Singh, son of slain dacoit Shriram responsible for Phoolan's escape into the Chambal ravines, rang up the *Hindustan Times* office just to confirm the news about Phoolan. "Maybe she paid for her past deeds," was his first reaction.

Talking to *Hindustan Times* at Mati, Akbarpur, the SP (Kanpur Dehat), NK Shrivastava said vigilance has been stepped up in the dacoit-infested area, including Behmai. When asked about possible backlash of this murder, the SP ruled out any such possibility but said all measures were being taken to meet any eventuality. The police post in Behmai has been alerted and the station officer was asked to personally patrol the area extensively.

The scenario was just the opposite at Shekhpur Gurha, Phoolan's ancestral village in Jalaun district. A pall of gloom descended on this hamlet as soon as news about Phoolan's murder filtered in. Taking no chances, the district administration rushed senior policemen to the area. The SO of Kalpi PS went and met Phoolan's sister, Ram Kali. He made arrangements to get her to New Delhi immediately.

More reports, photographs on
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UNDP index should have factors relevant to India: Swaminathan

The Times of India News Service
NEW DELHI: Noted agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan says the criteria used for ranking countries on the technology achievement index (TAI) of the UNDP's Human Development Report should have had factors relevant to India.

India has been ranked 63rd on TAI. Mr Swaminathan says, "Instead of the first three criteria (technology creation, diffusion of recent innovations and diffusion of old innovations), there should have been others oriented towards the majority of our population." These criteria, he said, could take into account innovations in agriculture, fisheries and other aspects concerned with the rural sector.

With the report's emphasis on technology as a tool for development, Mr Swaminathan says, "If it was the cause of inequity in the past, we must now enlist technology as an ally in the equity movement. Technology must lead to the creation of more jobs and not joblessness."

Mr Swaminathan, who has suggested the Antyodaya approach in

his contribution to the report, says it means one where "development is based on attention to the poorest people." For Mr Swaminathan, it also means technology that is pro-poor, pro-nature and pro-women. Elaborating on equity, Mr Swaminathan says there are three dimensions to this equity in terms of gender, in terms of social equity and inter-generational equity.

Mr Swaminathan acknowledges the important role of market forces. Yet, he says areas like health, education, food and drinking water cannot be left to the vagaries of market pressures and the public sector has an important role to play in such areas of basic human needs. At the same time, Mr Swaminathan says there can be a system wherein there are public-private partnerships. Noting that in a country like India where nearly three million people live below the poverty line, he says it is essential to technologically empower them. "They will remain poor so long as they are unskilled. so to overcome poverty, you need a paradigm shift from unskilled to skilled."

India ranks 115 in human development report

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 10. The United Nations has called for major initiatives to ensure that new technologies addressed the pressing needs of the world's poor.

In its annual Human Development Report (HDR) presented to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, today, it expressed concern over disparities in the spread of technologies both between and within countries. The report cited an urgent need for stepping up research efforts in four principal areas — vaccines for malaria, HIV and TB; high-yielding, pest-resistant and drought-tolerant varieties of staple foods in Asia and Africa; low-cost computers and wireless connectivity for the poor; and low-cost energy systems.

The report continued with its ranking of countries according to the Human Development Index, which is based on a combined measure of longevity, educational attainment and ability to buy basic goods and services. India is ranked 115th, 34 notches below Sri Lanka but well above Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan.

The report also examined the progress

made by developing countries towards targets set in the Millennium Declaration goals for poverty eradication. Only 11 developing countries, including India, are on course to meet the goal of halving poverty by 2015 but 70 countries are far behind or slipping.

Bangalore scored 13 out of 16 points as the global hub of technological innovations. Of the 46 global hubs, Silicon Valley got 16 out of 16 points.

However, India was not listed among technology leaders or potential leaders, but with 26 dynamic adopters.

On a less flattering note, the HDR pointed out that India was losing \$ 2 billions annually through brain drain. "For instance, 1,00,000 Indian professionals a year are expected to take visas recently issued by the U.S. — an estimated resource loss for India of \$ 2 billions. Many Asian countries are experiencing a crippling brain drain of trained professionals, who they had spent large amounts of money educating."

It made a strong case for fair use of intellectual property rights and illustrated how the concept had been subverted by the developed world in its favour. It called upon developing

countries to secure their interests by invoking safeguard provisions, such as compulsory licensing. While developed countries had often invoked such provisions, countries of the South were still to benefit from safeguards provided under the patent regime.

At the outset, the report referred to the uneasy relationship between development and technology. "The belief that there is a technological silver bullet that can solve illiteracy, ill-health or economic failure reflects scant understanding of real poverty." But if the world turned its back on technological innovations, it risked marginalising itself and denying developing countries the chance to offer breakthrough development opportunities to poor countries.

The report also incorporated cautionary public policy advice to ensure that technology did not sweep development off its feet; instead its potential benefits were rooted in a pro-poor development strategy. It pointed out that the 20th century's gains came from technological breakthroughs but it must be kept in mind that technology was created in response to market pressures and not the needs of the poor, who had little purchasing power.

US-64 episode raises questions on UTI's capabilities

HD-17
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By K. T. Jagannathan

CHENNAI, JULY 7. Investors of the 'commoner category' have seen this in the past. The latest US-64 imbroglio is just another usual occurrence. And, most probably, they will get immune to such happenings over a period. Be it private non-banking finance companies or public institutions of the UTI (Unit Trust of India) type they collectively do not hesitate to "distribute" injustice to common investors. So, what is unusual about the six-month suspension of sale and repurchase of US-64 units, the so-called flagship scheme of UTI?

The country has seen many non-banking finance companies collapse like ninepins. Factors ranging from a slump in the commercial vehicle sector to sudden introduction of rigidity in RBI rules and mismanagement have all contributed to push the NBFCs into despondency. As a consequence, the hard earned money of poor investors has just evaporated in thin air. The regulatory authorities (should we say the state governments) moved in to initiate indiscriminate action against the owners of these

NEWS ANALYSIS

NBFCs. No distinction was made between corporate NBFCs and unincorporated NBFCs. Likewise, no differentiation was made between wilful defaulters and those unable to pay. The good, the bad and the ugly among finance companies were all viewed as 'rogues' in the eyes of investors, regulators and the like. So much so, the acronym 'NBFC' has acquired a dirty connotation.

The move on the US-64 front comes against this backdrop. The creation of UTI through an Act of Parliament does not necessarily explain usual queries that come up in the wake of its decision to suspend sale and repurchase of US-64. Events following the suspension announcement suggest that the Union Government was taken by surprise by the very move. That a New Delhi appointee, Mr. P. S. Subramanyam, could independently go public with an unpalatable announcement impinging on millions of investors is plainly unthinkable. Mr. Subramanyam, nevertheless, has also shown inability to take professional decisions even after the recommendations the Deepak Parekh committee.

If investors have gone by 'big names' while investing in finance companies, they have placed their trust on UTI solely because it is a government-backed organisation. Despite its investment risk, in-

vestors have always viewed US-64 as some sort of an FD (fixed deposit) which could also fetch capital appreciation. Many a US-64 holder has joined the reinvestment scheme. Save for corporates, ordinary investors continue to stay with the US-64 for myriad reasons.

In what way investors in NBFCs are better or worse off than those who invested in US-64? To put it differently, in what way UTI is different from these defaulted NBFCs? An answer will expose the double standard in the treatment of NBFCs. If they were faulted for deploying investors' money imprudently — at times in their own arms, a largely Government-controlled UTI can also be blamed for investing US-64 funds in not-so desirable avenues. A quick vetting of the US-64 investment portfolio will tell its own tale.

Could a Government-owned UTI — among the largest institutional players on bourse — have functioned independently then? A case in point, according to authoritative sources, could be the way UTI went to bail out brokers by buying their outstanding positions when the Calcutta Stock Exchange was engulfed in a crisis recently. More often than not, assert privileged sources, UTI has used the 'broker network' to drive stocks up and down sans any relevance to their fundamentals.

If UTI had moved to NAV based pricing of US-64 as suggested by the Deepak Parekh panel, it is argued, things would not have come to such a mess. Nevertheless, UTI's inability or unwillingness to readjust its equity portfolio in line with market reality has raised serious questions over the professional capabilities of the organisation. If indeed UTI is professionally managed, it has given room for speculation that the invisible hand of the government is always at play in the affairs of the organisation.

The remedy, in the end, lies in delinking UTI from Government interference. An independent professionally managed UTI can go a long way in retaining public trust through a transparent pricing of its schemes.

● **Board meetings:** GG Igarashi: July 11; Jindal Vijayanagar Steel: July 21; Munoth Financial: July 11; Lakshmi Auto Components: July 20; Sundaram Clayton: July 27; Sundaram Brake Linings: July 30; Harita Grammar: July 20; TVS Suzuki: July 30; Tube Investments: July 27; Carborandum Universal: July 20; GIC Industries: July 18; Karur Vysya Bank: July 18; India Motor Parts: July 12; Dynavision: July 28; L & T: July 18.

Second shock for US-64 unit holders

KA Badarinath
New Delhi, July 6



US-64 INVESTORS are in for a second major shock. After UTI announced the six-month freeze on sale

and repurchase of US-64 units, investors are bound to be outraged, for the net worth of the unit might have tumbled to Rs 7.40 as against the redemption made by major corporates at Rs 14.25 in May this year.

This means that a unit worth Rs 10 will fetch only Rs 7.40 after the freeze goes. The UTI board has clamped a freeze on redemptions till December this year.

While the investors may not get the premium commanded by major corporates during

redemption just two months back, the ordinary investor might not be able to even realise the face value of the unit at Rs 10. The net worth of the unit has apparently been worked out at Rs 7.40 by linking it to the US-64 Net Asset Value (NAV).

However, Finance Ministry officials were tightlipped on the issue with the contention that none of their representatives were on the board of UTI and they were not aware of the NAV-linked net worth of the unit.

When contacted, UTI acting chairman K G Vassal said: "NAV is not known to us. We have not yet calculated our NAV." Vassal added that NAV was not known since the trust had sunk in about Rs 9,000 crore in real estates alone and it had a large, varied stock of transferable loans and debentures.

The impact of this erosion in

net worth of the unit would be devastating for the ordinary investor, for about 73 per cent of existing unit capital is owned by small investors. This locked up fund has been worked out to be about Rs 9,800 crore. If the redemption price of Rs 14.25 is taken into consideration, the investors' locked up fund will rise to Rs 13,965 crore. Even at the July 2000 redemption price of Rs 13.30, the trust owes Rs 13,034 crore to small investors. If one were to go by Rs 7.40 per unit net worth, then UTI would be able to scale down its payment liability to ordinary investors at Rs 7252 crore.

Sources maintained that the reported sharp erosion in the net worth of the US-64 came about as the trust continued to dabble in the highly volatile stocks instead of shifting its investments to debt instru-

ments. In this context, it has been pointed out that the proposal to bring UTI under SEBI scrutiny remains unimplemented though it was first mooted in 1993. The Deepak Parekh Committee in 1999 reiterated that UTI should be subject to SEBI's regulations.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha drew flak from members of Parliamentary Consultative Committee at a meeting held today. Cutting across party lines, the members apparently gave vent to the distress of millions of US-64 investors. The issue, according to sources, was raised by senior Congress leader and former Finance Minister N DTiwari. He was supported by members across the political spectrum.

Sinha told the MPs: "I assure you that the investor's interest will be fully protected".

US-64 move fells Unit Trust chief

Finance Minister in damage control as markets crash

KA Badarinath
New Delhi, July 3

THE VAJPAYEE Government has decided to sack UTI chief PS Subramaniam for his mismanagement of the Rs 60,000-crore trust that culminated in the controversial decision to freeze redemptions of the popular US-64 scheme.

Though officials were tightlipped on the decision, it is reliably learnt that the Prime Minister has cleared the proposal to dismiss Subramaniam.

According to sources, major corporates will be adversely affected by the poor performance of UTI and its decision to go in for a strategic sale of its investments. These industrial houses have intensified lobbying with the Vajpayee Government to put together a "salvage package" akin to the over Rs 4,000-crore deal announced around three years ago.

While Finance Ministry officials refused to comment on the issue, what led credence to this proposed package is Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha's hint earlier in the day that all investments made by UTI will come under the Central Government's scrutiny. He also assured that the interests of "small investors" would be protected.

Subramaniam had already come under a cloud due to his alleged role in the recent stock scandal where UTI took heavy exposure in the Ketan Parekh-

traded stocks. This strengthened the case to sack him.

Even as individual investors were outraged and shocked by UTI's decision to suspend repurchase or sale of US-64 units for six months, the stock markets reacted negatively with the BSE Sensitive Index losing over 114 points. Blue chip companies like Reliance, Infosys, Satyam, Tisco and ITC lost heavily on the bourses. Stocks of almost all companies in which US-64 has significant holdings fell by big margins.

Infosys tumbled by 12 per cent during a heavy sell-off. UTI's holdings in Reliance Industries is the highest in its US-64 corpus, constituting nearly 15 per cent. The scrip continued its free fall for the second consecutive day and hit the day's low at Rs 324 and finally closed at Rs 328.

Sinha sought to limit the damage, promising that the Government would go into all aspects of the freeze in sale and repurchase of US-64 units and the sale of UTI's strategic holdings in companies under all its schemes.

Asked if the Government had any timeframe to withdraw the suspension of sale and repurchase of US-64, Sinha said, "Let us not jump the gun. First we will scrutinise UTI's investments," adding, "We normally like financial institutions to function on their own without interference."

Related reports on Page 12

TRAGEDY STRUCK ON BLACK FRIDAY; RAIN HAMPERS RESCUE WORK

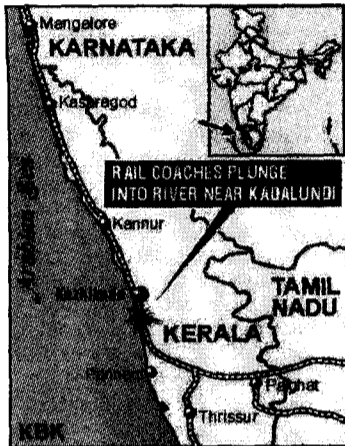
Over 40 killed in Kerala train accident

By R. Madhavan Nair

KOZHIKODE, JUNE 22. Over 40 persons were killed when four bogies of the Mangalore-Chennai Mail derailed and plunged into the Kadalundi river, 20 km from here, this evening.

Policemen and local people engaged in rescue work said a few more bodies were still trapped inside the submerged bogies.

About 230 passengers in the train suffered injuries in the accident, one of the worst in the State. Many have suffered serious head injuries and are under treatment



in hospitals in Kozhikode and Malappuram districts.

Eyewitnesses said the toll would have been higher had not the derailed bogies fallen into a shallow part of the river. Many of the injured passengers trapped inside were carried ashore by volunteers who were seen wading through knee-deep water. Rescue operations were hampered by darkness and rains.

The train (No. 6602) met with the accident near the bridge number 924 between Kozhikode and Parappanangadi stations.

Six bogies of the train derailed and four of them plunged into the river which was swollen with rain waters.

Railway authorities said 11 bo-

gies in front and two in the rear remained intact. But six bogies packed with passengers and positioned in the middle derailed.

Four of the derailed compartments plunged into the river. The other two tilted to the opposite side.

The bogies which derailed were S4, S5, S6, S7, a general compartment and the pantry car, a report from the Railway divisional office in Palakkad said.

Speaking to *The Hindu* from the accident site, the Malappuram District Collector, Mr. K. Chandrasekhara Babu, said *khalasis*, experts in moving heavy capsized objects, had been pressed into service.

The search for passengers trapped in the submerged bogies was continuing into the night against heavy odds.

The Kerala Industries Minister, Mr. P.K. Kunhalikutty, and the PWD Minister, Dr. M.K. Muneer, along with senior railway officials, are at the site supervising the rescue operations.

After the accident, the middle portion of the bridge across the river had crashed.

The Mangalore-bound Kochi-Nizamuddin Express had passed through the same track 30 minutes earlier. People rushed to the site for rescue work and were later joined by police and the fire force.

A Dornier aircraft of the Navy and a ship with divers and other Naval officers has left for Kadalundi. Supplies of medicines and blood are being arranged from the Kozhikode Medical College Hospital.

Crisis management team formed

By Our Special Correspondent

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, JUNE 22. The Kerala Government has formed a crisis management team headed by the Chief Secretary, Mr. V. Krishnamoorthy, to coordinate relief and rescue operations. The Chief Minister, Mr.



The scene at Kadalundi near Kozhikode where four compartments of the Mangalore-Chennai Mail derailed and plunged into the river on Friday. — Photo: S. Ramesh Kurup

A.K. Antony, has directed the team to mobilise all possible equipment and facilities and take urgent steps to speed up relief work.

Mr. Antony, who left here by train on a pre-scheduled journey to Kozhikode, will break his journey at Thrissur and go by road to Kadalundi.

The members of the crisis management team are the Home Secretary, Mr. Satyanarayana Dash, the Health Secretary, Mr. K. Ramamoorthy, the Special Secretary, Mr. P.H. Kurien, and the Secretary, Mr. Sajan Peter.

The Chief Minister expressed sorrow and condoled the death of the passengers.

The CPI(M) politburo member and former Chief Minister, Mr. E.K. Nayanar, the CPI(M) State secretary, Mr. Pinarayi Vijayan, and the Leader of the Opposition,

Mr. V.S. Achuthanandan, also expressed sorrow.

Probe ordered

By Our Staff Reporter

CHENNAI, JUNE 22. A probe has been ordered into the accident, the Railway Minister, Mr. Nitish Kumar, said here today.

Asked if it was damaged tracks or sabotage which was responsible for the accident, the Minister who refused to speculate on the probable cause of the accident, said only an inquiry would bring out the facts. The Minister, who arrived here from New Delhi by a schedule Indian Airlines flight, later left by a special train with officials and relief supplies to Quilandy. He is accompanied by Mr. O. Rajagopal, Union Minister of State for Railways.

The Additional Divisional Railway Manager, Palakkad, Mr. Titus

P. Koshy, and his team, who were returning to Palakkad in the train, had immediately led the relief operations at the accident site with local support.

The help lines for information on the train accident near Kozhikode are as follows: Chennai Central 044-5354854; Palakkad 0491-555337; Mangalore 0824-423137; Thiruvananthapuram 0471-518700, 0471-333198; and Kozhikode 0495-701499.

Relief train sent

By Our Staff Correspondent

MANGALORE, JUNE 22. A relief train had been sent to the accident spot, officials at the Mangalore railway station said.

Immediately after news of the accident came in, a relief train along with several officials, including members of the disaster management group of the Southern Railways, left for the spot.

Several trains going towards Kerala have been cancelled.

8 bodies identified

PTI reports:

The bodies of eight of the 42 passengers killed have been identified so far, according to official sources in Kozhikode.

Following is the list of victims identified till 11.30 p.m.: Murukesh (Erode), Kuruvila John (Chalakkudi), Zahir (New Mahe) Velayudhan Nair (Parappanangadi), Haneefa (Thalassery), Mohammedali Hajee, Ubaid (Tirur), and Harikrishnan (Vatakara).

'Coaches rattled before plunging into river'

KOZHIKODE, JUNE 22. Eleven of the 19 coaches of the Mangalore-Chennai mail had crossed the ageing steel bridge at Kadalundi before the six of the remaining eight coaches that derailed fell into the river, according to eyewitnesses.

Spans of the steel bridge, said to have been constructed during the British rule, collapsed under the impact of the derailment.

Incidentally, the old bridge was due to be replaced by a new bridge nearby that was under construction.

Mr. Moris Fernandez, a circle inspector of the CRPF, who was travelling in a first class compartment that crossed the bridge, told a UNI correspondent at the accident site that the train jerked shortly before the accident. He

noticed fire at a rear coach, caused apparently due to friction.

Another passenger, Mr. Natana Sabhapathy, chairman of the North Malabar Grameen bank, also said the bogies rattled for some time before they plunged into the river. Looking out through the window, he saw telephone lines getting snapped and some of the coaches behind tumbling down. He also heard shouts from co-passengers that there was fire at the back.

Another passenger, Mr. K.U.K. Nair, said he heard a continuous grating noise from beneath his coach no. 7. Throughout the journey from Kozhikode to the accident site. According to him some mechanical defect in the very badly maintained coach was perhaps the reason for the accident.

Mr. Shaju, who was in the coach that fell into the river, said he came out of the waters with the help of a rope thrown in by the rescuers. An employee of the revenue department, he had come to Kozhikode on transfer from Thiruvananthapuram only a week ago and was on his way to Kuttippuram from Kozhikode when the accident occurred.

He said that the contract workers of the bridge under construction were the first to come to the aid of the trapped passengers. His coach that fell into the water was upside down and he was knee deep in the river. However, he managed to come to the top when a rope was thrown by the rescue workers. He was so dazed that he could not say how many had been rescued from the fallen coaches.

Mr. Shaju, with a fractured shoulder, was among the seven people taken to the nearby Shifa hospital. All of them were discharged on request after first aid.

Survivors yet to get over shock

The 120-odd survivors are in a state of shock and many could not even recall the coaches in which they were travelling. "The train jerked just before it entered the Kadalundi bridge. There was a big noise. Everyone was thrown out of the seats and the next minute, before I could understand anything, I was neckdeep in the mud. Somebody pulled me out breaking open the window after half-an-hour," Mr. Gopinathan from Vatakara told PTI at the medical college hospital here.

With an ageing, ailing leadership, India is hardly in a position to stand up and be counted

Weak in the knees

By BRAHMA CHELLANEY

AF 8
14/6

A WEAK, SOFT, corrupt, pusillanimous republic. That is the popular perception about India among Indians. Like the leadership it has, the republic appears weak in the knees. It displays a poverty of ambition, moves tentatively forward in the style of an old man's gait, and has a predilection for weak-kneed policies. As A.P.J. Abdul Kalam once put it memorably, "A nation of a billion people that thinks like a nation of a million people."

India has had a series of weak governments led by fainthearted prime ministers. But the popular feeling that India is frail in the knees has never been stronger than under the present government.

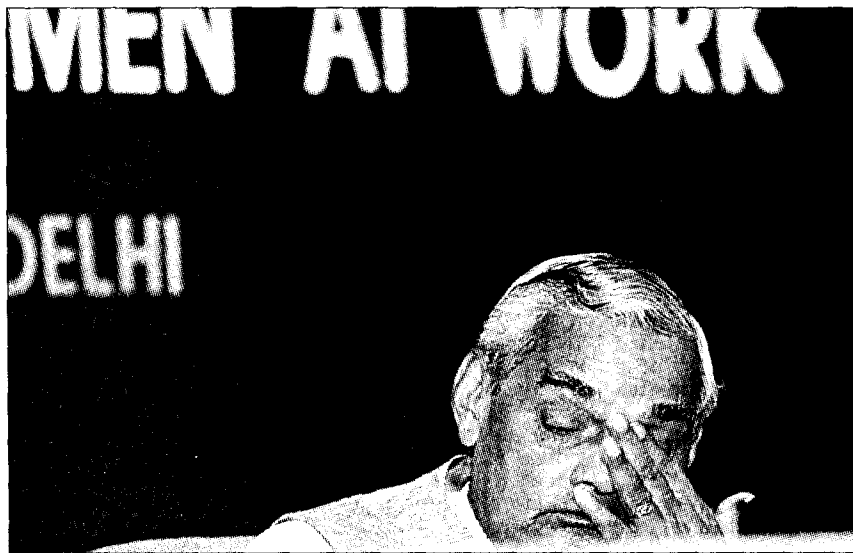
It may be a mere coincidence that Atal Bihari Vajpayee has had two knee surgeries as Prime Minister — on one knee after Lahore, Kargil and Kandahar and on the other immediately after he set off on the wrong foot to "walk the high road" with Pakistan military dictator Pervez Musharraf. The Prime Minister's physical condition, however, parallels the state of the nation.

Walking the high road to enlightenment will not be easy, or medically advisable. After all, the "defining moment" at Lahore was reached by bus, Kandahar happened through a special, terrorist-laden plane sent from New Delhi with the foreign minister as the terrorists' chaperon, and Kargil occurred as India slept blissfully under the Lahore lullabies. Given those walk-free debacles and Vajpayee's own difficulty to keep his feet, the "high road" seems too arduous to traverse, even with ambulifts.

Neighbours know they can trample on India's interests and go scot-free. In fact, Pakistan's subversion and China's containment have gone to India's knees. That gives confidence to smaller neighbours to play against Indian interests. India's shrinking base in Bangladesh and Nepal has resulted in New Delhi now identifying its stakes with one party. But the Awami League and Nepali Congress are loath to say or do anything that could be publicly construed as supportive of India.

With ambiguous friends like those insecurely in power and opposition forces openly hostile, India-bashing is endemic there and in Sri Lanka. New Delhi has only to blame itself for the anti-India feelings in its neighbourhood.

Firstly, India refuses to grasp a central principle of international relations — power respects power, and the meek always remain weak. In contrast to India, China employs its growing power to inspire awe, and none of its neighbours dares to mess with its interests. With its pursuit of naked power politics, Beijing sells arms to all of India's neighbours (except Bhutan) and buys ubiquitous



NEVER MIND THE MESSAGE BEHIND HIM: Atal Bihari Vajpayee

influence in their affairs of state.

No political party in this region (not even the Nepali Congress whose main opponent is a pro-Beijing communist alliance) will speak against China, even though, unlike India, it is not a status quo power and does not balk at making open threats. In contrast, even a rumour is enough, as happened in the Hrithik Roshan case, to spark anti-India violence.

Secondly, India is not a reliable friend. It is indeed risky to be a buddy of India because New Delhi has a record of not standing by its friends in the region. Lacking consistency and the courage of its convictions, India can, out of the blue, drop a friend and embrace a foe. A classic example is the manner Rajiv Gandhi overnight turned the Tamil Tigers from friends to foes. The bottom line for others is simple: To have a weak, whimsical friend like India is to ask for trouble.

The Indian republic does not stand by its friends even within its frontiers. Vajpayee's disastrous Kashmir ceasefire facilitated the methodical elimination of a large number of police and intelligence moles in the Valley.

Thirdly, India has not realised the importance of securing international respect. In fact, time and again it exhibits a low level of self-esteem. It constantly searches for approbation from major powers.

A nuclear-armed nation that wakes up after foreign invaders have captured a vast swath of its strategic land and that capitulates to hijackers ignominiously can never be looked at with respect by any neighbour, be it puny Bhutan. In fact, such events bared India's ineptitude and reinforced its image as a clumsy, big-

headed nation that claimed victory in Kargil when Bill Clinton to this day takes credit for getting the Pakistanis fully out.

While major nations go to great extent to provide a moral veneer to their foreign policy, India unhesitatingly discards its principles whenever politically convenient. Short of putting Musharraf on trial in absentia, India did everything possible to show him as a murderous general. He was painted as a war criminal who masterminded Kargil, a traitor to peace and democracy, the architect of IC-814 hijacking, and the sponsor of terrorism. Now, without retracting any of those charges, India is expectantly waiting to sup with him.

Fourthly, India continues to show that Indian military lives are cheap and expendable. More than 1,200 Indian military men were sent to their death in the jungles of northern Sri Lanka in a purposeless intervention that has left India to this day with no friends in that island nation. India succeeded remarkably in alienating all sides.

Almost every day brings news about a couple of security personnel killed in Kashmir. As grimy old men play grimy little games that steadily mess up the Kashmir situation, no one pauses to reflect how much longer the ungrateful republic can expect its troops to unquestioningly lay down their lives. To make things worse, the present army chief has been ecstatically sucking up to the government by making political statements in public, hailing first the ceasefire and now the U-turn on Pakistan.

New Delhi is now rewarding the rogue general, responsible for more than 500 Indian military fatalities in Kargil, with

the "peace" talks he desperately needs to get a degree of legitimacy denied to him and to contain the risks of further Pakistani sovereign defaults. How callously India treats its men who sacrifice their lives was shown recently by Vajpayee who, in belated comments, said that "a mountain was made out of a molehill" when Bangladeshis coldbloodedly murdered and maimed 16 BSF soldiers.

No State that treats its military men as cannon fodder can be a great power or a respected nation or even stay united for very long. Contrast the Indian unconcern over Indian lives with the way China dealt with the world's sole superpower over the Belgrade embassy killings and the more recent death of its fighter pilot.

Fifthly, the greatest harm to Indian interests has been inflicted by abrupt policy changes driven by the personal eccentricities of those in power, who have little regard for institutional mechanisms or for professionals. Brahmanical guile can never be a substitute for statecraft.

Sixthly, India's adversaries know its conspicuous weaknesses and exploit them. From Nagaland in the Fifties to Kashmir today, they have recognised that there is no better way to take on India than to mire it in internal-security problems, especially given the lack of Indian will to impose retaliatory costs. A weak-kneed nation stuck in knee-deep of internal problems is a guarantee that it will eventually go down on its knees.

Today, any enemy knows that an excellent route to strike further blows against India's infirm knees is through its open frontier with Nepal. Under Nepal's flawed democratic experiment, forces inimical to India's interests, particularly the United Marxist-Leninist alliance and the underground Maoists, have thrived. These are the very forces that stand to gain the most from the palace bloodbath and the resultant damage to Nepalese political institutions.

This leaves New Delhi with only two options: Either to stem Nepal's growing attraction as a staging ground by revising the open-border policy, or to move India's outer security perimeter to the Nepalese frontier with China-occupied Tibet. It is not clear that the septuagenarians and octogenarians who lead India by their chins understand that a continued open border without deep security safeguards is an invitation to disaster.

India is a young nation acquiring the attributes of its ageing, ailing leadership. Although home to one-sixth of the human race, India is hardly in a position to stand up and be counted. The frailty of its knees points to the need both for a generational change in Indian politics and for cleaning up the rot in the halls of power.

Strategic partner in VSNL to get free hand

Siddharth Zarabi
New Delhi, June 1

IN A significant move, the Government has proposed to give a free hand to the incoming strategic partner in running Videsh Sanchar Nigam Ltd (VSNL) after the sale of its 25 per cent stake.

Under this scheme, approved recently by the inter-ministerial group (IMG), the Government has decided that the absence of its nominees during board meetings should not debar the strategic partner from taking decisions in the interest of the company.

New clauses to this effect are being included in the draft shareholders agreement (SHA) for VSNL divestment. The earlier draft had envisaged that certain decisions of the company would require the "affirmative vote" of the Government nominees on the board.

Top sources told the *Hindustan Times* that the inter-ministerial group (IMG) has also

decided that the chairman and managing director of VSNL should be the strategic partner nominees alone.

The IMG has also decided that it will not appoint permanent directors, greater in number than provisioned for the strategic partner, on the reconstituted VSNL board. Independent directors will, however, continue to be governed by the Companies Act of 1956.

The centre has, however, kept its option open for diluting its remaining stake to financial institutions via a public offer. The IMG has also fixed the earnest money deposit (EMD) at Rs 500 crore in cash and not in the form of bank guarantees.

Sources said that in case the government wants to dilute any additional stake in VSNL to an individual, other than financial institutions, the first right of refusal will be with the new strategic investor.

Taken together, the new clauses on the government

directors and the posts of chairman and managing director will allow the new investor to run VSNL with an unfettered hand.

As against this, in the case of Maruti Udyog Ltd, the government has shared the right to appoint chairman or managing director alternatively every five years with the foreign partner - Suzuki of Japan.

Post divestment, the government shareholding in VSNL will fall to 26 per cent, while 30 per cent will be held by foreign investors in the form of ADR's, 17 per cent by domestic FIs, FIIs and public in the Indian capital market. Another two per cent is being allotted to employees.

Once the deal is finalised, the new partner will have to make a mandatory open offer under the Sebi takeover code to acquire another 20 per cent stake from the public. The minimum offer price will not be less than what the new investor has paid for the 25 per cent government stake.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

JUN 20

MADHURI WILL HAVE TO INFORM THE POLICE EACH TIME DR NENE IS IN TOWN

Order on foreigners could put VIPs in quandary

By Vinod Taksal
The Times of India News Service

NEW DELHI: The law, they say, is an ass. And the Foreigners (Report to Police) Order, 1971, under the Foreigners Act, 1946, is certain to have some of the most powerful and well-known persons in the country tied firmly in a bureaucratic knot. For, ignorance is not bliss, and this omnibus law is certain to invite serious trouble.

The order requires every "householder" to report to the nearest police station "the arrival or presence in his household or in any premises occupied by him or under his control of any foreigner, if he knows or has reasons to believe that he is a foreigner". Failure to inform the police would attract punitive action, "i.e. imprisonment up to a period of five years or fine or both".

And so: Brajesh Mishra's daughter is married to an Italian. Should Mr Mishra fail to ring up the Tughlaq Road *thana* every time his son-in-law is with him, does the National Security Adviser to the PM get hauled up?

The act dates back to 1971. Did Indira Gandhi, or the then Indian Airlines pilot Rajiv Gandhi, keep the Tughlaq Road police station informed that an Italian, Sonia Gandhi, was staying at the PMH?

K. Subrahmanyam is in a fix. His son-in-law, daughter-in-law, wife's sister, nephews, nieces, a brother-in-law are all foreigners or foreign



DHAK-DHAK OF A DIFFERENT KIND..
Madhuri with her husband Dr Nene

citizens. "I am horrified. Does this mean that every time my son-in-law or daughter-in-law comes to stay with us, I have to inform the police? And, if I fail to do so, will they take me in for five years?" asks his wife. 'K.S.' is considered to be the father of the country's national security concepts and principles.

Shovana Narayan is a well-known dancer, and lesser known as an Indian Accounts and Audit Services officer of senior rank in the government of India. She is married to an Austrian, who also happens to be his country's ambassador in New Delhi. What does she

do—call the Chanakyapuri police station every night to say a foreigner is staying with her overnight?

Former President R. Venkataraman's daughter is a German citizen. If she spends a night at his place, and the police are not informed, does the ex-president go to jail for five years?

How many times did the late Vijayaraje Scindia, a leading light of the Sangh Parivar which believes in flaunting its nationalist colours, or members of her household inform the Chanakyapuri police station of the arrival of Yashodhara Raje to her palace in the past 15 years? Yashodhara, Vijayaraje's daughter, was a U.S. citizen until she took up Indian citizenship five years ago to contest the Madhya Pradesh assembly elections.

► No one will be spared, Page 7

Police mess up Tejpal case

Neeta Sharma
New Delhi, May 8

HT-1
9/5

THE DELHI Police seem to have been landed with a murder case without a body.

Bhupinder Tyagi alias Avdesh, a history-sheeter from the Bulandshahr district of UP, and his five associates were arrested last Saturday over a plot to murder tehelka editor-in-chief Tarun Tejpal.

Four of Avdesh's associates are from Delhi and do not have criminal records. Senior Delhi Police officers say the way the case against Avdesh has been handled indicates a motive to destroy the case. "The case may prove to be a sham because of the investigating officers' fault," said an officer.

Sources say the ploy of booking suspects for serious charges that cannot be proved, so that they are acquitted, has been employed in this case.



Though Tejpal is alive, the police have registered a murder case against Avdesh and his associates, under Section 302 of the Indian Penal Code.

Avdesh has given the case a new twist by naming Shahabuddin, an RJD MLA in Bihar, as a close associate in the plot. The agency sought a 14-day police remand for the accused on the ground that it would have to send personnel to Bihar to recover the arms relevant to the case. The Delhi Police also want to interrogate Shahabuddin and his associates.

Whatever be Shahabuddin's role in the affair, the city police seem to have botched up the case. The FIR lodged with the Lodhi Colony police station lists wrong sections of the IPC while booking Avdesh and his associates. The FIR says: "The accused wanted to create political instability, hatred, contempt and disaffection towards the Government, which has been established by law in India."

The accused have been booked for sedition under Section 124(a) of the IPC. Sedition is construed under this Act as an attempt to destabilise a lawfully constituted Government. But Ashish Bhagat, a senior criminal lawyer, says a plot to assassinate Tejpal cannot be construed as an attempt to wage war against the Indian state.

The police have registered a case against the six alleged conspirators for possessing counterfeit currency and arms.

Balco strike called off

HT Correspondent
Raipur, May 8

THE 67-DAY-OLD strike by Balco employees has been called off. The core committee of the Balco Employees' Union that met thrice today appealed to the employees to resume work from tomorrow.

The Sterlite management accepted the union's 24-point demand, but refused to give two months salary to the employees. The management did not accept the union's demand that the strike period be treated as working days. However, Sterlite agreed to reinstate union leader A M Ansari of CITU. Ansari's services were terminated during the strike period.

The employees had gone on an indefinite strike from March 3 in protest against the Centre's decision to disinvest the public sector undertaking.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

9 MAY 1977

Maneka in UK, to sue Indira biographer for defamation

■ Katherine Frank's book called Sanjay a murderer

KANIKA GAHLAUT
NEW DELHI, MAY 6

ENDING a month-long suspense, Maneka Gandhi tonight left for England to file a defamation suit against Katherine Frank, author of *Indira*, a biography of Indira Gandhi. The lawyer accompanying her on the week-long trip was Raj Panjwani, who had fought and won Maneka's case against Khushwant Singh for a chapter in his autobiography.

According to her son, 21-year-old Feroze Varun Gandhi, the case against Katherine is to be fought on the grounds of "damages under permanent defamation."

It will be argued by a Queen's Counsel (equivalent of our senior advocate), who is yet to be decided upon. Maneka has also chosen Sarosh Zaiwalla for the case. He had fought the Bofors case for Amitabh Bachchan.

The Minister has strongly objected to the allegation in the biography that her husband, Sanjay Gandhi, was a murderer. For instance, on page 397 it is stated: "Lurid rumours also abounded on how Sanjay's 'hitmen' were liquidating human targets on his orders. Some of

these rumours were true."

Katherine then quotes a conversation with Rupika Chawla, who has since been reported to have denied giving an interview to the author. On the same page, the author reproduces an interview with James Manor, who cites Romesh Thapar as making the same claim: "Indira's friend and advisor in the 60s -- with whom she was now estranged -- claims that Sanjay had another enemy

murdered." In legal terms this is considered "double hearsay" which is an accepted ground for defamation.

The suit will also object to the account of

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



INDIAN EXPRESS

7 MAY 2001

from the front page 98-2 7/5

Maneka to sue Indira biographer

Indira Gandhi and her alleged affair with M O Mathai. "My grandmother has been defamed in the most disgraceful manner. It is shocking to me that members of my family have collaborated in the assimilation of these lies," says Feroze Varun.

While insinuations of an affair between Kamala Nehru and Feroze Gandhi (who married Indira) are mentioned in the book, it is allegations of an affair between Indira and Mathai which are sprinkled generously throughout. On page 399: "Sanjay...was also the same type of man as Indira's putative lover, her father's secretary M O Mathai."

Katherine quotes B K Nehru as saying that "There was more fact than fiction in these rumours." But in the cover story written by Uma Vasudev for Eurasia Times (May 2001), Vasudev quotes Nehru as denying this. "Mr Nehru...(denied this) categorically, asserting that it may have been the other way around, more fiction than fact" and that the author had got it wrong.

"By allegedly repeating these statements — baseless and false — about an affair between Kamala Nehru and Feroze Gandhi and Indira Gandhi and M O Mathai, she is bringing this information into the public domain and not proving it, thereby being guilty of defamation," says Panjwani.

"I find it shocking and disgraceful," says Feroze Varun. According to him, what convinced his mother to move the courts against Frank was a passage describing his father's death. Page 447 reads: "Stitched together, his corpse looked like an Indian Frankenstein's monster. No surgeon or undertaker's skill could make him seamless and whole and anything less than what he now was: a grotesque, bloodless husk of a human being."

"I have never seen a person's dead body being described so obnoxiously and tastelessly," he says, adding: "It was very hurtful to my mother and I, and it convinced me that this person had written the book with a pre-determined agenda."

The fact that the author did not bother to contact Maneka while she was researching her subject is evidence of Frank's bias and mindset towards Sanjay Gandhi and his wife, feel some people close to them. In contrast, Sonia Gandhi has been thanked in the acknowledgements for her help. Sonia reportedly met the author twice.

INDIAN EXPRESS

7 MAY 2001

Quit India, Sena tells McDonald's

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, MAY 5. Shiv Sena activists today staged a demonstration before the head office of the McDonald's in South Delhi protesting the alleged use of beef flavouring by the international fast food giant in its French fries.

The party later submitted a memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, demanding the closure of all its outlets across the country stating that "in a country where 80 per cent of the population worships the cow, one cannot go on with this kind of a controversy."

VHP to seek legal advice

The VHP general secretary, Mr. Giriraj Kishore, claimed that they would not seek any further action against the MacDonal'd's till they secured legal advice. Further, according to him, the clarification given by the company earlier in the day would not be accepted till a decision was taken on the suit filed against it in the United States or till the complainant withdrew the petition.

The VHP charged that "since the company had lied in the U.S., there was a possibility of the same being done here in India".

McDonald's clarifies

The McDonald's in India today issued a clarification asserting that none of its products, including French fries, contained any beef or pork extract. It had taken adequate precautions to avoid untoward incidents in all its outlets in the country, it said.

"All our restaurants are open. We have taken all precautions," the Managing Director of the McDonald's, Mr. Vikram Bakshi, said. Dismissing any negative effect on its sales, Mr. Bakshi added, "In India we don't serve any beef or pork in our menu as we are extremely sensitive to the Indian culture and religious sentiments."



A Shiv Sena activist trying to climb over a police barricade, while other members shout slogans against McDonald's during a demonstration in New Delhi, on Saturday. — Reuters

The company circulated statements issued by two firms in New Zealand and the U.S. which supply French fries for Indian operations saying: "No beef tallow or fat or any other ingredient of animal origin is used in the manufacture of this product."

PTI, UNI report:

Mr. Bakshi said that in the West beef was a staple diet, whereas in India beef was not liked. "We are also Indians and we respect the sentiments attached to it. We do not even have eggs in the vegetarian products," he said.

In Mumbai, Mr. Amit Jatia, Managing Director of Hardcastle restaurants, partners of the McDonald's, clarified that the products in India were different from the ones in the U.S.

The clarification comes in the wake of protests by the BJP and the Bajrang Dal activists at outlets in Mumbai and Thane on Friday. While the BJP's demonstration outside an outlet near the Chhatrapati Shivaji railway terminus in south Mumbai was peaceful, the Bajrang Dal activists ran-

sacked the Thane outlet. About 30 people were arrested and later let off on bail.

"The demonstrators over-reacted. We have suffered losses to the tune of Rs. 20 lakhs due to the ransacking of our outlet in Thane. The agitators should have discussed with us when the reports first came in that our vegetarian products contained beef extracts," Mr. Jatia said. It was too early to decide whether to file any cases against the protesters.

Mr. Jatia said the products were tested by the Central Food Technology Research Institute and the company was committed to build a relationship of trust with its customers.

According to media reports from Washington, U.S.-based MacDonal'ds admitted a small amount of beef extract was used in its French fries after a consumer lawsuit was filed on May 1 by three vegetarians who accused the company of "fraudulently concealing the existence of beef in the French fries".

Sena testing French fries. Page 8

THE HINDU

6 MAY 2001

Bollywood under cocaine scan after Fardeen bust

FROM CHANDRIMA BHATTACHARYA

Mumbai, May 5: The man who could say no to Urmila on screen could not say so to cocaine on the street.

Fardeen Khan, who plays the lead in the steamy *Pyar Tune Kya Kiya*, was arrested by the Narcotics Control Bureau tonight for possessing 9 gm of cocaine.

Sources said the narcotics cell was also keeping a close watch on peddlers and six other Bollywood personalities who regularly purchased drugs.

Fardeen was about to purchase the drug from a peddler near Juhu around 3 am today when he was picked up, the sources said.

Fardeen had visited an ATM kiosk to operate his account before purchasing the drug from the peddler, who has also been arrested.

However, the deal could not be wrapped up as his card got stuck in the machine, the bureau's zonal director Ajay Ubale said. He added that Fardeen had admitted to taking the drug regularly.

Each gram of cocaine,

dubbed a "rich man's drug", costs Rs 2,500. An official said possession of the drug was punishable under the Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Act. Those found guilty could be sentenced up to 10 years in jail.

The actor, producer-director Feroze Khan's son, was interrogated till late in the night on Bollywood's nexus with the drug cartel.

While Fardeen was being questioned at the narcotics bureau headquarters at Ballard Pier, father Feroze visited him twice. On his second visit, Feroze

was accompanied by Fardeen's friend and actor Kishen Kumar, brother of slain music baron Gulshan Kumar. Ironically, Feroze had produced *Janbaaz*, a film focusing on drug abuse.

Fardeen broke down when his father arrived. Feroze left because interrogation was still going on. "There is nothing to it," he told reporters. Later in the evening, Feroze and Kishen spent an hour with narcotics officials.

Fardeen's detention comes close on the heels of a spate of incidents — including financier

Bharat Shah's arrest by the police — pointing at links between Bollywood and the underworld.

Fardeen plays a photographer who withstands the charms of Urmila in *Pyar Tune Kya Kiya*.

He was just beginning to make his presence felt on the silver screen though he has been in the industry for quite some time.

He had debuted with Feroze's *Prem Aggan* some years ago. His second movie was *Jungle*, in which, too, he was paired with Urmila. The movie was directed by Ram Gopal Verma. Verma is the producer of *Pyar Tune Kya Kiya*.



Fardeen Khan

THE TIMES OF INDIA

6 MAY 2001

The sensational case of the 1980s had been forgotten by everyone until the Delhi High Court on April 30 held the conviction handed out to two senior armed forces personnel, Major General (retd) F.D. Larkins and Air Vice-Marshal (retd) K.H. Larkins by a sessions court way back in 1985. The Larkins brothers who are now in their 80s will have to return to jails to complete their sentences now. It has to be seen if both will comply with the court since one of the Larkins now lives in Australia.

RITU SARIN dusted up old files and records to reconstruct the whole saga of the two brothers who traded their country for a few thousand rupees.

HE called himself Jockey. And Major General (retd) F.D. Larkins didn't find anything strange about the American who was networking in a party thrown by an arms dealer, M.J. Rao. They exchanged telephone numbers, and promised to keep in touch. The two kept their promise. Since that evening in April 1978, Jockey hosted the General several times at the American Club. Over coffee one day, Jockey asked Larkins how often he visited the Army Headquarters (AHQ) and asked him to keep his eyes and ears open. "You would be suitably rewarded" is what Larkins was told. Larkins wouldn't have minded some 'reward'.

After retiring from the Indian Army in 1972, F.D. Larkins had tried his hand at many things. The taxi service he started with four cars never took off despite seeking business from the US embassy. The diary farm he ran in Deolali also did not work and he had to sell it off after his wife's death. After a short stay with his planter sons in Assam, he joined Mohan Meakins in the late seventies. His job included improving the sale of Meakins products in the Army. And that kept his links with the Army alive.

Jockey wasn't very demanding, bits and pieces of information about Russian arms and equipment. You know, the US and India were democratic countries and they needed to help each other to fight communism, he would tell Larkins. The first assignment Larkins got from Jockey was an exercise in essay writing, except that the topic was the morale of the Indian army. And the price a moderate sum of Rs 3000.

Slowly, the demands increased and became very specific. Who is going to be the next Chief of Army Staff? Are night convoys running between Srinagar and Leh? Who are the Russian technicians staying in India for training? Which are the submarines and torpedoes being acquired from West Germany? Has Beretta of Italy got an order

for 9 mm pistols?

Now Larkins needed more men to help him out. It was in the middle of 1979 that he roped in Lt Col (retd) Jasbir Singh into the spy ring. Jasbir was in the Armored Corp Directorate when Larkins was director of weapons and equipment. He offered Jasbir a "part-time" job and lied to him about the information on Russian equipment being needed by a West German diplomat. Once Larkins found that Jasbir was willing, he got his name cleared from Jockey.

The spy ring was now doing brisk business with Larkins getting a monthly stipend of Rs 3,000, Jasbir Rs 1,000. And Jockey was joined by Ben. Jasbir's help proved handy when Jockey demanded the technical manuals of the Russian T-72 tanks. Within a month Larkins could promise that it was possible. Some 10 manuals were handed over for copying. A sum between Rs 2,000 and Rs 10,000 was paid for the deal. Several other general manuals were also delivered.

In December 1980, Jockey made an unusual request — would it be possible to bore a hole through a T-72 tank with an instrument they would provide for testing the metal? Larkins and Jasbir Singh discussed this, but decided it was too risky.

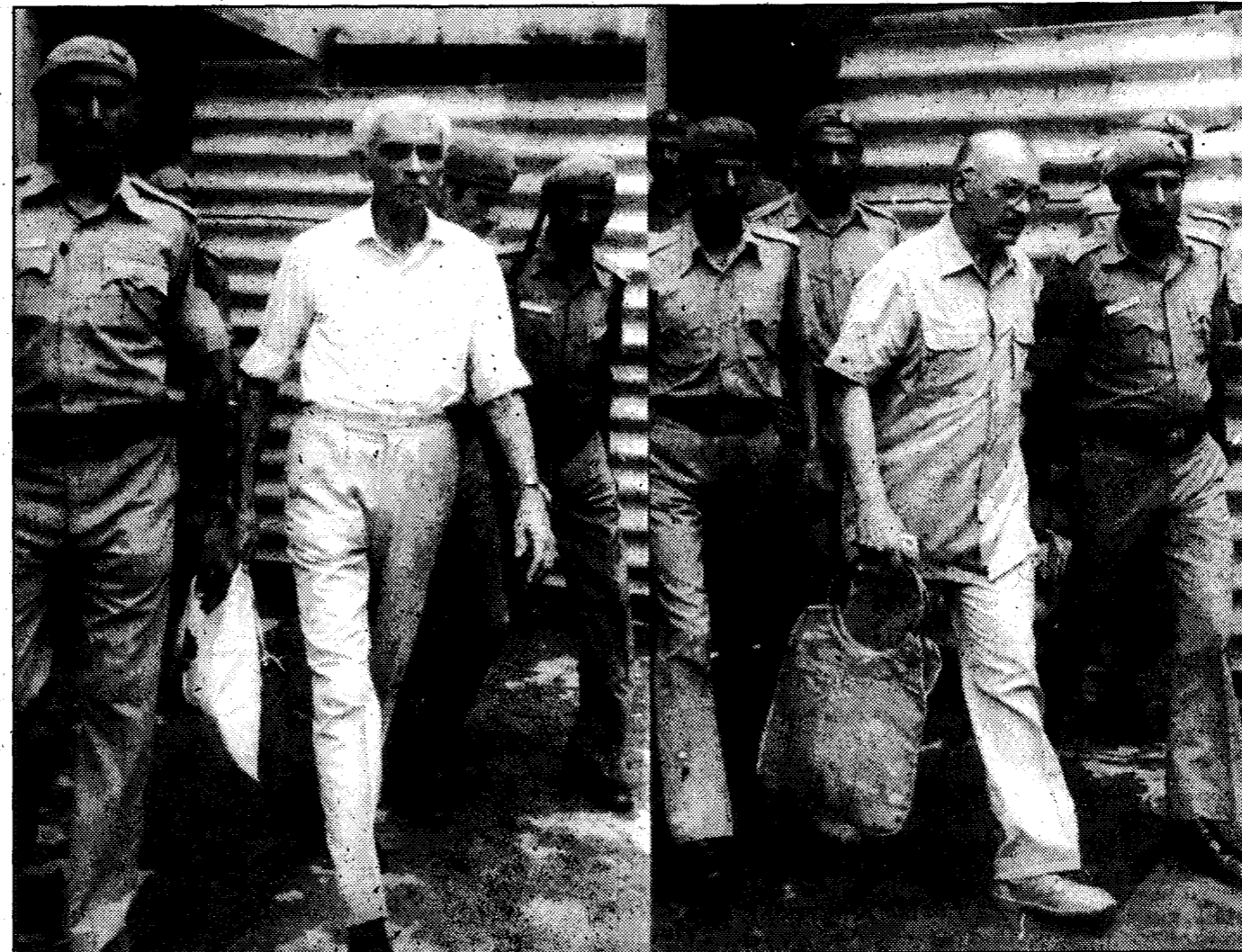
After some 23 meetings with Larkins, Jockey was posted out of New Delhi but before he left, he introduced a new contact, Ben, to the spy ring. Some 15 meetings with the new contact were arranged. By the middle of 1981, Larkins recruited his brother, K.H. Larkins into the network to provide information on the Indian Air Force (IAF). As a 'sub-agent' working for the Americans, he was to be paid Rs 1,000 per month. Shortly afterward, in July 1982, Ben too left the country and introduced John to Larkins. The Americans, were, by now very cautious and asked their agent not to visit the Embassy in his own car but in a taxi.

Around November 1982, John said the Americans had an urgent requirement of obtaining the technical manuals of the MiG-21, MiG-23 and MiG-25 aircraft. A price of between Rs 20,000 and Rs 40,000 was indicated for each. A list of 13 manuals was handed over. By the time the first manual on the MiG-21 aircraft was delivered on April 2, 1983, Ben had handed over charge to Bud. The delivery was done at a lonely spot off Dhaula Kuan. Two hours after the manual was handed over, the manual and a packet containing Rs 20,000 was dropped into Larkins' car, which had stopped at a pre-fixed spot near Munirka Marg.

Unknown to the Larkins brothers, they were being watched. On March 24, Group Captain Jasjit

THE LARKINS CASE

The spies who went into the cold, nearly



The Larkins brothers at the sessions court where the spy case was heard in 1984. File photograph

Singh, posted at the Air Headquarters (AHQ), had informed his boss, Air Vice Marshal S Raghavendran that a retired officer, K.H. Larkins was inducing him to part with secret IAF manuals. Senior IAF officials were consulted and it was decided that Jasjit Singh should play along with Larkins so that they understood the full ramifications of the episode.

Thus, the secret manual was handed over to K.H. Larkins on April 2 — the same day it was passed on to Bud. On April 5, it was returned to Jasjit along with Rs 10,000 in cash. Larkins never approached Jasjit again. During the seven-month long vigil, the au-

thorities managed to establish an incriminating pattern in the clandestine meetings F.D. Larkins had with Bud and his trips to the bank to deposit money he received from the US agents.

The original complaint in the Larkins case states that around the same time Raghavendran made an intervention when information came in that K.H. Larkins was soon likely to migrate to Australia. On November 9, 1983, Raghavendran lodged a confidential complaint under the Official Secrets Act with the espionage cell of the Delhi Police. On November 11, the residence of F.D. Larkins was

raided and incriminating documents as well as an unlicensed weapon recovered. K.H. Larkins was arrested in Lucknow and brought to Delhi.

On interrogation, F.D. Larkins named Jasbir Singh as his "sub-agent" and on November 13, he too was arrested and remanded to police custody. Gill confessed that he had been passing on confidential documents to F.D. Larkins as well as defence consultant Jaspal Singh Gill, with whom he was working and to whom he had given an internal MoD directory. Subsequently, Gill's house too, was searched and he became the

fourth accused in the case. Each of them made confessions, about their role in the spy scam.

The intelligence figured out that Jockey, Ben, John, Bud and the names of CIA operatives Rafael Mariani, Reynold F Steloh, Harry L Wetherbee and Major Paul Kinley Pittman respectively.

THE espionage trial began in the court of the Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) on April 16, 1984 with 60 witnesses in all being produced by the prosecution. On July 24, 1985, the four

accused were convicted under the Official Secrets Act. While three of them were handed out a punishment of 10 years imprisonment, Jaspal Singh Gill got a lighter punishment of two years.

Once in jail, the Larkins brothers proved to be persistent petitioners, filing one application after another for acquittal, bail or early hearing of the appeal they filed challenging the convictions. It was possibly their philanthropic activities in prison that resulted in the 1989 order of bail they received, which has now been cancelled in the case of the two Larkins brothers by the High Court. It will now be the turn of the Supreme Court to hear the appeals and give a final twist to the sensational spy saga.

Eighteen years after the spy scam broke, the case records are frayed, the files containing the evidence and confessional statements now lie layered with fine dust in the chambers of Delhi High Court. The High Court judgment delivered by Justice R S Sodhi on May 30, in fact, jolted everyone into remembering that the appeals against the 1985 Sessions Court judgment were still pending. It is a sad commentary on the Indian judiciary that it took 16 long years for the appeals to be heard. Inevitably, the case is now

the prime accused, the High Court announced an acquittal of the remaining two — Lt Col (retd) Jasbir Singh, who was alleged to have been regularly borrowing secret defence manuals and passing them on to F.D. Larkins and that of Jaspal Singh Gill. B.R. Handa, the Special Public Prosecutor in the case says he surely will be filing an appeal in the Supreme Court against the acquittal of Jasbir Singh, but will not pursue the decision in the case of Jaspal Singh Gill. "The High Court has simply not gone into the prosecution case as far as Jasbir Singh is concerned," says Handa. "The court appears to have gone out of its way to give him the benefit of doubt."

Handa says it was the Larkins case that proved to be an eye-opener for the Defence establishment since the Larkins brothers were high-ranking, decorated officers. "The cancellation of bail in their case is perfectly justified. The Larkins brothers deserve no leniency since they were blatantly meeting US intelligence officials and selling defence secrets for a few thousand rupees."

Now, a few months after the return of Win Chadha on a wheelchair to face trial in the Bofors case, another aged and ailing accused may be forced to surrender,

LARKINS CASE, OVER THE YEARS

April '78:	First meeting between CIA agent Jockey and Maj Gen (retd) F.D. Larkins
Sept '78:	First set of questions given by the Americans were answered by F.D. Larkins
August '79:	Lt Col (retd) Jasbir Singh recruited into the spy ring
May '80:	Technical manuals of the T-72 tanks handed over to US agents
Mid-1981:	F.D. Larkins' brother, Air Vice Marshal (retd) K.H. Larkins joins the ring
March '83:	Group Captain Jasjit Singh complains to his boss about K.H. Larkins demanding secret papers
April '83:	F.D. Larkins delivers a technical manual on the MiG-21 aircraft to the American agent
Nov '83:	All the four (Larkins brothers, Jaspal Singh Gill, and Jasbir Singh) accused are raided and arrested
Jan '84:	A formal complaint filed in the court of the ACMM
July '85:	Sessions court sentences Larkins brothers for 10 years imprisonment
March '89:	Larkins brothers granted bail due to their good conduct in jail
Mid-1999:	K.H. Larkins obtains an order from the High Court allowing him to go to Australia
April 2001:	'HC cancels bail of the Larkins' and acquits the other two accused

back on newspapers.

Major General (retd) P.D. Larkins is said to be living with his sister in Lucknow, his brother, Air Vice Marshal (retd) K.H. Larkins quietly left two years ago to live with his daughter in Australia. The brothers are now expected to surrender before the Sessions Court and spend the remaining four years of their 10-year sentence in Tihar Jail. Their sentence, had, incidentally been commuted by the court after they spent around six years behind bars, due to the exemplary conduct they had shown as detainees.

While dismissing the appeals of

in court. K.H. Larkins' lawyer, B.L. Wadhwa admits there was no option but for him to return though he was in touch with his sister to see if his health would permit it. "The Larkins brothers must face the administration of justice and go back to jail, but why should this have been done at a stage when they are waiting to die?" he demands. "The delay in hearing the appeals is very unfair. If K.H. Larkins is put back in jail, he might even die there. I will speak to doctors in Australia about the state of his health and decide if we should ask for exemption on grounds of ill-health."

Heat bombshell after ammo volcano erupts

FROM GAJINDER SINGH

Mamun (Pathankot), April 30: Girdhari Sharma had just finished dinner, relishing the last bite of *roti* laced with *gur* and home-made *ghee*, with his family when he heard a loud explosion and felt "the earth trembling".

For a moment he thought an earthquake had struck. "Run," he yelled at his wife, sons, daughter and aged parents. But before they could reach the door, two more blasts left them stunned. Huddled together in one corner, all they could do was pray.

"My wife said Pakistan had attacked. My son thought Kashmiri terrorists had attacked the Mamun Cantonment and my daughter started crying," Sharma said, reliving the horror of bombs exploding at the Simble Chowk arms depot late last night. The next series of explosions stopped the clock-hands at 10.22 pm.

"It was a nightmare. The whole sky lit up. It took a little while for us to realise that the arms depot was on fire," Sharma said holding up a piece of anti-aircraft shell that had landed on his roof. The blast had also shattered some window panes.

The army's Northern Command today ordered a Court of Inquiry into the blast. Army sources peg the loss at "over Rs 35 crore" as nearly "500 tonnes of ammunition have gone up in smoke". The loss includes machine guns, 122-mm tank ammunition and 30-mm anti-aircraft shells.

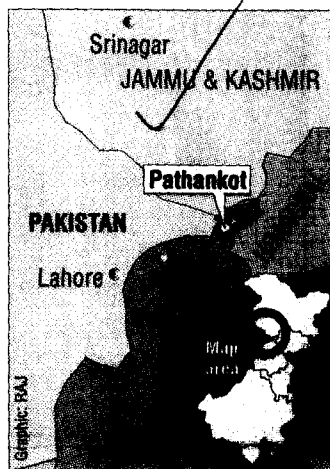
Senior district officials said high day-temperature led to a "spontaneous combustion" of the ammunition, the explanation given to them by the army authorities. But an officer on duty at the depot said lack of maintenance triggered the explosions.

"The bombs are kept 120 feet below the ground on wood plinths and covered with water-proof tar-

paulin sheets. The temperature there is relatively cooler than the surface. Last year, the Bharatpur depot had been rocked similarly. Some probe was held, but we have not heard of the report," he said.

Sources said the fire was "nothing" compared to last year's blast at the Bharatpur depot which destroyed 16,000 tonnes of ammunition, but conceded that hardly any lesson has been learnt.

"The inquiry into the Bharatpur fire threw up several recommendations. But little has been



done... More care should have been taken, especially because Pathankot and nearby areas experience summers with high temperature," an army officer said.

District officials said the devastation in Mamun would have been total had the dump stocked missiles and mortars. The blasts sparked off an exodus from Mamun, Sieunti, Manwal, Lamini and Redhwa, areas around the cantonment. "Those who could, left for Pathankot and the hills of Himachal Pradesh," said Kulbir Singh of Sieunti. "It was panic all around." About 2.5 lakh residents of Pathankot came out on the streets. Lamini, a village of 10,000, was deserted within minutes.

THE TELEGRAPH

1 MAY 2011

PASSING THROUGH

Opposition, indefensibly, ignores budget

YASHWANT Sinha should be happy that nearly two months after his budget was presented, Parliament finally found time to pass it. But he must be ecstatic that his original proposals, and the slew of amendments he proposed on Wednesday, were okayed without any criticism. The Congress refused to discuss the budget and two of the other Opposition parties, SP and RJD, staged a walk out. Thus arguably the most important annual legislation, the Finance Bill, which affects millions of citizens and all aspects of commerce, received the stamp of parliamentary approval in a fit of absentmindedness. Is this a good omen for democracy? Did the Opposition fail to do its duty — never mind the Congress' outrageously hypocritical noises about corruption? Didn't the treasury benches have the last laugh? The answers should be obvious even to Sonia Gandhi. But evidently she thought legislative agitpropism is her best way out of political sloth. The BJP, actually never had too much of a problem since they knew all along that Sonia couldn't have sabotaged the passing of the budget. In the event, Sinha got away with introducing amendments of which many read like an industry lobby wish list. These deserved to be debated.

Among them is the decision to extend the 16 per cent excise duty to unbranded garments. This was reportedly done to bring the unbranded sector at par with the branded, on which a 16 per cent duty was imposed in the budget. Whether this kind of levelling is the best tax policy is in some doubt. There is less doubt that the 16 per cent excise duty on the unbranded segment is likely to considerably dampen textile export prospects, which are already worse than in recent past. Again, the hike in customs duty — from 35 per cent to 60 per cent — on completely built units (CBUs) imported by the auto sector is not only antithetical to maintaining the primacy of the declared peak rate of 35 per cent, but also a result of frantic lobbying by domestic captains, most importantly from two wheeler manufacturers losing sleep over Chinese imports. It is legitimate to ask why ordinary Indians, who can put together the money for a two wheeler but not the fancy cars ministers and industrialists are seen in, should be denied the opportunity of buying really cheap products because domestic industry cannot compete. Opposition leaders are supposed to corner the finance minister on such issues, and the minister would then try to explain himself, and we will all be a little wiser as to why government took the decisions. Or, if the minister is in a corner, he may be forced to change tack. These are the normal and *necessary* brickbats and bargaining of legislative democracy. As you thank the finance minister for the income tax sops, spare a thought for this fact: you may pay less in tax, but you didn't really figure in the passage of the budget. The people were not heard because the people's representatives chose not to speak.

THE STATESMAN

28 APR 2001

Infant's death exposes adoption racket

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD, April 22. — A full-fledged adoption racket involved in buying and selling children was busted with one of the infants, who died of illness, being buried right in the compound of an adoption home in Tandur in Rangareddy district.

Two other children died in the Niloufer Hospital here after being rescued from fake adoption centres over the past two days. The condition of six children, earlier reported critical, is now stable official sources said.

Rangareddy district authorities exhumed the body of an infant, Elizabeth, at the Abraham Bethany Memorial Home last night. The premises have been sealed and will be dug up to find if the child

traffickers have buried more children there. Two children are missing. It is suspected that their bodies were disposed off after they died, police sources said.

The inter-state child racket from Karnataka to places in Andhra Pradesh, was running through an established network of brokers hunting for pregnant women living in poverty, children born out of wedlock and abandoned babies. In some cases they would induce poor or large families to sell their next child. These brokers would take those babies and sell them to their counterparts in the state.

The Galbarga superintendent of police is part of the search operations after the Karnataka home minister, Mr Malhikarjuna Kharge, announced an investigation by a special team.

Elizabeth's body was discovered when he was inquiring into how the Abraham Bethany Home was acquiring and maintaining babies.

During raids on illegal adoption centres, officials from the women and child welfare department were shocked when they discovered that Abraham Bethany kept no records of babies' deaths, leave alone keeping the local police informed. They, however, were able to furnish some death certificates today, official sources said.

Around 100 children, most of them infants, were rescued from two adoption homes. Thirty-one infants and 19 children between one and five years have been admitted to the Niloufer Childrens'

■ See RACKET: page 8

Harshad used Damayanti group to rig prices: report

NEW DELHI: The Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) inquiry report on market manipulation is understood to have charged big bull Harshad Mehta with using the Damayanti group companies as "front entities" for artificially jacking up prices of BPL, Videocon and Sterlite Industries.

Blaming BPL, Videocon and Sterlite, the report said some well-known names of these companies were believed to have provided funds to the Damayanti group to rig prices of their scrips, market sources said. When contacted, a Sebi official in Mumbai confirmed Damayanti group's name in the report but refused to divulge details.

The sources said six Damayanti group entities — Damayanti Finvest Pvt Ltd, Rijuta Finvest, KRN Finvest and Leasing, CDP Fincap and Leasing, IKSHU Finvest and Money Television Industries — were allegedly used

by Mr Mehta.

The report found that Mr Mehta, prime accused in the securities scam of 1992 and subjected to several restrictions imposed by

Details of KP's stakes in ABCL, B4U sought

NEW DELHI: The Securities and Exchange Board of India has asked Amitabh Bachchan Corporation Limited (ABCL) and B4U Multimedia to provide details of big bull Ketan Parekh's holdings in the two companies, market sources said here on Sunday. It is understood that Sebi has sought details of Mr Parekh's holdings in the two companies, both directly and indirectly, they added.

some courts, allegedly used these companies as facades to hide his identity, the sources said.

The three companies are also

believed to have provided funds to the Damayanti group to build up large positions in these scrips to facilitate manipulation of prices.

Sebi investigations indicated the three companies allegedly connived with Mr Mehta in the market manipulation that ultimately led to a payment crisis. The companies are also said to have provided funds to bail out brokers who were having dealings with Mr Mehta, the sources said.

To help Mr Mehta and his select brokers, the three companies also indirectly believed to have acquired shares, the report said.

Considering these, Sebi has banned Mr Mehta from investing in the stock market for life.

The regulator charged BPL, Videocon and Sterlite with prima facie violation of Sebi regulations and barred these companies from accessing the capital market for four, three and two years respectively. (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

23 APR 2001

DEFENCE & MEDIA

More Than A 'Management' Issue

By KEITH FLORY

THE outcome may not have quite been what the Services had desired, but welcome indeed was their attempt to dispel an impression that they had been sold "lemons" — which is what some self-styled experts had concluded from the Tehelka exposure. The two media sessions conducted by senior defence officers was in sharp contrast to the self-imposed silence in the wake of the Bofors scandal, which may have caused the efficiency of the howitzer to be needlessly questioned. There was nothing wrong with the equipment, what was wrong was the extortionate blackmail by crooks in India able to sign the order. Differences in approach could be attributed to the Defence Ministry having now acquired a media consultant, BG Verghese, as well as its in-house exercise to revamp its media relations machinery. The defence establishment has finally conceded what reporters on the beat had been saying for years — the "system" was not good enough.

SOUR TUNE

Yet there would be nothing terribly new to the exercise being undertaken. Way back in 1986 Verghese himself had been a key player in a joint-exercise of the Editors' Guild and the USI on the subject of defence-media relations. Its recommendations gathered the proverbial dust on shelves. As did the report of a sub-group of the Press Council, headed by the late Mrs Gita Mukherjee, which examined a complaint of defence correspondents against the post-Bofors news black-out. Since then the army, at various levels, has held seminars on the subject. To no real avail. Which leads to scepticism over the outcome of the current consultations.

What that string of fruitless endeavours should establish is that the problem lies deeper than the functioning of the Directorate of Public Relations (DPR), hence a genuine solution requires an in-depth examination of certain facets of the manner in which the ministry and the forces conduct their affairs. There would be need for honesty and transparency if such an appraisal is to prove its worth.

Are the forces and the bureaucrats ready to look within, identify broad aims and objectives, then develop the consequential strategy and tactics? If not, then all the media expertise of Verghese and Ramamohan Rao will add up to nought. For what is on hand should not be deemed a mere fire-fighting exercise, it should be seen as a mission to minimise the risk of a fire breaking out.

The shortcomings of the DPR are, in miniature perhaps, a composite picture of what ails the working of the defence establishment at large: the divisions between the uniformed community and civilians in the ministry that has developed into open distrust which often places the political head of the defence apparatus in awkward positions; the extreme, and at times unhealthy,

The author is Associate Editor, The Statesman.

rivalry that exists within various wings of the forces; and an overall tendency to refuse to accept that things can go wrong. Worst of all, a belief that media relations play no significant role in the overall national security effort.

The uniformed community has yet to realise that it too is open to public scrutiny, that it is one of the foundation-stones of a democratic polity. For far too long has it deemed itself

deal with particular matters — the bureaucrat/senior officer decides what information should be made available to the media, passes it on to the DPR as if it were a post office.

The Services are represented in the DPR (the discussion here is restricted to its headquarters, and no personal references are intended to the individuals presently working there) through the public relations officers of the Army, Navy and Air Force. They are of the rank of Colonel/ Major and their equivalents.

Unfortunately in organisations as rank-conscious as the forces those officers do not have the requisite "seniority" to lay their hands on all the information required to effectively discharge their duties. That many of them have succeeded in breaking those barriers is a tribute to their personal qualities — there is no institutionalised information-flow.

Worse, almost every officer who carries a little more "brass" than the PRO considers himself more knowledgeable in media affairs. If only some of them had to interact with reporters on a daily basis they would understand the PRO's lot. Helplessness when it really matters.

SHORT SHRIFT

For all their lip-service to the importance of the media in this era of information-dominance, the forces give their PROs short shrift. How many of them have risen to higher ranks in the forces after completing their tenures in the information-dissemination assignment? Would there be any professional reward for an individual who volunteered to do a PR stint?

On the contrary, a few years out of his professional stream would render him a misfit should he return to it. And since PROs are said to have the opportunity to get "close" to the Chief they run the risk of being "taken down a peg or two" once that Chief retires and they go back to regular duties.

The upshot of all that is that many PROs are officers whose professional careers have run a ground and thus it is a convenient slot to fill while awaiting return to civvy street. A couple have privately admitted that they took the job because it would ensure a long stint in the Capital. The only way out would be for the forces to create a specialised cadre of professional media managers, with attractive career prospects. An integrated cadre perhaps.

Of course, there will still be room for dispute over whether the information apparatus should be under civil or military control. The question is not academic, for the "official spokesman" must be aware of the political and diplomatic ramifications of his or her statements. Defence PR is a tricky business, hence it would be silly to expect the committee now dealing with it to pull out a rabbit from the hat. It will probably have to start out by explaining to the brass hats the difference between news, publicity, and propaganda. And convince them that there can be no manipulation to achieve the image they seek.



excluded from accountability to the taxpayer and has made a mantra of "security" and "morale" to draw a curtain around its functioning. It also carries much too far its theory that it alone puts life to risk for the national cause.

Hence its inability to come to terms with criticism, and a tendency to write off criticism as motivated. It deems the role of the press as limited to being its trumpet-blower. Alas, the tune it composes for itself is replete with sour notes. That attitude will have to be shed before genuine progress in media-relations can be registered.

The forces will have to learn to live with both a "good" and a "bad" press — and if they cared to do some introspection they would realise that unfavourable accounts in the newspapers generally followed unhappy realities. Reporters consider themselves duty bound to project the truth, they have taken no oath of silence about shortcomings in the defence system, made no promise to jingoistically beat the drums about what they believe to be accomplishments.

POST OFFICE

By and large — and the forces are unlikely to accept this — the press tends to be "soft" on the forces. It respects their commitment, traditions, devotion to duty in the most adverse of conditions, and allows them a wider margin of error than it does with other agencies. The police for example.

Only when all those clouds and dust are cleared away will a realistic look at the DPR machinery be meaningful — the army's attempt to by-pass it has not paid off. Its composition is a mix of civilian and defence personnel, it is an elaborate organisation spread across the country and fairly well equipped to disseminate information. The problem lies in access to information.

What computers buffs dub the "gigo" factor (garbage in, garbage out) is an apt parallel. Though headed by an officer of the rank of joint-secretary/major general, the DPR is totally out of the management loop: neither the ministry nor the Service Headquarters fully accept it as being part of their show. Seldom indeed is the DPR consulted about how to

THE STATESMAN
16 APR 1991

Strict vigil at ICWA to prevent Josh takeover

By SUGATA NANDI

New Delhi, April 11: Policemen and private security guards are on 24-hour duty at the Indian Council of World Affairs following an attempt by ousted ICWA chairman Harcharan Singh Josh on April 4 to take over the body.

The ministry of external affairs is on alert to prevent any attempted takeover in future.

According to ICWA director-general P.S. Ray, "Following the forced intrusion by Mr Josh, security has been stepped up in the ICWA. Private guards along with policemen are on duty to stop a repeat of last week's incident. Identity cards have been issued to all ICWA employees and people can enter only after a thorough

check at the gate."

The ICWA, set up by leaders like Tej Bahadur Sapru, Hriday Nath Kunjru and Jawaharlal Nehru, is housed in the Sapru House. Till the late Seventies, the ICWA served as the centre for intellectual and cultural events. A decade later, under the presidency of Mr Josh, it lost all its glory.

The ousted ICWA president is alleged to have rigged elections to retain presidency of the ICWA and rented out the Sapru House for Jewd Punjabi plays and wedding receptions.

From September 1, 2000, the ICWA was taken over by the ministry of external affairs by an ordinance of the Union government. That ordinance expired on

January 1, 2001, and it could not become an act as it was yet to be ratified by the Rajya Sabha. The ordinance was reintroduced on January 5. But that ordinance too is yet to be passed by Parliament.

"The ordinance has made it legally impossible for Mr Josh to reclaim presidency of the ICWA," Mr Ray said. "The day he made an attempt to take over the ICWA, Mr

Josh sent in a number of his followers in batches. These people waited in the library for Mr Josh to come; as soon as he came there, they started shouting that the ICWA has been taken over."

Mr Ray added that during that time two chowkidars were present at the ICWA and they were intimidated by Mr Josh

the allotment of party tickets.

which he represented now.

and his followers.

After that incident five policemen and two security guards were deployed at the entrance of the ICWA.

"Private guards are changed every eight hours. This building is guarded all the time. Policemen are on patrol at night," he said.

At present, the Central Public Works Division workers carrying out reconstruction work in the Sapru House have also been issued identity cards.

"Large-scale reconstruction and restoration work is on in the ICWA. The task is extremely challenging. Protection is very important at this point so we have call in extra security. For this reason the Sapru House is not open to the public as of now," Mr Ray said.

SAPRU HOUSE BLUES

THE ASIAN AGE

The nation can go to hell. Is this the governing principle of the Indian political class?

Power corrupts

By J.N. DIXIT

IT IS just about a month since the Tehelka film on defence supplies scam was filmed at the Ball Room of Hotel Imperial in Delhi. The past four weeks have seen polemics, explanations, accusations and counter-accusations. But a remarkable aspect of the whole controversy is that little has been thought about the impact of the scam revelations on the processes of governance, on economic activities, and on India's external relations. Equally curi-

ously, the film has been obscuring the impact of this aggressive nationalism. An assessment of the impact of the Tehelka film on our establishment at the political and economic level and the impact on the Indian economy.

The impact of the film has been taken by the establishment. There is a cynicism in the way the film is being exercised. It is coming from the establishment commission to the political establishment. It is a deal for a deal without having a procedure.

The government is in a state of anxiety. It is not clear what incentives do not work. It is not clear what basic verification and commission are.

The officials reveal confidential information. The defence supply agents are pursuing matters of 'Secretcy' in the name of 'Secrecy'.

The purchasing process is not adjusted in the government official salesmen, as

cross-section of officials are willing to assist the framework of the plan. The explanation of the government is not receiving

the international network.



STINK STICKS: NDA rally in Bangalore

work of private Indian businessmen who play a clandestine role in processing defence purchases, because they have links with the political leadership at the senior levels of the government based on illegal business practices.

The inescapable conclusion is that all this has been possible because there is no formal arrangement for representatives of defence supplies companies to register themselves as facilitators for defence transactions with clear procedures and rules governing the non-confidential dimensions of purchase procedures. One hopes that the tehelka.com film will result in basic and extensive reforms in our defence purchase procedures. Justice Venkataswami's inquiry will help in this matter. Also, conversations in the film regarding two senior government figures like Brajesh Mishra, defence secretary Yogendra Narain, etc. are innuendoes without any substantive proof to back them up, so far.

The reactions of the government and political parties leaves one bemused with concern. Instead of discussing the matter in Parliament aimed at substantive remedial action, opposition MPs have refused to let the Parliament meet and to allow the government to state its side of the story. The whole issue has been metamorphosed into an exercise of party politics. The over-riding objective is not to take corrective action against corruption but to oust the government and capture power, if possible without an election.

If the intellectual and political disenchantment about parliamentary discus-

sion is so high among the opposition parties, why does this logic not result in their not accepting any remuneration during the period they are boycotting Parliament. I have been told by MPs that before they stage their walk-outs and indulge in slogan shouting outside Parliament, MPs go and sign the attendance register and other documents to ensure payment of their salaries and daily allowances. They are not setting a terribly edifying example. Political and moral concerns obviously do not affect their personal and economic well-being.

What are the larger political implications now? A reasonably good Budget proposed by Yashwant Sinha still has to be passed. The Centre is stuck in the doldrums of a 'vote on account'. Indications are that opposition parties will not allow Parliament to function when it reconvenes this month. A number of important bills and legislations which have to be passed by Parliament will be delayed if not indefinitely postponed.

The entire process of purchasing defence equipment is now subject to the apprehensions generated by the Tehelka exposé. The negative impact on the morale of our armed forces facing tense situations in Jammu and Kashmir and in the north-east, and contending with the uncertainties of our relations with Pakistan and China, should be of deep concern.

Even important issues like restructuring the defence ministry and armed forces, modernisation, and reforms of defence purchase procedures is likely to be delayed under the cloud of suspicions

generated not only by the Tehelka film or articulated by opposition political parties, but within the government departments themselves.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Jaswant Singh have a major and sensitive responsibility in coping with this critical predicament. The scams in the Mumbai stock market and in the highest echelons of our customs organisation have not helped. The stock markets are down and will take time to recover. The credibility and the capacity for expeditious and effective governance of the Vajpayee government has been dented by the Tehelka scam.

Rival public rallies by political parties may educate public opinion and clear the dust but these are essentially political events aimed at the assembly re-elections. The rallies are not going to solve the substantive problems affecting governmental work.

India's external credibility in terms of political stability and economic situation stands questioned in the chancelleries of important powers of the world. Foreign Direct Investment and joint ventures for the infrastructural sector of our economy has declined. The world outside will be more cautious in getting involved with India in the current situation.

Jaswant Singh has recently visited Scandinavian countries and the US. The Prime Minister is visiting Iran and Malaysia. Their high-level discussions may marginally contribute to restoring faith in the political stability of India and in the continuity of its policies of modernisation, but not beyond a point, unless we set our house in order. Even within the government, some inner distances are discernible between senior leaders.

BJP's important constituent, the RSS, has been critical of the PMO. Though senior leaders have appeared with Vajpayee at public platforms, one has not heard any strong policy statement by Advani and other BJP leaders supporting Vajpayee's leadership in recent weeks.

The scam is leading to competitive political exercises to capture power at the Centre, whatever the means. While the government is compelled to work for its survival, there is no characteristic in the public and political discourse which is focusing on correctives against the aberrations revealed in the tehelka.com film.

Is it now time for our governing classes to attend to things that really matter instead of jockeying to remain in or capture the Centre? What really matters is restoring some semblance of effective and fair governance in the country responsive to our economic and security needs.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

31 APR 2001

Bill keeps his date with ^{5/18} Mumbai's bold and beautiful

From Page 1 ^{5/4}

IT WAS a pleasure to serve a guest like him who enjoyed the food and appreciated every bit of it."

You're not the only one who loves to hang around in the quaint south Mumbai shopper's paradise Colaba. Mr Clinton went around the streets of Colaba and met up with the locals, happily posing and mingling with them.

On his 4th day in the country, he took Mumbaitees by surprise by walking into Cottage Industries and purchasing a Lord Ganesha idol for Rs 11,000. He also bought a marble box decked up in precious stones — which, it is learnt, was gifted to him. He also spent time at the Taj shopping complex, ending up being reasonably impressed with book store Nalanda.

As all important dignitaries that come visiting, it's not the Western but the Dhobi Ghat that fascinates. So, off he went to famed Dhobi Ghat at Mahalaxmi, where he spent over 15 minutes admiring the Big Mumbai Laundry and its historical significance.

And before he called it a day — whaddaday — his dinner at the Taj Ballroom, with over 200 celebrities, was equally tantalizing. Other than the company, of course, which was indeed appetising. There's malvani curry, parsi fish, bohri biryani, coastal food which includes lobsters, fish and prawns, along with the bold and the beautiful sipping bubbly from Esteclauder-kissed goblets.

Of course, the Big C will come back — very soon. To shake a leg with the hot and happening of Mumbai, wine and dine with Big Business and the Pawarful, eat to his heart's content... What say, Mr Clinton?

The Economic Times

- 5 APR 2001

HT Correspondent
 Kolkata, April 3

Human error caused Gaisal accident

THE JUSTICE G N Roy (ret'd) Inquiry Commission has attributed the Gaisal tragedy to "human failure", rubbishing the various 'sabotage' theories that have been floating to explain the train accident.

One of the worst train accidents in the nation's history, over 300 people died in Gaisal on August 2, 1999.

In his report, Justice Roy has squarely put the responsibility on about a dozen North-east Frontier rail staff, including the drivers and assistant-drivers of both the Assam Avadh Express and Brahmaputra Mail, which collided near the Gaisal station in North Dinajpur.

In the report submitted to the then Railway Minister, Mamata

Banerjee, on January 25, Justice Roy states: "It was a clear case of human failure. The cabinmen, pointsmen, assistant station masters and station masters failed to detect or correct the wrong diversion of tracks of the two trains, resulting in the collision."

He has held Ram Narayan Singh, ASM Panjipara (the station before Gaisal where Avadh Assam Express stopped for 11 minutes on the wrong track) as being primarily responsible for the collision.

The report identifies cabinman Allauddin, pointsman Jagdish Ram, assistant station master (cabin) SP Chandra of east cabin, Kishanguji, cabinman Gulabchand Gupta and assistant station master Ram Narayan Singh of Panjipara cabin, besides the two erring drivers and assistant drivers of the

two trains as the culprits.

He also said though Gaisal was at the "receiving end" of errors committed by the operating staff at Kishanguji and Panjipara, the Gaisal assistant station master on duty was also at fault for fleeing the scene after the accident.

Justice Roy, who toured Gaisal and adjoining areas extensively over 16 months for investigations and cross-examined about 106 witnesses, holds that the operating staff at Gaisal did not immediately inform the NF Railway Divisional Headquarters at Katihar about the accident.

"In fact, the primary report that they sent said the accident was due to a powerful bomb blast inside Assam Avadh Express, which was carrying a number of defence personnel from Assam to the Karail war front," he said.

Recommending an overhaul of the NF Railway administration — suffering from "low morale" due to the casualty of railway personnel because of insurgency activities in the North-east, Justice Roy hinted there was a dearth of funds to run the system smoothly.

He suggested that radio wireless devices be installed to connect station staff with the driver, colour signalling to inform the staff whenever a train is on a wrong line and optical fibre connections to improve communication links. The inquiry report stresses the need to change the interlocking system within the stipulated time-frame to prevent such tragedies.

Justice Roy found that Gaisal did not have enough resources to mobilise immediate remedial operations.

Govt mulls judicial probe into Phoolan killing

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 30. - Not convinced with the investigations of Delhi Police - which claims to have made a breakthrough in the Phoolan Devi murder case - the government is considering a judicial inquiry into the killing.

Highly-placed home ministry sources said they were in touch with the Delhi Police chief, Mr Ajay Raj Sharma, and other top police officers in Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and were examining their findings. However, the possibility of holding a judicial inquiry into the case couldn't be ruled out.

The sources said "it was too early to reach any conclusion."

But whatever information the government had received so far on the basis of the statements of the accused, family members of the victim and eyewitnesses, was conflicting in nature. The department was examining all aspects minutely.

Mr RK Anand, criminal lawyer and Rajya Sabha MP, has accused the government of inaction

'SP, CONG PLAYING COMMUNAL CARD'

NEW DELHI, July 30. - The BJP today alleged that some parties were trying to derive political mileage in the UP Assembly polls by giving a communal and caste colour to crimes, the BJP said today. But they'll fail in their attempts, for facts will prove them wrong. The party spokesman, Mr VK Malhotra, was referring to the Samajwadi Party's comments on Phoolan Devi's murder and the Congress's attempt to give a communal colour to the Moradabad killings. - SNS

tion despite knowing about the growing clout of crime syndicates. He has demanded a judicial probe into the Phoolan murder case by a sitting or retired Supreme Court judge.

"Only a time-bound judicial inquiry will unearth the politician-criminal nexus and the role of politicians, if any, into the murder," Mr Anand said.

Accusing the home ministry of dilly-dallying over making the Vohra Committee report public, he said: "Various crime syndicates and mafia groups have developed significant muscle and money power and established links with officials, political leaders and others." He added that the committee had named

several politicians for their shady connections with criminals and underworld dons.

Saying it was appalling that "a sitting MP was murdered in broad daylight when Parliament was in session," he held that the home ministry was responsible for all matters on internal security.

He said the UP chief minister, Mr Rajnath Singh, had denied that Phoolan had sought a license for arms after the withdrawal of security to her.

He also demanded that the UP government make the Special Task Force report, which had named more than 18 politicians for their "nexus with the underworld", public.

VIPs run to security agencies for cover

SHIVNATH JHA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 30. - It's boom time for private security agencies in Delhi. After Phoolan Devi's killing, many politicians facing death threats for their alleged involvement in criminal activities have started strengthening their security at their "own cost".

They've begun visiting "trusted" agencies to hire security personnel as the government refuses to grant or strengthen security cover to them.

But why? said a home ministry official "it isn't possible for the government to provide security to all the MPs and MLAs, even if they face a threat to their lives. Some of them treat it as a status symbol, while others have demanded security allegedly to protect themselves from their enemies."

Officials said there are over 600 MPs and MLAs with a criminal background. Besides corruption cases, they are allegedly involved in heinous crimes including murder, dacoity and kidnapping for ransom.

A senior Samajwadi Party MP of the Lok Sabha said: "Since the government is unable to provide security cover to me even though I am facing a serious threat to my life from outside the party, I have to arrange my own security." The MP was allegedly involved in over a dozen criminal cases in Uttar Pradesh.

The owner of a private security agency in Bikhaji Cama Place here said two BJP MPs from UP approached him yesterday and sought "trusted armed-men" for whom they were ready to pay Rs 5000 each per month.

In 1995, the NN Vohra Committee after identifying the nexus between crim-



Phoolan Devi

als/mafias and anti-national elements on the one hand and bureaucrats, politicians and other sensitively located individuals on the other had observed: "Crime syndicates have become the order of the day. Hired assassins have become a part of these organisations and the nexus between the criminal gangs, police, bureaucracy and politicians has come out clearly in various parts of the country."

Mr NN Vohra, a former Union home secretary, had also named some politicians (from different parties), who were running "gangs" to settle "scores". The committee had also said the mafia network was running a parallel government, pushing the state apparatus into irrelevance and suggested establishment of an institution to effectively deal with the menace. But even after six years, the Centre has taken no action on the committee's recommendations, the official said.

Mr Vohra had prepared only three copies of his report. One copy each was submitted to the then minister of state for internal security, the home minister and the third copy was retained by him.

"After the home minister has perused this report, I request him to consider discussing further action with the finance minister, the minister of state for internal security and myself. The Prime Minister can then approve the emerging approach before being implemented," Mr Vohra had said in his report. Ironically, it never saw the light of day.

PHOOLAN: (Continued from page 1)

Delhi Police officers now say that Pankaj and Rajbir shot Phoolan Devi while Shekhar drove the getaway car (CIM 907) and abandoned it at Pandit Pant Marg. The fourth man, Rajbir, was waiting in the second getaway vehicle (UP 14 B 7559) near the Gole Dak Khana.

Police say the scooterist chased Pankaj's car because they had hit his vehicle near Gole Dak Khana and not because he had seen them shoot the MP. The assailants were then on their way to meet Rajbir.

"The original plan was that they will park the green car (CIM 907) somewhere and escape in the white car which Rajbir was driving. But when they hit the scooterist and saw him note down their number, they panicked and parked their vehicle in the service lane adjoining the Delhi BJP office. As they couldn't find Rajbir from there, they jumped into an auto-rickshaw. Then they either informed him or they had a pre-arranged plan to meet in Ghaziabad that evening. Rajbir left the city undetected when the others didn't arrive," a senior police officer said.

The Saharanpur Police have also seized another white car (UP 10 B 3007), a mobile phone and two SIM cards from the three men when they came to surrender. However, Rajbir's getaway vehicle still remains untraced. The police also couldn't ascertain whether the mobile phone and the SIM cards recovered were actually used by the three men during the planning or execution of the murder.

Pankaj is under medical observation at Safdarjung Hospital. He was admitted yesterday with a complaint of high blood pressure and severe vomiting. "He is normal" said the medical superintendent, Dr Jagdish Prasad, and added that Pankaj was likely to be discharged by tomorrow. A crime branch team will then escort him to Dehra Dun, Haridwar and some other places to re-create the sequence of events.

Phoolan's PSO, Balwinder Singh, has made a statement to the Delhi Police. But crime branch officers only revealed a part of what he said. "He fired four shots and one of those hit the windscreen of Pankaj's car. He didn't manage to injure any of the assailants as it was believed earlier."

Umed asks PM for security

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 30. - Phoolan Devi's husband today sought security from the Prime Minister and home minister. "The forces that eliminated Phoolan may target me," Mr Umed Singh told Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani.

Mr Singh didn't buy the Behmai revenge theory and wasn't satisfied with the police probe. "I've asked for a high-level inquiry and beefing up of security in the VIP area."

Even after the sensational murder in central Delhi, there's not a single police picket in the area. "Whatever little security we have at the main gate will be removed in a few days," Mr Singh said.

What did police question him about? Mr Singh said he was asked about how Mrs Uma Kashyap and Pankaj Singh alias Sher Singh Rana came to know Phoolan Devi and how frequently they visited 44 Ashoka Road, Phoolan's residence.

"As I hardly interfered with Phoolan's political life, I know little about them. I knew them only by face. Uma has been coming here for almost two years. Rana has visited the house three or four times," Mr Singh told the police.

Police, he said, had been questioning other members of the family separately. He is still living at 44 Ashoka Road.

He dismissed reports that Phoolan wanted to disinherit him from her property. "This is all nonsense and is being done to confuse people and the investigation," he said.

Did Phoolan Devi take Rs 10 lakh from Pankaj Singh to help him get a petrol pump licence, as reported in some papers? Mr Singh said: "Why on earth would she do so? She was a righteous woman."

Mr Singh said he didn't have any political ambition nor would he allow anyone to cash in on the death of his wife. But he'll try to strengthen Eklavya Sena, formed by Phoolan Devi in 1994.

Hizbul threatens to avenge Masood death

KAVITA SURI
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU, July 30. - Security has been beefed up in Kashmir valley after the killing of moderate Hizbul Mujahideen deputy supreme commander, Abdul Hamid Tantray, alias Masood, and Hizbul and Lashkar-e-Taiyaba's threat to avenge the death.

The Hizbul has launched "Operation Masood" from Friday under which it has escalated attacks on security forces and government establishments in the valley.

The Hizbul deputy supreme commander and spokesman, Commander Masood, was killed in a Pulwama village on Tuesday and was buried in his native Sangas village in Kulgam tehsil of Anantnag district on Wednesday.

Masood participated in the talks on 24 July last year that the home secretary, Mr Kamal Pandey, had held with the group at the Nehru Guest House, Chashmashahi, in Srinagar. After the talks the group had announced a unilateral ceasefire. A close aide of Hizbul chief commander operations, Abdul Majid Dar, Masood was killed exactly a year later on 24 July in an encounter with the Special Operations Group.

A police spokesman had said that Abdul Hamid Tantray, Hizbul deputy chief, alias Masood of Shangas, Anantnag, was killed in an encounter at Pahoo, Pulwama. A pistol, six rounds of magazine and some incriminating documents were seized. However, other reports had said that Commander Masood was killed in a fake en-

ABDULLAH IN DELHI

NEW DELHI, July 30. - Dr Farooq Abdullah, is in the capital to meet members of the Cabinet Committee on Security to discuss the increasing violence in Jammu and Kashmir following the deadlock at the Agra Summit. He will also discuss the rejection of his autonomy proposal by Mr L K Advani, the home minister. - SNS

counter near Pulwama two days after his arrest by the SOG of Jammu and Kashmir police. An SOG team had arrested Commander Masood from Wangam, 9 km from Shopian. He was shifted to the interrogation centre where he was subjected to severe

torture.

Rumours were afloat that the SOG party brought out Commander Masood and shot him dead at Pahoo village, five km away. His body lay there for a night and was picked up by Pulwama police next morning. Before his arrest, Commander Masood had stayed at Pampore and Ratnipora. Police had raided several houses of the two villages before arresting him from Wangam.

Hailing from Sangas village of Kulgam tehsil, the 38-year old Commander Masood had obtained a Masters degree in Islamic Studies and Urdu from Kashmir university and was appointed supervisor in the handicrafts department. He was an Islami Jamaat-e-Tulaba activist and later became a Jama'at-e-Islami member. In 1991,

Commander Masood announced the amalgamation of Al-Badr, of which he had become the chief commander after Mohammed Maqbool's death, into the Hizbul and was mainly associated with the group's education and training. He authored seven books, including Mujahideen Fillah on militant's training.

The Hizbul supreme commander, Syed Salahuddin, has said Masood's killing will inspire others fighting the government.

The Lashkar too has threatened to target senior Army officers in Kashmir. A group spokesman said that they have set up new camps inside Kashmir as part of their plan to launch a series of attacks on top Indian military officers responsible for killing their "Kashmiri brothers".



An assistant sub-inspector, who lost his leg during a attack, being fitted with an artificial one at a police Srinagar on Monday. - AP/PTI

CPM discipline

India to buy Russian seismic sensors

By Vladimir Radyuhin

MOSCOW, APRIL 3. India is planning to buy a large number of Russian seismic instruments to equip a national network of earthquake monitoring stations being set up in the aftermath of the January 26 killer quake in Gujarat.

A delegation of Indian Government officials and scientists has signed preliminary agreement with the Moscow-based Design Bureau of Geophysical Instruments, Geophyspribor, for the supply of two sets of seismic equipment — one stationary and one portable — for demonstration purposes. If demonstration is successful India may buy more than 100 sets of seismic stations and about 20 portable instruments.

Portable equipment can be used to choose the best sites for deploying permanent seismic stations, which helps reduce the number of required stations. Both portable and stationary equipment is computerised and uses an array of sensors for the accurate registering of seismic, geophysical, hydrodynamic and other

signals accompanying ground movements.

Our instruments make it possible to compile medium-term prediction of earthquakes on the basis of comprehensive analysis of a wide range of precursors, says Prof. Igor Bashilov, head of Geophyspribor.

The Geophyspribor design bureau, which operates under the Russian Academy of Sciences, has a solid reputation of long-time supplier of quality instruments for the Russian defence establishment. Its sensors have also been successfully operating in Hyderabad, Dehra Dun and Delhi.

Training free

According to Prof. Bashilov Russian seismic instruments are as good as American-made but have the advantage of being cheaper, more rugged and simpler to use and repair. Another reason why India opted for Russian sensors is that the deal will not be purely commercial: the Russian side will provide free training to Indian personnel and will conduct joint scientific research with Indian seismol-

ogists on the basis of data gathered by Russian sensors.

Indo-Russian joint work will cover the full spectrum of seismic studies, including investigation of mechanisms of natural and induced seismic activity, prediction of earthquakes, and monitoring of sensitive structures, such as high dams and atomic power stations.

This work will be undertaken under the Indo-Russian Integrated Long-Term Programme (ILTP) of wide-ranging cooperation in science and technology. The plan has been approved by Academician Gury Marchuk, Russia's Co-Chairman of the ILTP Joint Council, and Academician Yuri Nefyodov, Vice-President of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who oversees the earth-sciences sector in ILTP.

The Indian delegation has also reached an agreement with Geophyspribor to set up a joint venture in India to manufacture Russian seismic instruments. The JV will try to penetrate the South Asian market now dominated by the United States, said Prof. Bashilov.

India's population

By C. Rammanohar Reddy

More than the decline in the population growth rate it is the spurt in literacy rates that makes this Census stand out from the others in post-independence India

410-12
31/3

THE THREE most populous countries in the world have just completed their censuses. The results from all three present a mixed picture, revealing just how much these societies remain the same even as they undergo change.

The population of China, the world's largest country, is officially put at 1.26 billion and according to the recent census the annual growth in the 1990s was just a little over one per cent. This is a considerable slowing from the 1.47 per cent yearly growth of population in the 1980s and it is one that India would be envious of. But all is not what meets the eye and one reason for the slowing of China's population growth is the implementation of a certain kind of government programme that no country could be proud of — the one-child policy. However, the imposition of such a norm in a society where son preference is very strong has also meant that millions of children have been "hidden" from official eyes. For this and other reasons, the official population count is believed to be a fairly large under-estimate, though by how much is not clear. The one-child policy has also led to a considerable amount of foeticide/infanticide and according to the official figures as many as 117 boys are born for every 100 girl births in China when the natural figure is 105. The population of the country third in the league, the United States, is now 281 million which is 13 per cent larger than in 1990. Population growth is not something the U.S. is worried about though the world as a whole should be considering the hugely destructive environmental load that every additional resident of the U.S. places on the earth. What is being highlighted, however, is the increasing ethnic diversity of U.S. society with an expanding Hispanic (and to a considerably lesser extent Asian) population driving growth in certain areas.

India's Census of 2001 has already received a fair degree of comment, including questions on its reliability. One must wait for the results of the post-enumeration survey to have an idea of the extent of the under-count. But instead of carp-

ing about the statistics it is more important to understand what the census, which has always had a reputation for more than reasonable accuracy, says through the provisional results about population, literacy and the sex ratio (the number of females for every 1,000 males).

A lot has been made of the decline in the rate of growth of the population during 1991-2001, which, at an average annual growth of 1.95 per cent, is the lowest in the past four decades. More recent annual yearly growth, based on the Sample Registration Scheme, suggests an even slower rate of increase. The Economic Survey of 2000-01 reports a yearly population growth of around 1.6

per cent between 1997 and 1999. If this is a pointer to the future then the slow-down may be even more rapid than that suggested by the Census data.

In analysing the variations in population growth across States, the impressive slow-down of population growth in the four Southern States (especially in Andhra Pradesh) has been compared with the increase in Bihar and the near stagnancy in Uttar Pradesh. But the bigger story of Census 2001 is that even States with no history of a slowing population growth rate have turned in fairly dramatic performances. The four examples in this respect are Assam, West Bengal, Orissa and Chattisgarh, all of which have seen their decadal population growth rates decline from 20 to 25 per cent to between 15 and 18 per cent. Out-migration is unlikely to be the larger cause for this deceleration. And while the population growth rate depends on the movement in both fertility and mortality, the complete Census data will hopefully show that the decline in 1991-2001 was not on account of death rates falling at a slower pace than birth rates.

More than the decline in the popula-

tion growth rate it is the spurt in literacy rates that make this Census stand out from the others in post-independence India. The Census confirms what a number of surveys and field reports have been indicating in recent years — there is now a strong emphasis on education. Perhaps on account of the literacy campaigns but more likely because of a parental thirst for education of their children, the Indian population is finally moving towards a reasonable level of literacy. There is of course a very long distance yet to travel and the "achievements" of the past decade look impressive only because progress in the previous four decades was

MACROSCOPE

abysmal. First, literacy, as defined in the Census, is only the ability to read and write while what even the poorest of parents ideally want for their children is at the bare minimum the completion of elementary education. Second, one-third of all Indians still do not possess even the basic proficiency in literacy. And, third, female literacy rates have only just crossed the 50 per cent mark. But none of this can take away anything from the fact that for the first time since 1951 there has been an absolute decline (32 million) in the number of illiterates in the country and that the gap in literacy rates between males and females is narrowing, even if very slowly. Here again the bigger story is not that the Southern States are doing well, but that even some of the traditionally "backward" States are showing impressive improvements. The literacy rate in Orissa, for example, is now higher than that in Andhra and only a little lower than Karnataka's. This is true as well of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh. Bihar and U.P. are of course way behind. But what is interesting is that even in these States literacy rates rose fairly sharply in the previous decade. What this means is that in spite of the government schooling system in near col-

lapse in most of the poorer States, parents are yet able to make their children functionally literate. How much more could have been achieved if the Centre and the State Governments had shown a greater commitment to school education in the 1990s?

While being appreciative of the movements in literacy rates one should not be blind to one large dark spot that Census 2001 has thrown up. This is the substantial fall in the child (0-6 years) sex ratio even as the overall sex ratio has improved for the first time in decades. The child sex ratio (the number of girls for every 1,000 boys) has fallen from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001 and the Census reports a very sharp decline in some of the northern States as well as in Gujarat and Maharashtra. There is no inconsistency between the two movements in opposite directions. The sharp fall in child sex ratio seem to suggest prima facie that the forces which discriminate against the girl child are getting stronger rather than weaker even as the overall sex ratio has moved a bit in favour of females.

Demographers suggest there could be three reasons why the child sex ratio is declining. Prof. Mari Bhat at the Institute of Economic Growth, Delhi, argues that one reason is better reporting of the ages of both boys and girls in the 0-6 age group. But the two others reasons that Prof. Bhat suggests are very worrisome. One is an adverse sex ratio at birth caused by a growing resort in large and small towns to foeticide — a practice that the media has reported is quite common not just in Punjab and Haryana but in all parts of the country. The other reason is the continuation of higher mortality among girls in the 0-6 age group, even if there are some signs of the gap narrowing. This higher mortality in the extreme takes the form of girl infanticide. If it is the twin phenomenon of son preference and discrimination against the girl child that is more behind the decline in the child sex ratio then voluntary action by Indian couples is leading to the same result as the forced one-child policy in China. This is the bleaker message from Census 2001.

THE HINDU

31 MAR 2001

OF THE PEOPLE

51-6 3/13 A billion problems

THERE are, as per early census figures, 1,027 million living souls in this country. By any standards, that is a staggering number with implications for public policy and social welfare. It is also a fairly clear condemnation of official efforts at population control. The provisional census figures reveal that the decadal rate of growth of population is around 1.95 per cent for 1991-2001, down from the 2.2 per cent "achieved" in 1981-1991 but higher than the widely expected 1.8 per cent. Experts say this means the level of population control that was earlier thought to have been achievable in one decade, 1991-2001, will now take one more ten-year period, ending in 2011. This should put the 100-member national population commission chaired by the Prime Minister, into advisory overdrive. But, of course, the body has not stirred since the census commissioner revealed the grim tidings. Nor has there been any particular show of concern from the government. The sloth even applies to taking credit for the little good news the provisional census figures have brought.

High on this small list is the surprisingly good performance in literacy. According to census authorities, 65.4 per cent of Indians are literate. While that still leaves millions of Indians unfamiliar with basic reading and writing skills, the proportion of literates is impressive compared with the desperate situation only ten years back. Clearly, the literacy missions have had some effect. Politicians and officials should take heart from this and get down to identifying the weaknesses in the desegregated literacy figures and also the faults in the programme delivery mechanisms, including funds allocation and use of voluntary organisations. There must also be effective recognition of the wide disparity between male and female literacy ratios (75.9 per cent to 54.2 per cent). Special targeting for improving female literacy rates is an urgent policy necessity. The female/male ratio in total population still remains in favour of the latter, in contrast to almost every other country (save basket cases) but the bias has narrowed. But before rushing to make new theories, social scientists must look at the female/male ratio for infants (0-6 age group). This has gone down even while the average for all age groups has gone up. The terrible social prejudice that this implies has obviously remained immune to all censure and laws. There's in fact little point blaming the government here since it can hardly combat a perversity so deep rooted in sections of Indian society.

THE STATESMAN

31 MAR 2001

TUESDAY, MARCH 27, 2001

IN A COMBATIVE MODE

WITH THE REGIONAL constituents of the ruling NDA demonstratively pledging their support to the Atal Behari Vajpayee Government in the aftermath of the Tehelka expose, the Bharatiya Janata Party has moved into a combative mode, driven as it was by the electoral compulsion of neutralising the negative impact of the Opposition's vigorous campaign in the context of the upcoming Assembly poll in four States and the Union Territory of Pondicherry. The political message that came out of the BJP's national executive and the NDA rally is that the Vajpayee Government is not going to oblige the Opposition by being on the defensive and that, instead, the party along with its allies will face the Congress(I) challenge of taking the issue to 'the people'. What is striking about this is not so much the line itself but the assertiveness palpable in the way it has been set forth by the two fora.

The political dimensions aside, a significant change in the BJP's position on the substantive issues thrown up by the Tehelka expose is discernible. Although the party leadership continued to harp on the much-too-familiar theory of 'conspiracy' by unspecified forces that are out to "destabilise" the Government, it has acknowledged, at last, what had come in full public view when Tehelka put out its videotape showing the BJP's president, Mr. Bangaru Laxman, accepting a wad of currency from a self-styled arms dealer purportedly for the party fund. The nuanced shift in accent, focussing on the organisation's felt need to remove the "dirt that has come into view (post-the Tehelka revelation)" and to "look within and counter the negative influences that have gained ground" within the party, is indeed an admission of tainted image. On his part, the Prime Minister has, while appearing to go along with the 'introspection' line projected by Mr. L. K. Advani and the party's new chief, Mr. Jana Krishnamurthi, chosen to place the Tehelka expose in a larger perspective, blaming the murky disclosures on the 'system'.

There can certainly be no quarrel about Mr. Vajpayee's diagnosis that much of the cankerous corruption, be it in public life or in administration, is traceable to systemic shortcomings. His call for funding-related electoral reforms and making political parties accountable for the funds they collect and spend is not open to question either. In fact, a wide range of legislative and other proposals in this vital area formulated largely on the basis of the Sarkaria Commission's recommendations have been under discussion endlessly and at different levels for well over a decade, but no headway could be made — and this, despite constant pressure from the Election Commission — for want of that elusive phenomenon called 'political consensus'. But the stark reality is that the political leadership in general has tended to be singularly non-serious about concretising the correctives, although they never fail to make the right noises if warranted by the political exigencies of a given situation. Given this backdrop, there has to be some credible initiative on the part of the Government by way of demonstrating its sincerity.

What requires to be emphasised is that the 'big picture' related concerns should not be used as a pretext for wriggling out of an embarrassment or as a convenient ploy to evade responsibility in the immediate context. If doubts about Mr. Vajpayee's real intention behind talking of 'systemic deficiencies' are not to linger, he has to be seen applying "strict accountability standards" and probity norms in his own establishment, considering the fact that some close personal aides of his have come under attack in the wake of the Tehelka revelations, with pressures building up from within the BJP itself, not to speak of the RSS or quite a few of the coalition partners. As an organisation, the BJP has to go a long way before the dent caused in its image by the unseemly spectacle of its party chief accepting a 'donation', without any compunction, from a shady arms dealer could be removed, if at all.

THE HINDU

27 MAR 2001

Sena plans to extract its pound of flesh

Seeks review of Centre's agenda and ceasefire in Kashmir

By Ambarish Mishra

MUMBAI: In exchange of its continued support to the Atal Behari Vajpayee government, the Shiv Sena plans to persuade the BJP to adopt a hawkish line on several national issues, including the extended ceasefire in Kashmir. According to sources, the party is also likely to ask the Centre to slow down the pace of labour reforms.

Two weeks after the "armsgate" scandal, the Sena leadership has stitched up a post-Tehelka strategy to extract greater concessions from the beleaguered Vajpayee government. Interestingly, the Sena, which for long has been clamouring for high-profile portfolios in the Union cabinet, is not keen on grabbing crucial posts after the recent exit of George Fernandes and Mamata Banerjee from the Union cabinet. "Instead of haggling for portfolios, the Sena will be more interested in re-defining the agenda of the BJP government," a key Sena functionary told this newspaper on Saturday. "The time is ripe to negotiate afresh with the BJP several crucial policy issues. Ending the ceasefire is on top of our agenda," he said, adding, "The Sena has always been critical of the Vajpayee government's policy of holding out an olive branch to Pakistan in a bid to ease cross-border tension."

Sena chief Bal Thackeray has not missed a single opportunity to pour ridicule on the Vajpayee government for its "misplaced" efforts to buy peace with Pakistan. Furthermore, the party is clearly upset with finance minister Yashwant Sinha's move to amend the existing contract labour laws, which Mr Sinha had argued in his budget speech would facilitate outsourcing. The Sena's principal worry is that the Mr Sinha's sweeping amendments in the existing labour laws will result in the shrinking of the party's electoral base among Mumbai's working class. Again, the Sena is unhappy with the finance minister's move to allow retrenchment in units with less than 1,000 employees.

On May 21, Sena leaders Uddhav Thackeray and Raj Thackeray had led a mammoth morcha of labourers to Vidhan Bhavan to protest against the Centre's "anti-people and anti-labour" policies. Addressing the rally, the Thackeray cousins exhorted trade unions with different political tags to sink their "narrow" differences and put up a united front against the Centre's decision to amend labour contract laws.

It may be recalled that the Sena had made deep inroads into Mumbai's organised sector in the 1970s by ousting the Communist-controlled trade unions from the labour scene. The Bharatiya Kamgar Sena and the Sthaneeya Lokadhikar Samiti Mahasangh, the Sena's bulwarks in the organised sector, have for long been deriding the new economic reforms and the Centre's pro-globalisation policies.

In August last year, the Bharatiya Kamgar Sena had hosted a seminar in Mumbai in a bid to cobble together an all-party front to take on the Centre on the issue of GATT and globalisation. Prominent Left trade unionists, including S. R. Kulkarni, Roza Deshpande and Vivek Monteiro, had attended the day-long seminar.

Meanwhile, Union minister for heavy industries Manohar Joshi had a prolonged meeting with the Sena chief at the latter's Bandra residence on Saturday. Mr Joshi is believed to have furnished Mr Thackeray with a copy of the transcript of the tehelka.com videotapes involving political bigwigs such as former BJP chief Bangaru Laxman and ex-chief of the Samata Party Jaya Jaitly.

Thackeray stands by 'Saamna' editorial

MUMBAI: In a complete turnaround, Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray on Sunday said he stood by the editorial in his party mouthpiece *Saamna* demanding the removal of principal secretary Brajesh Mishra and officer on special duty N.K. Singh from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO). He, however, remarked that the timing of the demand had been improper.

"If the editorial says Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee's image is being tarnished by the presence of Brajesh Mishra, N.K. Singh and Ranjan Bhattacharya (Mr Vajpayee's foster son-in-law) and demands action in this regard, there is nothing wrong with it," he said in an interview published in *Saamna* here.

Soon after the publication of the editorial on March 19, Shiv Sena parliamentary party leader Anand Geete had stated in Delhi that it was not written by Mr Thackeray and the views expressed in it were that of the paper's co-editor Sanjay Raut. The editorial had demanded the immediate removal of Mr Mishra, Mr Singh and Mr Bhattacharya from the PMO till the completion of the judicial inquiry into the tehelka expose.

"*Saamna* is Sena's weapon and my thoughts as the party chief are carried by it," Mr Thackeray said. Stating that the timing of the demand had been improper, he added, "The fall of the Vajpayee government at this juncture when the ISI and the Lashkar-e-Toiba are active does not augur well for the country's security. The editorial had also spoken about corruption during the Congress regime, but the media highlighted only the aspect of removal of certain officials from the PMO. As an editor of *Saamna*, I am morally responsible for each and every word published in it. And I have never shirked from owning my responsibility in this regard."

Speaking about Mr Raut, the Sena chief said, "Raut handles the entire responsibility of the paper. After having worked together for so many years, our wavelengths match. He is aware of my thoughts on various issues. We discuss the issues and I suggest topics for the editorial." (PTI)

FRIENDS AND FOES



A.B. Vajpayee Bal Thackeray

- Sena urges Centre to go slow on labour reforms
- Sena favours discussion on vital policy issues
- Manohar Joshi meets Bal Thackeray

Crisis pours cold water over visits of Annan, Mandela

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 16 MARCH

ON ANY other day, these two men would have been guaranteed Page 1 in all the national newspapers. But on Friday, UN secretary general Kofi Annan and Mr Nelson Mandela could have walked through the streets of Delhi and not feared recognition — the entire nation and its press corps were riveted to the drama in real life unfolding in this political cauldron.

For three years, India has fobbed off Mr Annan — this is his first visit to India after April, 1997. But his recent statements in Islamabad were nothing short of music to Indian ears and his refusal to meet the Hurriyat Conference on Friday and his emphasis on bilateral talks with Pakistan qualified for a concerto. You would have thought the

proverbial red carpet would be laid out for him. It probably was, but nobody noticed.

Indian politics was having a bad hair day. So it took all of Mr G.M.C. Balayogi's diplomatic skills to change Mr Annan's schedule in the last minute and keep him from visiting the Lok Sabha and watching Indian democracy in all its exuberance. Mr Annan was supposed to witness Parliament proceedings between 11-11.15 a.m. — the time when parliamentarians are at their most vociferous. Mr Balayogi just had to keep Mr Annan in his chambers for a few minutes before the adjournment of the House.

That completed, Mr Annan then set off to meet the leader of the Opposition, who, at that precise moment, was in Rashtrapati Bhavan witnessing the award of the Gandhi Peace Prize to a liv-

ing legend — Nelson Mandela. So it fell to Dr Manmohan Singh to entertain Mr Annan, which he accomplished after a sprightly sprint to his chambers from the Rajya Sabha.

It was another quarter of an hour before Sonia Gandhi came rushing back from Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The political divide was bridged for that brief moment as both the government and the Opposition strove to present a picture of normalcy.

However, when Mr Annan observed: "I hear there is some turmoil in this country," he was greeted only with sheepish grins.

It fell to the lot of Jaswant Singh to extol the virtues of Indian democracy during his meetings with the UN secretary-general. Mr Annan's next meeting was with the Prime Minister

at 5 p.m. But when he arrived, surrounded by alert UN officials, the overwhelming numbers of reporters parked outside 7, Race Course Road, should have warmed his heart.

Except...his arrival coincided with that of George Fernandes. The pack of reporters rushed as one man towards the visitors — and instantly mobbed Mr Fernandes. Mr Annan certainly saw Indian democracy at its most vibrant.

As for Mr Mandela, here to collect the highest Indian award, he was probably aware of the fact that he would be upstaged by the events of the day. Giving an acceptance speech, he remarked wryly: "I am afraid that I am an unemployed person. And that too, an old man. So I will speak a little longer than five minutes."



A chink in the defence armour

KEITH FLORY
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Mar 13. - A few decades ago it was the "Cadillac pimp" that hit the headlines. Then it was the Anand Kumar affair that caused bureaucratic heads to roll. The hawala racket and the Jain diaries dragged in political figures. And all along have there been deep suspicions about defence deals. Corruption in high places is the Capital's creed.

Bofors and HDW became major political controversies, and today's exposures would probably rock the Parliament in a similar fashion. For while just about everybody knew that no defence deal was clean, what has been caught on Tehelka's spy cameras really amounts to the first "documentation" of what has been spoken about for long. Smoking guns there have always been.

For the Congress party the latest disclosures will come in handy and will be used to pay Bofors back with the same coin. To gain political mileage that is, cleansing the system is not the ultimate aim. For if there was no equivalent of "thieves honour" in

THE 'FIXERS' OF DELHI

political circles the malaise would have been eradicated long ago.

As important as the exposure of how swinging a deal requires compromising the men in uniform, civilians in the defence ministry and their political bosses is the abundance of "fixers" loitering around the corridors of power. They make every effort to advertise their presence, offer their services to anyone willing to pay for them.

Having themselves photographed with VIPs is part of the game plan, the Cadillac pimp, who was a middleman in more than one particular exercise, carried in his wallet a photograph of him putting a rasagulla in Indira Gandhi's mouth. In these days of electronic media being seen (on the small screen) in proximity to a VIP goes a long way.

Every big-time businessman has his favoured fixers. For he knows that without them not a file moves, not an approval made. They help him prepare a tender document tailor-made to what the govern-

ment department is seeking, tip him off about the other bids in the pipeline.

The spy camera has caught some of them in expansive moods, and the odd hiccup enhances the frequent image of the glasses being topped up. Yet it was not the liquor alone that had loosened the tongues. The name-dropping of the cocktail circuit had moved up a notch or two.

It did seem incredible that people indulging on obviously shady activity would be brazen about it, but truth is stranger than fiction. The fixers make a point of dropping names to impress what they think is the new kid on the block, the latest sucker to be "had."

That brazen showing is reflective of another of New Delhi's traits - that those with clout are a law unto themselves. Be it land grabbing, striking business deals, or just plain boorish behaviour, those with the money and the power that goes with get away with it, murder even. Don't forget that the young men in a BMW who ploughed through a police piquet were the relatives of a former defence chief who proceeded to dabbled in the arms trade.

THE STATESMAN

19/3

The poor respond to new challenges

By Surendra Mohan

10-12/1573

THE COMMON people began feeling the pinch of the policies of the present Government more severely as the impact of the withdrawal of the first phase of quantitative restrictions started to hit them by August last year. The south was agitated with the free import of coconut and the crash in the prices of the local produce. The free import of edible oil affected the prices of mustard and soyabean, which angered cultivators in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat. In the Punjab, the dairy industry was facing vigorous competition from the cheaper imports of milk and milk products and milch cattle were even being offered for sale for slaughter. The fall in the prices of wheat and rice was affecting the farmers in large parts of the country, and additionally, the failure of the FCI to enter the market to deliver the farmers of their plight was demoralising.

The removal of quantitative restrictions, on the one hand, and the concessions offered to foreign capital to invest in India, on the other, have hit small and medium industry equally hard. Over and above that, divestment policies of the Government, its decision to downsize the strength of its employees and adoption by it and private sector companies of the voluntary retirement scheme have rendered a large number of people unemployed. Reduction of the interest rates on small savings is yet another assault on the poor, particularly the lower middle classes and senior citizens among them. The Finance Minister's announcement that the labour laws will be made elastic and the protection provided by Article 311 of the Constitution shall no more be available has to be seen together with the Government's intention to delete chapter 5 of the Industrial Relations Act and amend the Contract Labour Act. On the other hand, there is not a word about providing relief to the millions of people in parts of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat who have suffered owing to drought. The Government rejected the proposal that the foodgrains stocked in the FCI's overfull godowns be offered to them through food-for-work programmes or at

lower prices. Nor have any proposals been made to increase irrigation.

In its agricultural policy, the Government has candidly stated its intention to push for acquisition of land for contract farming and corporatisation of agriculture. It is keen on inviting the private sector, including foreign corporations, in this sector. Interestingly, the Confederation of Indian Industry has submitted a memorandum to the Government pleading for the reduction of people employed in agriculture from the present 63 per cent to 30 per cent, and, by implication, rendering this huge population without any

are given places to settle which cannot offer them any kind of employment opportunities.

The poor have no less been hit by the illegal occupation of common property resources in the rural areas. The gradual erosion of physical environment has also robbed a large number of groups of their livelihood. On the other hand, privatisation of several services such as transport, education and health has put them out of the reach of the common man. They are also being squeezed by rising prices of essential commodities, not only because of the new excise duties but also persisting

The people are faced with multiple challenges to their livelihood... The time has come to organise massive resistance jointly as rallies, symbolic strikes and fasts cannot go on forever.

means of livelihood. Such rashly self-serving advice can only lower the credibility of our captains of industry. If one of the objectives is to find very cheap employment out of the consequent massive unemployment, then the CII is discounting the explosive social unrest that will result from such policies.

It is thus obvious that the Government intends not only to accelerate disinvestment and invite the MNCs but also to take over larger areas in industry, agriculture and forest. In respect of the latter too, several statutes are going to be amended. The Land Acquisition Act is being amended without adding to it the necessary provisions for adequate rehabilitation.

Policies of massive displacement are continuing with accelerated pace. In fact, in most cases in the metropolises and large cities, those threatened with this new offensive are those who were driven out from their villages or small towns. Slums are not being improved but rooted out and hundreds of thousands living in jhuggi-Pomdi clusters are being compelled to vacate their hutments, without the provision of alternative shelter. In certain cases, they

inflation which is expected to rise further.

The people are faced with these multiple challenges to their livelihood, employment opportunities, living standards and human life indices. When the policies of globalisation, liberalisation and privatisation were introduced in 1991, various groups had started to organise protests. But, since August last year, the protests have become more vociferous and vigorous. Cultivators of coconut, rubber, tea and coffee conducted a massive rally at Kozhikode on August 19, which was attended, among others, by three former Prime Ministers, Messrs V. P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar and H. D. Deve Gowda.

Alwar in Rajasthan witnessed the coming together of the cultivators of oilseeds and the small manufacturers and traders of edible oils in September. In the same month, the police opened fire on an assembly of sugarcane growers and sugar mill workers in Pandrauna in eastern Uttar Pradesh leading to the death of one worker. Consequently, an agitation began and drew the three former Prime Ministers to attend a big rally in Lakshmiganj near the place of occurrence. It may be pointed out

that neither in Lakshmiganj nor in several parts of the South, does any one of them have much of a following. It was an expression of the spreading resentment among farmers which made these rallies successful. There have been demonstrations by the national trade union centres and one-day token strikes. Employees of sector banks and insurance companies have not lagged behind.

Two rallies, one in New Delhi in November which was sponsored by the Sangharsh Samiti of Madhya Pradesh, another in Bhopal on February 26 brought the political parties and grassroots social protest movements together. Despite the differences, the CPI(M), the CPI, the C (ML), the RJD, the Janata Dal (Secular), the Samajwadi Janata Party, the Forward Bloc and the Revolutionary Socialist Party have jointly participated in several protests. Most of them joined the massive rallies of the residents of J.J. clusters in Delhi.

The Samajwadi Party has kept away from all these protest rallies, excepting the one in Jaipur, but has cooperated in the agitations in Mumbai and Nagpur. On the other hand, it mobilised over one lakh workers in Uttar Pradesh to court arrest in its month-long agitation against these policies. Nevertheless, it is of paramount importance that it is persuaded to join hands with other parties and grassroots social movements. The BSP has also kept aloof; in fact, it has not made its position on economic reforms clear. The RPI, the Dalit Panthers, Puthiya Thamizhagam and the PMK also have not been associated.

All these parties which represent the most deprived sections of the society must realise that it is as much their battle as that of the common cultivators and workers in the organised and unorganised sectors of the economy. If these parties are not feeling the pressure of their followers who are even more adversely hit than the rest, it is because the concerns of landless agricultural workers and small craftsmen have not been adequately articulated. However, the time has come to organise massive resistance jointly as rallies, symbolic strikes and fasts cannot go on forever.

Post-Bamiyan, Sangh Parivar gathers the Buddha into its fold

By Ambikanand Sahay
The Times of India News Service

AYODHYA: What suddenly catches your attention as you wander through the jungle of carved sandstone pillars meant for the proposed Ram temple is a freshly made statue of an 'enlightened Buddha sitting in padmasana posture' at the Karsewakpuram here. It's a wonderful piece of art. But that's not the only reason why one is awe-struck.

The moment you see this statue, your thoughts travel towards the Taliban's barbaric shelling of the standing Buddha at Bamiyan in Afghanistan. And it's only then that you grasp the meaning of the statue's presence at the Vishwa Hindu Parshad's war-camp in Ayodhya. What becomes clear is that the leaders and followers of the Sangh Parivar will now fight for the cause of the Buddha as well.

Maybe it's a turning point in the VHP's politics. Offshoots of the Sangh Parivar, including the VHP and the Bajrang Dal, will be staging massive demonstrations in the various district headquarters of Uttar Pradesh in protest against the continued attacks on the Buddha statues.

"Bhagwan Buddha is one of the greatest saints of our motherland and his philosophy is absolutely illuminating," Sharad Sharma, media cell in-charge of Karsewakpuram says, adding that those who are

attacking the Buddha and Buddhists will have to pay through their noses.

The statue, which has been brought here from the VHP's workshop in Rajasthan, will now be taken to Lumbini, a major Buddhist pilgrimage centre, and installed there with much fanfare.

Sharad Sharma isn't the only VHP activist who says this, others sound even more aggressive. But the

reaction among Ayodhya citizens is somewhat different. They seem to be doing some soul-searching, their conscience having been stirred by the unsavoury developments at Bamiyan. Not that are they equating the destruction of the Babri mosque with the shelling of the Buddha statue at Bamiyan, but they do seem to think that nobody should be allowed to deface and defile statues, temples, mosques and churches.

Muslim leaders, however, are as aggressive in their reaction as the VHP activists. Mohammad Hashim Ansari, the only surviving plaintiff of the original Babri Mosque title suit, says, "You demolished the mosque first. It's a lie to say that Babar had destroyed a temple to build this mosque. If you can prove that a temple was indeed destroyed, I am prepared to withdraw from the suit."



THE TIMES OF INDIA

- 9 MAR 2001

CENTRE FOR ONE-TIME SETTLEMENT OF OUTSTANDINGS

States agree on power reforms

By Alok Mukherjee

NEW DELHI, MARCH 3. With the Centre proposing a one-time settlement of the outstanding dues of the State Electricity Boards (SEBs) towards Central utilities, and also allowing the States to choose their method of improving distribution, most State Governments today agreed to press ahead with power sector reforms in a time-bound manner. In doing this, they would focus on streamlining distribution, imposing minimum tariff on power for the agricultural sector and subsidising power supply through the budgets so that the SEBs did not incur losses.

These decisions emerged at a meeting of Chief Ministers and Power Ministers convened by the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, which was also attended by the Union Power Minister, Mr. Suresh Prabhu, the Union Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha, and the Deputy Chairperson of the Planning Commission, Mr K.C. Pant. To work out a scheme for the one-time settle-

ment of the ⁴outstandings — about Rs. 26,000 ³crores — an expert group is to be set up. It will present a report within three weeks.

A high-level group has been formed, with the Union Power Minister and some Chief Ministers as members, to monitor the process. On the basis of a memorandum of understanding between the States and the Centre, allocation of Central funds would be made, subject to attaining the milestones listed in the MoU.

The agenda for the meeting was set by the Prime Minister who drew a dismal picture of the power sector. "In view of our rapidly growing needs, we need to add 100,000 MWs to our generating capacity in the next 10 years... This will cost Rs. 800,000 crores including associated costs in transmission and distribution systems. Nearly half of these resources have to come from the private sector."

The Prime Minister frankly admitted that attempts to reform the power sector had not moved

smoothly. "Several projects promoted by the private sector have failed to take off, though an enabling policy framework has been in place for the past eight years. Till date, independent power producers have added only 5,000 MW of capacity and only another 5,000 MW of capacity is under construction. Many viable projects have not been able to achieve financial closure due to inability of the State power utilities to have an adequate payment security mechanism."

Mr. Vajpayee pointed to the tendency of providing free power to certain segments of the consumers. "Only 40 per cent of the power supply is billed. And not all those billed are made to pay. There are also many other categories of users who get electricity either free or at highly subsidised rates in the name of agriculture. The combined effect of all this is the stupendous losses of our SEBs, which now stand at an unsustainable level of Rs. 24,000 crores each year. These losses have further worsened the fiscal

health of many State Governments."

All-party meet proposed

Prior to the meeting, the Congress Chief Ministers of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Delhi and Karnataka, met this morning and decided that the Congress would speak in one voice which would be articulated by Mr. Digvijay Singh of Madhya Pradesh. Consequently, Mr. Singh, on behalf of the other Chief Ministers, proposed that power sector reforms should be depoliticised; and for this, the Prime Minister was requested to convene an all-party meeting where not only Chief Ministers but the leaders of Opposition in State Assemblies should also be invited. The proposal was accepted by the conference.

The matter of imposing a minimum tariff of 50 paise per unit for power supplied to the agriculture sector — a decision of the 1992 Chief Ministers' conference and pending since — saw some political opposition, mainly from Tamil Nadu and Punjab. First, it was pointed out that with the setting up of regulatory commissions at the level of the States it was the discretion of the Government of the day to subsidise any segment of the consumers. Only, the cost of the power supplied to them would have to be made good from the State Budget so that the generating unit did not suffer losses.

Secondly, it was said that mere metering of power supply would not suffice and some recovery of cost — even a nominal 50 paise per unit — should be done so that the system remained effective. If no attempts were made to monitor the meters, there could be a tendency of "meterised theft", as Mr. Suresh Prabhu put it.

On the issue of streamlining the distribution system, the Centre told the State Governments that they not necessarily have to go in for privatisation of the distribution system.



The Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, with the Finance Minister, Mr. Yashwant Sinha (extreme right), the Power Minister, Mr. Suresh Prabhu (second from right), and the Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Mr. K.C. Pant (left), at the conference of Chief Ministers on Power Sector Reforms in New Delhi on Saturday. — PTI

THE HINDU

4 MAR 2001

Census 2001: It's about people, not population

The census should not be an occasion for scare-mongering about our burgeoning numbers. If the statistics can be used to devise ways which can improve the quality of life, we don't have to worry about population. Empowered people will make positive life choices and among these will be small families

By Lalita Panicker

CENSUS 2001 will reveal quite a few new figures but on the population front, there will be no surprises. It's a billion plus, a number which almost always sends a frisson of horror down our collective spine. Experts across the board agree that at present levels of development, there's no cause for cheer that we will soon be the most populous country in the world.

Dr Ashish Bose, professor emeritus at Jawaharlal Nehru University has been one the harshest critics of the government's family planning efforts. "Simply by calling it reproductive health instead of family planning is not going to solve anything. This is just playing to the international galleries," he says. The real effort has to be made not at the national level but at the block level. The census data ought to equip leaders at the grassroots level with the information they need to provide the services that truly empower people, he feels.

Eminent demographer Mari Bhat, professor at the Institute of Economic Growth concurs with Bose. "You cannot have quality without sacrificing quantity. Only a reduced population can improve the quality of life," he says.

But does the billion plus figure really cause concern among people? No, very few people ever think of the big picture and this is where the government has been going wrong each time. So what use is a National Population Commission (NPC) comprising 140 members who gather in New Delhi from time to time to deliberate on how to reduce the numbers. As Nina Puri, president of Family Planning Association of India puts it, "People have families, nations have populations". It is precisely because we have missed the people for population that no national effort has ever

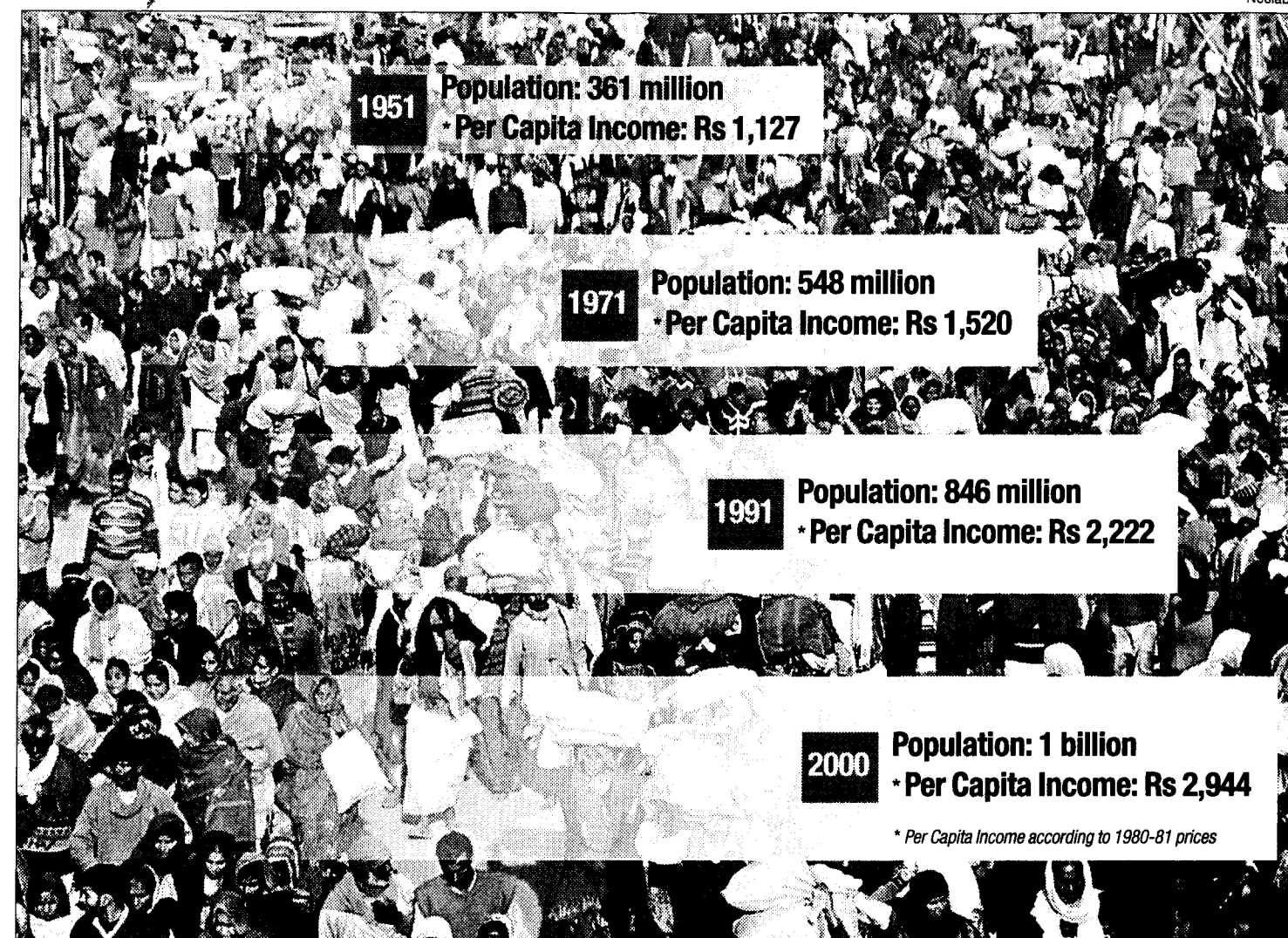
paid off. Even the 'development is the best contraceptive' theory is being questioned now, fertility is declining among the illiterate in certain regions.

What explains this? Dr Bhat attributes this to the increasing reach of the mass media. Small families are shown as happy and prosperous, the message which gets people thinking positively about the benefits of fewer children.

Dr Saroj Pachauri, regional director, Population Council, feels that the key to family planning is to target India's growing youth population. "Even if fertility declines, the fact that there is such a big youth population will keep up population momentum," she says.

India's family planning programme has so far been premised on the myth that the poor want to have large families. This has been conclusively disproved. People have more children because they have no access to reversible contraception or health services. The focus on sterilisation has been a major deterrent for those seeking to limit their family size. No one wants to give up the choice to have children, irrespective of socio-economic circumstances. The public health system is simply not geared either to reduce maternal and infant mortality — the key determinants to reducing fertility — or offering couples a choice of reversible contraceptives. But instead of focusing on these details, the government is still stuck commission and policy mode.

Neither has worked and neither will. First we had the slogan hum do hamare do. No one paid the slightest attention. Then came Sanjay Gandhi who proclaimed that the disadvantaged cease all reproductive activity forthwith. We all know where that got his party. Since then, not one politician has dared to tackle the subject seriously. Witness Renuka Choudhary's flip sloga-



neering: *Ek bacha achha hai.*

The latest population policy reads like wonderful philosophy, it says all the right things about women's empowerment, basket of contraceptive choice, awareness and so on. But like all our policies, no one has any ideas about how to implement it. It was for this that the

NPC was set up, but so far it has not come up with a single workable solution. Instead of this futile exercise, if the government had instructed the ministries of Health, Youth Affairs and Education for a start to build in a family welfare component into their plans, perhaps we would have got somewhere.

We don't really need to look very far for answers. Right here, in the south, state after state has seen numbers dwindle thanks to imaginative thinking and political will.

The Kerala model apart, Tamil Nadu a notoriously politically unstable state has recorded stunning

achievements in family planning. The key was the mid-day meal scheme and a positive public campaign spearheaded by the charismatic MGR.

What is common in each success story? The focus was on people, not population. The accent was on what is in it for you.

India can provide protection to its consumer goods industries without flouting WTO rules

Safety in numbers

BY PREM SHANKAR JHA

HT-8
2/2

IT IS still not too late for the government to work out precisely how, under the WTO agreement, India can offer sufficient, time-bound protection to the Indian consumer goods industries after April 1 to prevent a wholesale deindustrialisation of the manufacturing sector. The threat is most acute for the small-scale industries. It arises from the prolongation of blanket protection to the small-scale sector through the reservation of more than 800 products for it, and the failure to dismantle the restrictions on its growth. The first deprived it of the compulsion to become more efficient; the second of the ability to do so.

The precise shape of the threat was revealed by a casual enquiry from a prominent industrialist in the household electrical appliances sector. When asked how he intended coping with the threat of Chinese and Southeast Asian consumer goods imports after April 1, he said that over the past year he had made arrangements to source his products from factories in China. Asked why he had done so, he said: "All my competitors are doing it. If I don't we will be ruined." While he deeply regretted what it would do to Indian small-scale industry, the consumer at least would benefit, because he or she would get better, cheaper goods.

Electrical household goods were not the only ones that were going to be affected. A news report in *Business Line* (January 9) disclosed that Ajanta, the world's largest transistor clock manufacturing company, is shifting production/procurement to China.

These two examples show that whatever import duty India has bound itself to may not prove sufficient to stop a very large inflow of Chinese, Southeast and east Asian consumer goods. What is more, the inflow will affect entire sectors of the Indian industry.

There is a real danger that the replacement of Indian with imported consumer goods will not take place gradually but very rapidly, at a pace that Indian industry and society will not be able to absorb. This is because the reservation of a vast range of consumer goods for the small-scale sector has separated the manufacture of consumer goods from their marketing.

The manufacturers whose brands we are familiar with are only traders who procure their goods from the small-scale sector and put their logos on them. They have therefore nothing to lose by shifting from Indian to Chinese or South Korean goods. As a result, they do not have the incentive of genuine manufacturers to fight competition by remodelling their product, lowering its price or



CONSUMED BY COMPETITION: OUTSIDE AN ELECTRONIC GOODS SHOWROOM IN KOLKATA

improving its reliability, that a genuine manufacturer has.

The actual manufacturers, on the other hand, will not only lose a large share of their market, but also their marketing agencies. This is something they will not be able to withstand. Some idea of what lies in store for them may be had from the fact that in the 47 consumer goods whose import was permitted in 2000-2001, imports have been growing this year at 40 per cent per annum. This is at a time when non-oil imports — excluding gold and silver — have declined by almost 3 per cent.

The impact on employment could be frightful. At this moment, there are approximately 45 million workers in the manufacturing sector (excluding handlooms and handicrafts), of whom 37 million are in the unorganised sector. Approximately, 28 per cent are in the textiles industry and another 11 per cent are in engineering. According to a FICCI study, textiles could be affected even more severely than engineering. No fewer than 322 of the 714 items on which there are QRs today belong to this sector. Of these, 151 are readymade garments and another 14 are carpets.

In the worst case scenario, therefore, we are looking at the possibility of losing up to 10 million jobs in these two sectors alone. But these are not the only industries that will be affected. We are very high cost producers in chemical products, rubber goods and plastics. Many

more jobs will be lost in these sectors too.

The estimate of 10 to 11 million jobs given above relates only to direct employment. In addition, a number of indirect jobs generated by these sectors will be lost. In the textiles industries, for example, the total number of direct and indirect jobs is around 93 million. Most of the latter are in distribution and should not be directly affected. But even the loss of a tenth of the indirect jobs would be catastrophic.

CATASTROPHE IS not, however, unavoidable. To avert it, the government needs to buy time for the consumer goods industries to gear themselves up to face competition. This requires an added measure of protection in the immediate future and the completion of the structural reforms begun under Narasimha Rao in the next four to five years.

There are four ways to provide added protection. The first and most effective is to devalue the rupee. The second is to levy anti-dumping duties. The third is to invoke the safeguards clause in the GATT/WTO agreements. The last is to offer concessions from domestic taxation to small-scale industry to enable it to withstand the onslaught from imports.

So far, all that the government seems to have thought of is to levy anti-dumping duties. It has already done so against several products from China. But by definition, such duties can be levied only

against unfair trade. It would be absurd to categorise all sales of consumer goods to India by Asian countries as unfair.

The least harmful method of protecting industry is through devaluation, which makes imports more expensive. In theory, devaluation should take place automatically after import liberalisation because of the increased inflow of consumer goods.

In practice, however, the alacrity with which the RBI has been defending the exchange rate by raising interest rates makes it extremely difficult. Indian real interest rates are now among the highest in the world and have made the rupee appreciate by between 3 and 4 per cent in the last two years.

The best way to reverse this trend is simply to lower interest rates. This will cause an outflow of portfolio capital and bring down the rupee. The RBI Governor's fear that lower interest rates will make it very difficult to finance government borrowing could turn out to be unfounded. For lower interest rates will also lower the cost of servicing the domestic debt. Furthermore, devaluation will increase customs revenues and that would further reduce the fiscal deficit.

The government can reinforce the effect of devaluation by invoking various safeguard clauses in the WTO charter to protect the most threatened sectors of Indian industry. The government would be justified in doing this because the generation of unemployment is not an objective of trade liberalisation.

But by definition safeguards too can be invoked only to buy time for making structural changes in the economy that will obviate the threat. And since they are designed to limit the side effects of fair trade, India will have to offer the affected countries compensation in the form of additional concessions at a future date. Thus, safeguards can be used only as a part of a medium-term programme of reform designed to make them redundant.

The fourth way is to first levy an additional excise duty on the products that are being imported, and then waive it for the small-scale industries. The fact that the reservation policy has pushed the production of many consumer goods into the small-scale sector makes it possible to use this stratagem to give a measure of added protection. The encouragement of particular sectors through domestic policy instruments of this kind does not violate WTO's rules. But this too can only buy time to complete the reform of the industrial structure.

What the government cannot afford to do is nothing.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 FEB 2001

The politics of religion count

By Garimella Subramaniam

CHENNAI, FEB. 21. While in the past two decades, the country has been generally feeding on a high-pitched fascist majoritarian propaganda about religious minorities, the perpetration of falsehoods pertaining to questions of fertility, especially of minority religious communities, the Muslims in particular, predates the political ascendancy of the Hindutva campaign.

Although this tendency to link questions of population growth among different religious communities to the tenets of particular religions has little basis, an exercise involving the distribution of population among different groups may be the only way to disprove such claims.

The 1991 Census provides the distribution of the population among different religions. The percentage of population of the Hindus was 82.00, Muslims 12.12, Christians 2.34, Sikhs 1.94, Buddhists 0.76, Jains 0.40 and others 0.39 and religion not stated 0.05.

A set of findings based on earli-

er Censuses and other surveys are revealing of the kind of falsehoods propagated about the numerical strength of religious groupings. The study conducted by Mr. Abusaleh Sharif on the 'Socio-Economic and Demographic Differentials between Hindus and Muslims in India' (*Economic and Political Weekly*, November 18, 1995) effectively debunks myths such as "appeasement of minorities", an epithet that is generally targeted at Muslims.

The study brings out striking differences in the demographic profiles of different religious communities during the first three decades after independence; differences that arise out of historical and cultural factors. The country's population (in millions) nearly doubled from 361.1 in 1951 to 665.3 in 1981. During this period, the Hindus grew from 303.6 to 549.8 millions in the total population; the Muslims from 35.4 to



लोकाभिमुख
PEOPLE ORIENTED

30.8 and 30.6 per cent; Christians: 27.4, 32.6 and 17.4. The national averages to the total population for the different religious groups was: Hindus 82.6 per cent, Muslims 11.4 per cent and Christians 2.4 per cent. The Hindu population was in majority in 13 out of the 15 States considered in the study.

However, the Hindu population in Kerala and West Bengal was 58 and 77 per cent respectively which is less than the national average of 82.6 per cent.

Interestingly, 52 per cent of Muslims reside in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. Jammu and Kashmir is the lone State where they form a majority (64

75.5 millions; Christians from 8.3 to 16.2 millions; and others from 9.7 to 25.8 millions.

In these three decades, the population grew at the rate of Hindus: 20.3, 24.7 and 24.2 per cent respec-

tively, Muslims: 25.6, 30.8 and 30.6 per cent; Christians: 27.4, 32.6 and 17.4. The national averages to the total population for the different religious groups was: Hindus 82.6 per cent, Muslims 11.4 per cent and Christians 2.4 per cent. The Hindu population was in majority in 13 out of the 15 States considered in the study.

However, the Hindu population in Kerala and West Bengal was 58 and 77 per cent respectively which is less than the national average of 82.6 per cent.

Interestingly, 52 per cent of Muslims reside in Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. Jammu and Kashmir is the lone State where they form a majority (64

per cent) and Punjab is the other State where non-Hindus (Sikhs) constitute the largest religious group. After Jammu and Kashmir, the next largest proportion of Muslims, about 21 per cent each, were in West Bengal and Kerala.

Muslims constitute about 16 per cent in U.P., 14 per cent in Bihar, 11 per cent in Karnataka and 9 per cent in Maharashtra. The States where Muslim population is about 5 per cent or less are Tamil Nadu Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana and Punjab. Christians are mostly concentrated in Kerala, about 21 per cent, and in T.N. about 6 per cent of the State's population.

The other areas where Christians are found in significant percentages are some States in the Northeast. Against this distribution of the population among different religious communities in the background, it would be interesting to look at the socio-economic profile of Muslims in the first three decades after independence. That is the task for tomorrow.

THE CENSUS-II

Dread, Suspicion And Reverence

By SR MAHESHWARI

INDIA had adopted a one-night theory for the entire country. On this night each enumerator visited every house in his block, taking with him the book of schedules prepared during the preliminary enumeration and on the spot corrected and completed it, striking out the entries for those persons who had left the house and entering the particulars of those persons who had come to the house since the preliminary counting.

Easily, the census night was the most exciting time for the census as it involved the door-to-door visit of the enumerators throughout the country within the span of a few hours. In the census of 1941 the "one-night theory" was abandoned in favour of a "spread-over system" to give full scope for the economical and efficient use of the widely differing provincial systems. As a result, the number of enumerators was halved in British India.

To many readers of census reports, the primary interest lay in the information provided on "caste", the single most exotic social institution in India. Census reports were the first systemised documents which contained a wealth of information about caste and thus have played a pioneering role in its study.

CHALLENGE

One must note that JH Hutton, who authored *Caste in India* (1946), acclaimed as an authoritative work, was the census commissioner of India in 1931. The caste column always appeared during the colonial rule but since 1931 its recording was not insisted upon. In independent India, caste was deleted from the census schedule: information is collected only on scheduled castes and scheduled tribes because of the constitutional requirement. With reservation granted to more and more castes, India thus may be seeing a return of castes in the census.

A most remarkable feature of the census organisation in India was its observance of the phoenix principle since its conception in the later part of the 19th century until 1941. The census organisation came into existence to complete the task of counting human heads in the country. Once the work was completed it burnt itself out completely as though only to re-emerge to its full form after an interval. To create an entirely new organisation of such a large scale was not easy or simple. When MWM Yeats joined as the census commissioner of India in 1941, the only link with the past was the *daftri* who had served in his predecessor's office. Most persons who had earlier served in the census refused to join when contacted. Yeats, therefore, built the census organisation anew — with fresh appointments of inexperienced personnel.

From the outset, the legendary institution of the revenue administration, its bottom-level functionary being the patwari, was being utilised. The patwari, the all-too-familiar figure in rural India, was mobilised as an enumerator and the higher revenue functionaries for supervisory and administrative duties. A basic feature of the census is that it should graft itself on to an existing agency already moving among

been a strong tendency everywhere to enter girls in the returns as women", observed the 1869 Census Report of Oudh.

People at this time were absolutely new to the census culture. Their imaginations were naturally fanned by the novelty of the exercise. Among the lower classes, dread and suspicion were mixed with instinctive reverence for authority and perhaps confidence in the intentions of the rulers. Among the upper classes, a similar feeling prevailed at first, but as they gradually found themselves personally enlisted in the work of the census, mistrust gave way, and in the case of the non-official instructors and enumerators was succeeded by a feeling of pride at being entrusted with a share of participation in the state's responsibility.

To sum up, the prevalent rumours were: The British Government in India was going to impose a poll tax; the government

was about to take one member of every family as a recruit for the army; one male from every house was to be compelled to emigrate or to work without pay on the roads; women were wanted as wives for the European soldiers; every fourth man was to be taken to build an enormous fort; Indians were wanted to colonise a distant settlement; and every fourth Indian was to be recruited to the army.

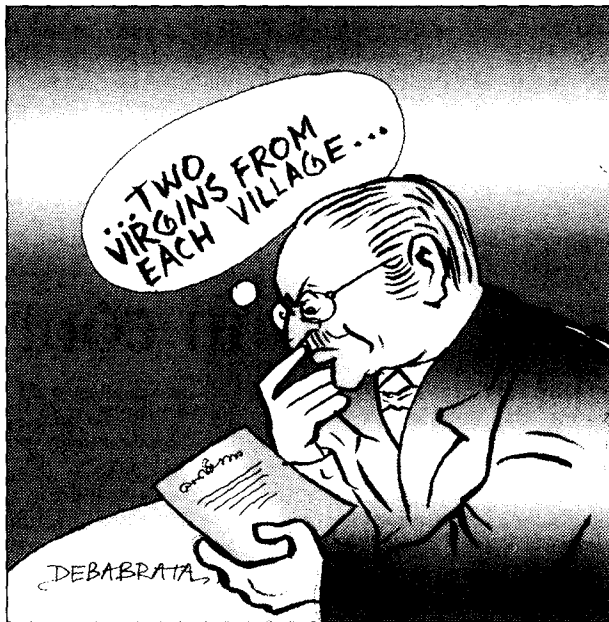
RUMOURS

The report on the Census of Oudh (1869) narrates a strange rumour, namely, that Great Britain had suddenly become very warm and Queen Victoria had sent orders to the Governor-General in India to send to England at once two virgins from each village that they might fan her night and day and keep her cool.

Rumours thus did prevail. Yet the demeanour of the people was on the whole quiet and submissive. As the report on the Census of Oudh, 1869 observes, the people at large did not assist in any way; neither were they disposed to be communicative. But they made no attempt to obstruct or interfere with the census operation.

Petty cases of corruption were not entirely non-existent among enumerators of the day. At a few places, the enumerators were found collecting a copper coin from every house. A few took a few annas from the people saying that the red ochre and oil used in numbering the houses had to be paid for. One man falsely represented himself as an enumerator, and went about on the night of the census collecting fees in the name of government; he was sentenced to two years' rigorous imprisonment. The census report on Oudh concludes: "It is probable that small fees were often levied by the ground-level functionaries while performing census task."

(Concluded)



the people, thus causing minimum disturbance or inconvenience. It is not only economical but also judicious. Physical head counting was a novelty and a mystery in India. The mystery would be reduced if not removed entirely, when it was put through agencies with whom the masses are familiar. This agency, obviously, is the revenue one. The patwari is the preferred enumerator and this practice is still observed in rural areas.

Head-counting was an unfamiliar experience for India and its newness was stunning. At places, there was alarm leading to emigration across the border and concealment of girls. People endeavoured to conceal some members of their families, fled from their houses on the night of head-counting and slept in the fields or went into the neighbouring province. The lower castes especially tried concealment and for some weeks immediately preceding the census night, considerable migration took place. Certain areas were particularly gripped by a rumour that fine unmarried females were wanted for the European army, and as such several unmarried women made engagements at once to escape such a conscription.

HUSBANDS

A similar rumour prevailed in certain parts of the country. There was a story that the British government wanted wives for its soldiers and would take any girls who might be unmarried at the time of the census. Accordingly, all parents did the utmost to find husbands for their daughters, and when they had married them off they quietly awaited the result. There were many villages where the census returns hardly contained any girls. The numbers of girls was singularly disproportionate to the number of boys throughout Oudh. "The result I now arrive at from these facts is that there has

THE CENSUS-I

The Old Imperial Character

By SR MAHESHWARI

THE census is one of the oldest activities of the government of India and certainly the single largest administrative operation. The exercise has a long history spanning more than 150 years. As long ago as 1856, it became a concern of the government of India. Evidence exists of census activity in British India from even earlier times. Characteristically, Sir Thomas Munro turns out to have been pioneer and the enumeration in 1822 was carried out on a form devised by him for a census taken in 1802. Between 1813 and 1850, a three-yearly count was carried out along with the determination of the land revenue for the year, and in 1850 a five-yearly sequence began which was absorbed in 1871 into the all-India series.

It was, however, in 1856 in a despatch of the East India Company that the proposal for a general census all over India and its underlying principles was first laid down. The despatch said: "We attach much importance to the manner in which the work is accomplished, and are very desirous that the census should be made upon a system and at the same period for the entire country under our administration. The next general census of our Indian territories may be taken in 1861 to correspond with the next census of Great Britain, and thence forward at intervals of ten years".

OBJECTIONS

The government of India was consequently considering the holding of the census in 1861, but the "mutiny" — or the first war of Indian independence — broke out in 1857. The subject was naturally laid aside, but only temporarily. In 1865, the government of Bengal, revived the proposal for a general census. It urged that the considerations which led to the postponement of the census of 1861 no longer existed, and that the want of anything like even an approximate knowledge of the population was acutely felt in every department of the government. The government of India concurred with the proposal and submitted it to the London government for final clearance, with the condition that when the time approached, the measure would, if necessary, be suspended, as it was in 1859. The secretary of State for India, Sir Charles Wood, fell in line with the recommendation. Meanwhile, a census of the population of the

North-Western Provinces (now UP) was taken in January 1865 and that of the central provinces in November 1866.

Armed with the London government's approval, the government of India embarked on a process of consultation with the provincial governments. Some provinces were opposed to the plan of enumerating the population "of all-India at the same time". The suggestion was that a census of each province

with the census in their respective areas. When the census was originally proposed, a suggestion was made to hold it synchronously with that of Great Britain. This was to emphasise the imperial character of the operation. In Britain, the census is taken in April but in India this month marks the advent of the hot season making it unsuitable for census work. Taking into account the climatic conditions, the month of February was fixed as being equally away from extremes in

both winter and summer. The month of February is a settled fact for census taking in India ever since. It was proposed that the numbering should be done on a moonlit night. The date of the full moon was deliberately chosen as the enumerator should have moonlight to guide him round his beat, which included, in the rural tracts, a comparatively large area.

The final decision having been taken to hold an all-India census in 1871,

between 1867 and 1872 censuses were taken in as much of the country as practicable. The government of Berar carried out its census in 1867, the Punjab in 1868, the North-Western Provinces in 1865 and Oudh in 1869. This series of censuses is commonly known as the census of 1871. This census is not regarded as a regular general census as it was not synchronous. The first regular general census was taken on 17 February 1881 and in six months time, that is in August 1881 the provisional population of the country was made known it was 208,202,050.

LEGISLATION

The report was published in 1883 in three volumes. The total cost of the census exercise was nearly Rs 25 lakhs, which came to Rs 12 per 1,000 persons, making the Indian census the cheapest operation in the world. Since then it has been organised without interruption every 10th year. Not even in 1941 was it suspended in view of the Second World War, though the head count was suspended in Great Britain itself. India conducted the head count in those troubled times even though it was a truncated census.

During the entire British period the census in India rested on a temporary piece of legislation. A law was considered to be necessary in order to put both the census bureaucracy and the enumerated within a legal framework of enforceable duties and obligations. It was only after independence that it was firmly underpinned by a permanent legislation.

(To be concluded)



should be taken separately and that not till every province had been separately subjected to the process and all had become accustomed to it by experience should a simultaneous census for all-India be made. What is now UP wanted to spread the census over two years. The government of India appreciated the objections against simultaneous census in 1871, and the final decision accommodated the provincial concerns. The census could be held in the same week or month.

The two-year length of the census, as demanded by the North-Western Provinces, was, however, termed "simply mischievous". The final decision was in favour of a simultaneous census for the entire province. The year chosen was 1871, and the day 1 January. It was clarified: "All that was intended is that the census should be made upon system and at the same time", i.e., some time in 1871, the time to be determined in each province by the local authorities.

SYNCHRONOUS

The general census of 1871 was preceded by isolated census exercises in individual provinces like the North-Western Provinces and Punjab. The experience gathered, the forms used and the procedures adopted were of enormous value in the all-India census planned for 1871. Forms were developed for general adoption throughout India as it was desirable to secure uniformity for the purpose of facilitating comparison of the statistics of one part of India with that of another.

As said earlier, individual provinces were going ahead

The author is a former professor of political science and public administration at the Indian Institute of Public Administration, New Delhi.

India must not give in to MNC pressure on drug patents

BY OLGA TELLIS

Mumbai, Feb. 20: Indian policymakers have to guard against monopolies under the product patents regime. They must also retain compulsory licensing. India with a population of over one billion people and it cannot allow monopolies in any sphere, least of all in the sensitive drugs and pharmaceutical industry.

A WHO Report of November 1997, *Globalisation And Access To Drugs—Implications For The WTO/TRIPS Agreements*, observes: "In the pharmaceutical field the logical consequence of this provision (extended 20-year term of patent) is that drugs will be sold at high prices, as is the case for all monopoly products, for a long period of time, and manufacturers of generic products will have to wait longer before they can produce the drug in question and sell it at a more accessible price."

The MNCs say that India will not be affected by TRIPS as only about 30 per cent of the drugs marketed in India are patented.

This is grossly misleading apart from being factually incorrect, says Mr. Narendra Zaveri. What is relevant, he says, is which are these drugs and what will be their total impact on the consumer in terms of cost and treatment.

Pakistan is an outstanding example of how expensive medicines are because of the strong product patent regime and the stranglehold of the MNCs over its pharmaceutical industry.

Various published reports in pharma news-magazines abroad show that MNCs charge prices for imported raw materials that are 400 per cent over the market price. Here are some examples of what the MNCs charge under different regimes:

■ Ranitidine (300 mg), an anti ulcerant, costs Rs 13.91 in India for a packet of 10 tablets as against Rs 241.44 in Pakistan which is 17.35 times costlier, Rs 1,080.72 in the US and Rs 502.70 in the UK;

■ A packet of 14 tablets of Famotidine (40 mg) cost Rs 6.75 in India, Rs 363.37 in Pakistan, Rs 1,445.76 in the US and Rs 731.50 in the UK.

The scenario is the same with every patented drug.

The MNCs claim to have suffered a loss of Rs 2,000 crores a year in India because of the lack of patent protection under the Patent Act 1970 and the price control regime.

Whether it is loss or loot is, Mr Zaveri says, India has been making a direct saving of Rs 2,000 crores a year only on sales of US MNCs' products under Patents Act in other countries but denied under Patent Act 1970 here.

If the government and the bureaucrats fall to the hidden persuasions of the MNCs and betray the people of India by introducing the product patent under the facetious excuse of implementing TRIPS, India's sick and dying will have to shell out Rs 5,000 crores with the expected increase in the number of prod-

uct patents with 20 year terms.

This Rs 5,000 crores, says Mr Zaveri, may be peanuts for the MNCs but for India's poor millions and the middle class it means life's savings and saving of life.

Thus, the introduction of the strong product patents regime will cost India Rs 5,000 crores every year.

The MNCs claim that they invest heavily in R&D, approximately 10-16 per cent of their sales turnover. Going by their figures, and taking their cost price as equal to their cost of production in India, then their US and Pakistan prices rake them enormous profits.

For instance, Glaxo developed their blockbuster drug Ranitidine in 1970s and the cost of research was less

than \$100 million. During its entire extended patent term that ended in 1997, Ranitidine's total world sales ran into billions of dollars with sales in the US alone exceeding \$1 billion per year. This shows, says Mr Zaveri, that their profits in one year alone from the US sales exceeded the research cost many times over.

One of the favourite games of the MNCs is to dangle patent as a carrot for more investments to flow in. However, the experience in the last five years in India has been just the contrary, as Mr Zaveri's studies reveal.

Between 1994-98, in expectation of TRIPS, the MNCs have:

■ Started closing down and disposing of

some of their existing production facilities (eg Pfizer— its Kalyani and Ankleshwar plants; Parke Davis its Sakinaka plant. About 30,000 employees have been discharged in Mumbai-Thane region alone.)

■ Started liquidating their immovable assets. Selling off or leasing plants and open plots in Mumbai region

■ Started closing down or disposing off parts of their business (eg Glaxo parting with its food production division.)

■ Started charging royalty for trademark use (eg Pfizer parent company was recently paid crores of rupees by way of royalty on trademark use by the Indian unit. Smith Kline have started claiming royalty for Horlicks.)

■ Move to start 100 per cent subsidiaries to undertake import and distribution and

■ Increasing shareholding in subsidiaries

Once the TRIP/WTO regime sets in, the MNCs will be able to import drugs into the country and the price control will not effect them too much as it would be on the already high landed costs.

The Patent Act 1970 has struck a balance between national objectives, priorities and interests on the one hand and the rights and benefits to be granted to the genuine inventors and investors for contributions, research and establishing production in the country.

India has the example of the extortionist prices that Pakistan has to pay under the product patent regime and this should remain in focus when charting a new patents regime under TRIPS.

■ CONCLUDED

INVESTIGATION: PART III

THE ASIAN AGE

21 FEB 2001

Census overlooks Bangla migrants

Archis Mohan
Kolkata, February 20

ILLEGAL IMMIGRATION from Bangladesh has allegedly been rampant since its independence in 1971. While this has affected West Bengal's economy the State Government has neither any data on the number of immigrants or any effective strategy to stop the flow. Even the Census department, currently involved in population enumeration across the State has received no specific brief on identifying the foreigners.

The census officials are categorical in stating that it is not part of their job to detect foreigners, whether Bangladeshi or others. "I have received no such instructions either from the State or the Central Government to detect the number of illegal migrants from Bangladesh," said director, census operations (West Bengal) Vikram Sen. The director added that to his knowledge the State Government has not issued any instructions to the administration to this effect.

The census questionnaire does have questions to find migration details. These include questions on the place of birth, last place of residence, reason for migration and period spent at the present residence. "These can at best be only indicators from which one can arrive at a rough estimate," Sen said.

In 1991 census, out of the State's total population of 6.80 crore, 31.41 lakh were born abroad of these 30.72 lakh in Bangladesh. In all 26.36 lakh had said their last residence was in Bangladesh, out of these 50 per cent had migrated after the country's liberation in 1971. From

1971 to 1991, migration was most in North 24 Parganas with 3.42 lakh migrants, followed by Nadia (2.01 lakh). Border districts of Jalpaiguri, West Dinajpur, Murshidabad and Malda had also witnessed substantial immigration.

The BJP puts a question mark on these figures and says actual figures are at least twice of this. "The Left, to further its vote bank, encouraged migration of Muslims. The census figures are much lower than actual figures as most immigrants never tell the truth. The migration is affecting the economy of the border districts as these immigrants are ready to work at much lower wages," said State BJP President Ashim Ghosh.

Recent Intelligence Bureau reports indicate that illegal immigration has been at ebb in the last few years, a fact even accepted by the BJP. "Last few years the flow of immigrants has indeed gone down but not because of any steps on the part of the Left Front Government or security agencies. It is because of the economic development in Bangladesh and decrease in unemployment," said Ghosh.

Sometime back even Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee had expressed concern over the illegal immigration. "His conceding that immigration is a threat to the State's economy vindicates our stand that steps should be taken to stop this," Ghosh said.

But with the border State's economy doing well, and the Left Front not overtly concerned with the problem, it seems only the BJP stands to lose one of its major ruling plank of the ruling coalition.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

21 FEB 2001

President outlines reforms road map

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 19

AS PART of its second-generation reforms and attempts to achieve 9 per cent economic growth, the Centre is seeking to open up more areas for foreign investments, remove sectoral caps and restore foreign investor confidence.

An indication of this was provided in President K.R. Narayanan's speech to both houses of Parliament on the first day of Budget session.

A major initiative concerns the lifting of the 74 per cent cap on foreign direct investment (FDI) in pharmaceuticals to encourage R&D in this highly specialised area.

This apart, the Centre is shortly to announce a new drug policy that could phase out pricing controls.

Also, the coal sector will be opened to foreign investment, ending the monopoly of state-owned behemoth Coal India Ltd (CIL). FDI is currently allowed only in captive coalmines assigned

PRESIDENTIAL INDICATORS

- 9% economic growth rate target set
- FDI in pharma to be 100% on automatic route
- New drug policy to phase out pricing controls
- Coal to be opened up for private investments
- International oil equity shopping spree to be norm
- Tech mission to chart out course for trained professionals in IT, pharma, biotech and other sunrise industries
- Aggressive divestment programme indicated
- Communications convergence, fiscal responsibility and electricity reforms bills on anvil



Graphic by VINEY

to specific power plants.

The economic agenda outlined in the President's address was in line with the 9 per cent growth projected by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and thrust on the Finance Ministry.

To blunt future international oil price shocks, the Centre has decided to pick up oil equity abroad. This will be in addition to its 20 per cent equity in Russia's proven oil fields, Sakhalin-1, the President said.

The continued emphasis on the

new economy areas such as Infotech, biotechnology and pharma, is evident from the Centre's plan to put in place institutional framework to develop trained manpower to realise the full potential in these areas. A national mission on technology education will shortly come into being under the chairmanship of HRD Minister Murali Manohar Joshi.

The Centre is to involve private companies and NRIs in the development of world class science and technology institutions.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 FEB 2001



THE ROAD MAP

WOMEN'S BILL



Evolve a consensus on the women's reservation Bill and pass it in the budget session

US RELATIONS



The steadily growing strength of India's interaction with the US forms an important new dimension of external relations. Committed to friendly and good neighbourly ties with China. Strengthen relations with all neighbours except Pakistan

GI L

2012

ECONOMIC GROWTH



9 per cent GDP growth targeted over the next 10 years to double per capita income and halve poverty

LABOUR



Labour laws to be amended without diluting commitment to worker welfare. Will implement programmes for training and retraining workers

AGRICULTURE



Subsidisation of farm inputs will be reduced. Instead, investment in farm infrastructure will be stepped up. Government will try to make removal of quantitative restrictions less painful for agriculture and industry

COAL MINING



Allow private coal mining

TERRORISM



Crackdown against terrorist outfits in Jammu and Kashmir will continue relentlessly. Government ready to talk to groups that forsake violence. Also willing to talk to Pakistan if it stops cross-border terrorism

QUAKE



The Gujarat quake and Orissa supercyclone have highlighted the need to expand and modernise disaster management capabilities. Rules governing construction and town planning must be revised. Stern action should be taken against violators

CONSTITUTION



Parliament should resolve to do its best to further the republican values enshrined in the Constitution. Government uncompromising in commitment to secularism

Graphic: PAU

THE TELEGRAPH

20 FEB 20

119-12 ✓
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2001

A DEADLY ADDICTION 12/2 ✓

ANY MOVE TO stub the cigarette out is to be welcomed. The Union Cabinet's decision to ban smoking in public places all over the country — it is already in force in some States — will help millions of those who have to suffer the intrusive puffs of smoke of millions of others who freely pollute the atmosphere with sheer inconsideration and indifference. What appears even more positive is the Government's determination to introduce a Bill in the Budget session to stop tobacco advertisements. This will also mean a firm "no" to cultural and sports sponsorships. Obviously, much work has gone into this for, the proposed curb will cover all tobacco products, not just cigarette. "Pan masala" and "gutka", for instance, have been wreaking havoc on people who chew these: it is beyond doubt that this habit causes cancer. A pathbreaking judgment of Justice Narayana Kurup in the Kerala High Court brought out the hazards of passive smoking and firmed up the legal basis for the ban.

What is imperative now is that these steps must be taken to their logical end. Most efforts in this country begin with hype and fanfare, but lose steam even before they reach midway. The restriction on smoking in New Delhi and Kerala, among some other regions, started with a bang, but ended soon after in a whimper. The first thing that strikes one as he or she flies into the capital city is the number of travellers having a puff, as the airport police remain oblivious of the nuisance and harm being created. Or, is it that nobody really cares? With a fifth of the world's four million tobacco-related deaths occurring in India year after year, such insensitivity is criminal. Even in Kerala, which boasts of high literacy — and hence, one would presume,

greater awareness — the prohibition lost much of its effectiveness in a seeming web of corruption and bribery. The poorly paid constable is more concerned with making an extra buck from an offender than the well-being of society.

The war on tobacco is, therefore, not going to be easy, and it calls for tremendous courage and, maybe unpopular decisions. A law that prevents tobacco companies from flaunting their products in the media can be effective, but only up to a point. Ultimately, who is to say "no" to one willing to spend money and buy a pack of cigarettes or "pan masala" or "gutka"? A sustained campaign must be carried out to end this evil, and it must start in the schools, where teachers should set aside a little class time to tell children how tobacco can ruin their lives, eventually killing them. Surveys have revealed that the habit usually forms in the teens. Celebrities can take a pledge not to endorse smoking: a play, "Dr. Muktha" (with Mrs. Jaya Bachchan in the lead role), held in Chennai the other evening showed a doctor with the poison stick. Worse, he encouraged someone much younger than him to give him company. Beyond all these, the Government has to grapple with the onerous problem of tobacco farmers. There are hundreds of thousands of families which rely on this crop, largely because it is not easily susceptible to pest attacks and is highly remunerative. Policy-makers must evolve ways of weaning these men away from tobacco; there are any number of other cash crops. Yes, if the demand for tobacco falls, the attraction to grow it will also fade. The answer, then, is education, education with a sincere feeling for health and joy.

THE HINDU

12 FEB 2001

THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 15, 2001

LOVE IN THE TIME OF CHOLER

157 SHIVA'S SOLDIERS? HARDLY. Just Bal Thackeray's self-styled policemen. The crazed culture cops of the Sena have demonstrated this truism once again. This time the object of their frenzied rage is the celebration on Valentine's Day — which derives its name from the saint who lived during the Roman empire and whose fame, according to one version of the legend, spread because of his martyrdom for love and romance. The Sena's stormtroopers have adopted familiar tactics of violence and intimidation — vandalising shops selling Valentine's Day bric-a-brac and forcing restaurants and amusement parks to cancel their celebrations. The so-called ideological justification for this thuggery is that Valentine's Day is not Hindu or Indian (totally missing the point that the two categories are not the same in the bargain) but a product of a "corrupting and immoral" Western culture. Such arguments have a familiar ring and, in essence, are essentially similar to those trotted out to defend the nasty and narrow-minded attacks on the film Fire or on college students who choose to wear jeans. In all such cases, those who want to promote a kind of cultural fascism masquerade as defenders of an imagined cultural identity. If they do not know this already, Mr. Bal Thackeray and his roughnecks must be told that it is neither Hindu nor Indian to threaten, harass, coerce and engage in random acts of violence. A nation's culture is a complex product of the fusion of various strands and cannot be monolithically determined by lawless men, who are untouched by liberal ideas and have no catholicity of outlook.

A few years ago, Valentine's Day passed off in this country without so much as a nod of recognition. It is only recently, thanks to those who saw a commercial possibility in promoting the Day among youth, that it has become some-

thing of an event. Even so, in the larger context, it remains a fringe happening — popular among a small section of urban youth, whose involvement is largely limited to the exchange of greeting cards and other affectionate bric-a-brac. It is hardly the kind of event, in either substance or in scale, that should send anyone into a paroxysm of rage about the country being invaded by an alien culture. Over the past couple of years, Valentine's Day has become a target for our self-styled cultural czars. Last year, Mr. Bal Thackeray vowed to have a ban clamped on Valentine's Day celebrations even as protesters spearheaded by the BJP's student wing conducted an intimidatory campaign against the festivities in Kanpur. Unfortunately, this kind of cultural policing appears to have taken root in India; the most dangerous aspect of this is the fact that, from time to time, the policing is done by the State. The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mr. Rajnath Singh's summary ban on fashion shows is a case in point. The attempt by the Union Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to ban the satellite channel Fashion TV is another. The I&B Minister, Ms. Sushma Swaraj, is a vocal critic of the channel and is currently trying to forge a consensus on its banning. Wouldn't it have been far more democratic if Ms. Swaraj and others registered their distaste for the channel by simply choosing not to watch it? The notion that Indian culture is so fragile that it could be destroyed by the sight of skimpily dressed women sashaying on a ramp is ridiculous. The culture police make two fundamental mistakes in their assessments of the threats of 'outside' influences. They underestimate the resilience of Indian culture on the one hand and they exaggerate the so-called threats to it on the other. Their attempts to convert an essentially tolerant nation into a Taliban-like society must be resisted.

THE HINDU

15 FEB 2001

Cooperation, better tool to check population

By Garimella Subramaniam

CHENNAI, FEB. 11. Ironically, the locus of the problem of the so-called population explosion in India appears to be really in politics and policy, though, in sheer numerical terms, the country's population has undeniably seen a steady increase since independence and the two per cent rate of growth is higher than that of China.

This is because a wide variety of factors which have contributed to substantial reductions in rates of fertility in some States — factors which are even otherwise intrinsically valuable — are noticeably absent in other five decades after independence.

The record of Kerala in bringing down fertility rates to below the 'replacement level' of 2.1 to 1.8, compared to the all-India rate of 3.7, influenced by the high level of female literacy in that State (86 per cent) than India as a whole (39 per cent), is well documented.

Equally well-known are the high rates of fertility coupled with low levels of women's education and participation in the labour force in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar and Rajasthan.

However, proposed solutions to the problem of population growth are not always informed by factors underlying the above contrasting scenario. Instead, coercive and authoritarian means of population control — often at enormous cost to women's agency and autonomy — have held great appeal at the highest levels of policy making.

One misinterpretation of the concern about rapid population growth relates to food supplies falling short of the requirements of an increasing population. The point is not so much that such fears for the future may not be legitimate, though, India, like other developing countries, is said to have been able to

keep the production of food above population growth in recent decades. What is dangerous is that worries about fall in food production should be taken to suggest coercive means of population control.

On the contrary, if the problem of rapid population growth were related to illiteracy, high rates of fertility, which in turn could be linked to high rates of infant mortality, the solutions we may contemplate are more likely to entail cooperation than coercion. This is borne out by the fact that coercive means of birth control are resorted to in some northern States

which rank low in terms of literacy and high rates of fertility. On the contrary, Kerala and Tamil Nadu which fare well in terms of fertility reduction and literacy have embraced the voluntary route to birth control. Moreover, the unpopularity of coercive methods among the people sometimes adversely affect emerging social norms in favour of smaller families.



लोकाभिमुख
PEOPLE ORIENTED

The figures thrown up by the census could not justify authoritarian means to curb the growth of population. On the contrary,

we would have to approach the data in a more comprehensive manner and look at the interlinkages between female literacy, participation in the labour force and decisions about fertility in different States. Returning accurate information on these indicators could in a significant way bring to light the magnitude and dimensions of the problem far more accurately.

There is good reason to believe that this has not happened in previous censuses because, a combination of gender bias, the sensitive and highly personal nature of fertility-related questions and needless apprehension about the census operation have had the adverse effect of information concerning female population not being returned accurately and adequately.

THE HINDU

1 FEB 20

SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2001

19 ✓ **THE CBI AND THE CAT** RD ✓

IT IS A matter of enormous irony that the appointment of the CBI Director, Mr. R. K. Raghavan, has been held unsustainable and quashed by a bench of the Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT). Mr. Raghavan is the first CBI Director whose appointment was decided not by political diktat but by a procedure based on a landmark Supreme Court judgment which was related to the Vineet Narain/Jain hawala case. In accordance with the directions of the Court, the CBI Director was selected from a shortlist finalised by a 'CBI Selection Board', which comprised the Central Vigilance Commissioner and the Union Home Secretary and the Union Personnel Secretary. So, how was the procedure 'flawed'? The Bangalore Bench of the CAT believes the infirmity lay in the Selection Board's failure to consider all senior police officers in the country (in the States and at the Centre) for the post of CBI Director. As against this, the Selection Board had considered only all those empanelled at the Centre in the rank of Director-General of Police as eligible for the job.

Three things need to be kept in mind here. First, there are pragmatic reasons, which stem from administrative convenience, for restricting the number of eligible police officers in a situation like this. Second, there are other bureaucratic parallels which may be held out as guidelines — for example, it is a tradition to choose the Cabinet Secretary from those Secretaries serving at the Centre. Finally, the CAT decision in no way reflects either on Mr. Raghavan's competence or his eligibility for the job as Director. The principal difference between the CAT and the Selection Board is over a technicality — namely, how a certain detail of the Supreme Court's directive should be interpreted.

ed. Even if the net of eligible police officers were stretched as the CAT desires, it is arguable that Mr. Raghavan would have deserved to become CBI Director anyway. When selected for the job, he was the senior-most police officer in the country with experience on the anti-corruption front — thus fulfilling the critical requirements stipulated by the Supreme Court for the job.

Before the CAT Bench, Mr. Dinakar had argued that Mr. Raghavan's appointment was flawed in terms of the Supreme Court ruling. Mr. Dinakar, who belongs to the same IPS batch as Mr. Raghavan but is junior in rank, may have reasons to feel vindicated by what has transpired. But it is important to remember that the CAT ruling does not in any way strengthen or buttress the Karnataka DGP's claim to superior merit; it says he should also have been considered. Neither does the ruling support Mr. Dinakar's allegation that Mr. Raghavan was appointed because of "political pressure". Despite his seniority, the bald fact is that Mr. Raghavan was not a frontrunner for the CBI post and may not have landed it but for a couple of wholly extraneous developments. With the Union Government having decided to appeal against the decision, the CAT ruling is academic in the sense that Mr. Raghavan's tenure as CBI Director will remain undisturbed until he retires in a couple of months. At the same time, the ruling has challenged the very manner in which the Union Government has interpreted the judicial directive on the appointment of a CBI Director. This matter requires to be clarified urgently and at the level of the Supreme Court, the very body which laid down the procedure for appointments to this important and sensitive post.

THE HINDU

10 FEB 2001

Tobacco Bill will go up in smoke, feels stock market

SUBHASHISH GUPTA
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Feb. 9. - Even as ITC Ltd announced yesterday that it is voluntarily withdrawing from all sports sponsorships following the Centre's move to prohibit cigarette companies from advertising their products and sponsoring sports events, corporate circles feel that such a legislation is totally impracticable in India.

The feeling of the stock market, the barometer of the corporate sector, is that the Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation) Bill 2000 is yet to be passed. Since a sizeable portion of India's rural population has tobacco farming as their livelihood, the Bill will face strong resistance from different lobbies in Parliament. It will not achieve its stated purpose of discouraging minors from

consuming tobacco products, observers say, adding that the prohibition of advertising will deprive tobacco consumers of their right to information which enables them to make an informed choice about the products they purchase.

Advertising pundits feel that it is part of established wisdom that in a mature product category such as cigarettes, advertising does not create new demand. The advertising of a product brand in a mature product enables only brand switching.

According to a tobacco industry analyst, tobacco consumption has dramatically surged in countries like France which had imposed restrictions on cigarette advertising. Cigarettes are the only form of tobacco consumption in these advanced countries.

The analyst said that between 1975 and 1987 the consumption of

ITC ANNOUNCEMENT A PLOY: WHO CONSULTANT

KOLKATA, Feb. 9. - The tobacco industry's decision to stop sponsoring sporting events should not be taken at face value, the state jail secretary and World Health Organisation consultant, Mr TK Das said today. This is just a ploy to create pressure on the government through the sports lobby, he said. The tobacco industry had never cooperated in framing anti-tobacco legislation anywhere in the world. It is no different in India.

The industry had ensured that the anti-tobacco Bill, drafted in 1994, remained on the backburner all these years. Mr Das had drafted the earlier Bill as joint secretary in the Union health ministry. - SNS

cigarettes in Finland went up by 11 per cent after the country had stopped all cigarette advertising in 1975.

On the share of tobacco in the company's total business, he said that this is not revealed for public knowledge. But the company was giving considerable attention to its wholly owned IT subsidiary, ITC Infotech India Ltd, the spokesperson added. It is one of the very few CMM (capability maturity model) level five software companies glob-

ally.

Speaking to **The Statesman**, the president of the Calcutta Stock Exchange, Mr Kamal Parekh, said that the broker fraternity has discounted any impact of the present developments on the share price of the company. There were initial hiccups but "we don't think that this will affect the profit level of the widely diversified company," Mr Parekh said. "ITC's turnover last year was Rs 8,000 crore."

The advertising companies will be affected temporarily. However, he was disappointed that Merrill Lynch had downgraded ITC even before the proposed Bill was passed. This would fuel speculation in the scrip and hurt the small investors, Mr Parekh said.

The ITC scrip, which was quoted at Rs 914 early January, fell to Rs 789 earlier this week. But yesterday, with ITC's announcement, the

scrip recovered to Rs 816.70. Today's slight reaction to Rs 812.80 was due to the Merrill Lynch downgrade.

"The menace of contraband cigarettes of the premium international brands of the foreign cigarette multinationals, which is growing at an alarming rate of 20 per cent per annum, actually makes a complete hash of the proposed tobacco law, because they are free to advertise in foreign TV channels that can be viewed in India" said a habitual smoker.

These contraband cigarettes today account for nearly seven per cent of the Indian market of 97 billion cigarettes per year.

The estimated revenue loss to the government exchequer as a result of this scourge of contraband cigarettes is placed at anywhere between Rs 1,000 crore and Rs 2,000 crore.

THE STATESMAN

10 FEB 2001

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 9, 2001

A GIGANTIC EXERCISE

INDIA'S 14TH DECENNIAL census — the 6th since independence and first in the new millennium — commencing on Friday is, in terms of the sheer scale and logistics of the operation, arguably matched perhaps only by the country's general elections. But even in terms of its long and short-term impact on the course of the democratisation process, the ocean of data generated by the population census must be no less critical, albeit an indirect input, than the periodic electoral exercise. As far as the current census goes, the cruel calamity that struck Gujarat has predictably cast its shadow on the enumeration process in the State, with the operations postponed in the districts of Kutch, Rajkot and Jamnagar and consequently the Census department is denied the sense of accomplishment of having carried out a country-wide enumeration after three decades. It may be recalled that census operations were suspended in Assam in 1981 and in Jammu and Kashmir in 1991.

This second phase of the census, focussed on gathering individual particulars about practically every single person present on Indian soil between February 9 and 28, would for the first time gather information on families engaged in cultivation and plantation. The data on age distribution, fertility, education, occupation and work participation will help to determine more or less precisely the demographic and socio-economic profiles of our society. But the single most noticeable feature of census 2001 is the truly empowering provision in the schedule requiring respondents to affix their signatures or thumb impressions on completing the questionnaire. This, in addition to the signatures of the enumerators and supervisors, should ensure maximum coverage of the population in a given locality and accuracy of information returned.

Both in terms of the questions included

and not included for the enumeration, the Census department has clinched decisively in favour of a broader perspective of social inclusiveness and accommodation rather than succumb to narrow and sectarian pressures. The enumeration of disabilities, for instance, in the five umbrella groups of hearing, seeing, speech, movement and mental for the very first time holds enormous promise of ascertaining the number of the disabled population in the country, an area where even the census officials themselves have in the past admitted to serious discrepancies. At another level, it is indeed a matter of immense relief that insofar as canvassing the question on caste, the Census department has not budged from the Constitutional mandate to enumerate the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SCs and STs) alone. At a time when caste as a vehicle of mobilisation has come to assume great preponderance across the political spectrum, the consequences of yielding to the demand to canvass backward classes are anybody's guess. The riposte that hostilities along caste lines have not reduced even in the absence of "potentially potent" data does not address the real danger of a likely abuse of the enumeration exercise to return false information with an eye on cornering benefits.

While the Census department has done commendable work in translating raw data into a vast treasure house of information in the form of thematic and specialised reports, considerable effort needs to be directed at ensuring that private agencies and the average man derive the fullest benefit out of this mammoth operation. That could become a reality only if the data processed is disseminated far more rapidly than it has been in previous censuses. The recourse to information technology in the current census will hopefully make some difference.

THE HINDU

39 FEB 2001

ITC stubs out sports sponsorship

OUR BUREAU

Feb. 8: Two days after the government said it would introduce a Bill to ban tobacco advertisements, the cigarettes-to-hotels conglomerate ITC sent shock waves through the world of sports when it announced that it would pull out of all forms of sports sponsorship from April 1.

"In a constructive spirit and to avoid any ongoing controversy, ITC has decided to voluntarily withdraw from all sponsorship of sporting activities irrespective of the legal position on the subject," said a statement from Virginia House, the headquarters of the Calcutta-based company.

ITC said it had already initiat-

ed action to withdraw from the long-term sponsorship arrangements it has with various sports.

Cricket is the biggest beneficiary of ITC funding — the company is the main sponsor of the Indian team. In golf, the country's highest prize-money tournament — the \$300,000 Indian Open — is sponsored by ITC. It used to sponsor horse racing but withdrew last year.

However, a Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) source said ITC's contract stipulates that if the sponsorship was stopped by legislation, the company was obliged to pay the regular fee till a new sponsor was found. The series with Australia is scheduled to begin on February 27 in Mumbai.

ITC gives the BCCI around Rs

35 lakh for each Test and Rs 32 lakh for each one-dayer. Sixty per cent of these amounts is given to the players by the board. ITC spends annually around Rs 13 crore on an average on the team assuming India plays six to eight Tests and 30 to 32 one-dayers a year.

ITC's withdrawal immediately stoked the interest of other big-ticket sponsors like Coke and Pepsi. Coke spokesman Irfan Khan said: "We are exploring the possibility of enhancing our sports sponsorship. It has always been associated with sports and young people. We are already sponsoring the cricket tournament in Sharjah."

Coke has been a big sponsor of cricket and was the official sponsor of the World Cup held in

Britain in 1999.

"Everything will, however, depend on the level of funding required to fill the breach created by the exit of the present sponsors and who bid for the rights. We will first have to see how much money we will have to stump up and what sort of mileage we can get from it," said Khan.

The Pepsi spokesman was more reticent. "It will all depend on my ad budget," he said.

Independent advertising consultant Arunabha Dasgupta said: "There are a lot of people ready to put up the cash in sports, which is a credible medium for advertisers."

ITC said it would also progressively scale down its cigarette advertising, pending the passage of the legislation. The company

spends about Rs 200 crore every year on advertisements through the media (print and television) and hoardings. Figures are difficult to come by, but industry estimates put the level of its sports-related ads and sponsorships at about Rs 100 crore. It spends another Rs 200 crore on a mix of gifts and commissions to dealers and consumers.

ITC hoped that today's action would create the right climate for a constructive dialogue that will help develop appropriate content, rules and regulations to make the intended legislation equitable and implementable.

Ad industry blues

Today's decision will shake the foundations of the advertising in-

dustry in Calcutta, which has been hurt by the flight of companies to the other regions and has been heavily dependent on ITC.

The cigarette giant uses three top-flight ad agencies — Hindustan Thomson Associates, Bates and Lintas — for its advertising campaign. Lintas is likely to be the worst hit, industry sources said. Lintas handles the media buying for ITC through its subsidiary Interactive Media; it also handles the account for cigarette brands like India Kings, Berkeley and Wills Sport apparel.

HTA is the creative agency for the ads featuring brands like Classic, Wills Flake and Bristol. Bates handles the accounts for 555, Benson & Hedges and Gold Flake.

ITC GAMES PACK

- Wills Trophy cricket team is sponsored by Wills Sport
- Gold Flake Open ATP meet
- Gold Flake World Doubles
- Wills Golf Circuit
- Classic Indian Open
- Bristol Rovers Cup
- Gold Flake has been associated with billiards

THE TELEGRAPH

9 FEB 2001

HINDUJAS WHY THE BILLIONAIRE BROTHERS CAN'T AFFORD TO ANNOY THE INDIAN STATE

Mapping the Indian Empire

With business concerns of over Rs 10,000 crore and spread across sectors varying from investment and banking to transport and power, the Hinduja family has to tread with caution in their battle over Bofors. VRINDA GOPINATH reports

THE business empire in India of the famously secretive Hinduja brothers is so vast — and spread out — that it evades being under wraps. What is, however, surprising is the brothers, who made a quiet homecoming only in 1987, have risen to control a conglomerate of companies in sectors as diverse as transport, chemicals, power, banking and finance and information technology worth at least Rs 10,000 crore:

The founder of the Hinduja Group, Parmanand Deepchand Hinduja (1901-1971) came to Mumbai from Shikapur, in Sind, in 1914, to carry on the family trade of commodities and banking, and established the group's first overseas branch in Iran, in 1919. Until 1979, the group's main operations were based in Iran, from where they moved on to Europe and returned to Mumbai which became the headquarters of its India operations.

The group re-entered India in 1987, when it gained controlling interest in the leading commercial vehicle-manufacturing company, Ashok Leyland, now its flagship



company in India. This acquisition came when the Hindujas bought the Leyland Group in Britain in association with IVECO (a fully-owned subsidiary of FIAT SpA of Italy). A recognised export house since 1978 and trading house since 1992, Ashok Leyland exports to

over 40 countries in Asia, Middle East, Africa and South America.

But it is the Ashok Leylands Projects Services Ltd (ALPS) which spearheads project development activities for the group in India. ALPS also provides professional services to help interna-

tional companies interested in projects in India by undertaking pre-investment feasibility studies, appraisals, development of joint ventures, company formation, and also provides negotiated equity on behalf of the Hinduja Group as commitment to the sus-

tained results of its services. This has included power generation, airport construction, air cargo transportation, development of roads and associated infrastructure. ALPS has already been shortlisted for the second round of talks for the disinvestment of Air India and Indian Airlines and is a strong contender for the privatisation bid.

It was not long before the Hinduja family moved into the crucial power sector and it was sooner than later that the brothers were involved in yet another unsavoury controversy, over the business advice given to them by the solicitor-general of India, Soli Sorabjee. The Hinduja National Power Corporation Ltd won the bid for one of the eight fast-track power projects selected by the Government of India.

The 1,040 MW coal-based thermal power station based in Vishakhapatnam, in Andhra Pradesh, is estimated to cost \$1.37 billion and will operate on a build-own-operate (BOO) basis. The group has also signed an MOU to establish a separate joint venture to lease/purchase/refurbish/operate coal-based and gas-based thermal power stations and hydel power stations in India.

Gulf Oil India was set up in 1993 to enter the oil sector and the company has already set up a lube oil plant at Silvassa, while a new company, Gulf Carex India Ltd, makes and markets a range of DIY vehicle maintenance products. The Group has also signed

an MOU with the Orissa Government for setting up a major Lube Base Oil Refinery.

The Hinduja family entered the banking and finance sector with Indusind, a broad-based economic platform to mobilise resources of overseas and resident Indian businessmen and professionals. Its first venture in the financial securities industry was the launch of the first commercial private bank called Indusind Bank in 1994.

But it is Ashok Leyland Finance Ltd (ALFL) which is the group's leading leasing, financing and hire purchase company with sales worth over Rs 230 crore. The Hinduja Finance Corporation Ltd (HFCL), which commenced its operations in 1994-95, has diversified in a major way into telecom, info technology and the media with subsidiaries like In2cable.com and IndusInd Media and Communications (IMC) capable of providing not only cable television but services like internet, telephony, data transfer, teleshopping and the like. Intel USA has taken a 3.3 per cent equity stake in IMC for \$49.23 million, in May 2000, giving the company a benchmark valuation of \$1.5 billion (Rs 6,800 crore).

A pet project of the Hindujas is the Hyderabad-based IDL Industries Ltd involved in the manufacture, supply and export of 'industrial' explosives and detonators. IDL has also entered the field of floriculture and a variety of roses are being grown for export to Europe and other conti-

All is not lost, say tobacco firms 5-8 Mixed response to Bill

ALOKE TIKKU
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 7. - Smokers and cigarette manufacturers should keep their fingers crossed. The manufacturers may have lost the battle, not the war.

The government has decided to ban smoking in public places but not made up its mind on what a public place means. And the definition will make all the difference.

Or how to achieve the impossible task of checking surrogate advertising.

The Union parliamentary affairs, Mr Pramod Mahajan, does not think the chances of the government succeeding on this front are too bright.

Advertising agencies and cigarette manufacturers, having recovered from the blow dealt by yesterday's announcement of the ban, said they may do just fine. It would just mean that they would have to work harder. "There will be an alternative. There is one for everything. We just have to look for one," an official with a leading advertising agency said.

He was quick to point to the fate on the ban on advertising by liquor companies. "Has it succeeded," he asked. It has not.

Leading liquor brands continue to advertise, notwithstanding how strongly the information and broadcasting minister, Mrs Sushma Swaraj, feels the need to do something to stop them.

Quite unlike the industry's first reaction - of the ban curbing advertising expenditure by cigarette manufacturers - an official of a major cigarette company suggested the reverse might happen for established brands. "Companies might need to spend more on advertising if they are not allowed direct advertising," he said. He also suggested that companies would have to give greater emphasis on brand-pushing at the retail level, specially when launching new brands.

"A lot depends on what the Bill says exactly. As of now, the situation is very fluid... It is yet to be discussed in Parliament," an official, working in the marketing department of a cigarette company, said, suggesting the companies still had time to lobby.

A senior health ministry official said that the government was determined not to buckle under pressure from the tobacco lobby. "The government could have stopped at banning smoking in public places. But it is going ahead to even stip-

ulate that the statutory warning should be of the same size as the largest panel and in two languages is an indication of the government's determination to protect the health of the citizens," he said. "This decision will force the industry to change the entire design of the cigarette packet," he added.

The government, however, is yet to decide whether it should define "public places". And this is one area on which the industry may "work on". The health ministry official said the term will be defined in the notification which will follow once the Bill is passed by the Parliament.

In Kerala, a public place is defined to include roads, bus-stops and other open spaces if there are people around. That means, you cannot even smoke while window-shopping or waiting for your bus without running the risk of getting hauled up by a police officer.

The Delhi Prohibition of Smoking and Non-Smokers Health Protection Act, 1996, - which went up in smoke - includes public offices, cinema halls, restaurants, court buildings, hospital buildings, libraries and the like which are visited by general public but excludes "any open space" as a public place.

SIMI KAMBOJ & ABANTIKA GHOSH
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Feb. 7. - The Centre's plans to ban the use and sale of tobacco-products within 100 meters of educational institutions and hospitals might have pleased the anti-smoking lobby. But, for the neighbourhood *panwala* this spells bad news.

"Why does the government not ban the companies manufacturing these," a pan and cigarette seller opposite the Calcutta Medical College and Hospital said and added: "In that case, they should also ban the liquor shops doing brisk business in the area."

"What shall we do? There are some eight cigarette shops in the immediate vicinity of Goenka College. If people are forced to close down their business they will take to crime", said Mr Mohan Lal Sharma, who has been running a cigarette shop in front

of Goenka College for the last 15 years.

Moreover, getting a space to set up a shop is not easy in Kolkata, shopkeepers said. In south Calcutta as well as in the business districts, a two feet by three feet space in someone's verandah can cost as much as Rs 2 lakh, an amount few shopkeepers can afford to cough up. In view of the proposed ban, shifting their shops away from educational institutions and hospitals, appears to be an impossible proposition.

Most of the pan-bidi shop owners told **The Statesman** that the government should give up its hypocritical attitude. It should not collect tax from these companies either, they said.

Or else, they demand that they be given an alternative means of livelihood.

Meanwhile, the proposed Tobacco Products Bill 2000 has invited mixed reactions from

smokers in the city.

Mr T Mitra, an engineer in his forties, described it as a fad against smokers. He felt that compared to the carbon monoxide that vehicles here belch out, hazards posed to passive smokers is miniscule.

Although 95 per cent of cancer patients are said to have their lungs afflicted, Mr Mitra is not very convinced about availability of statistics regarding what percentage of the total population has lung cancer.

In contrast, Mr Manas Pramanik, a student was emphatic in his support for the bill. He said it was long overdue.

Mrs S Bhattacharya, a young executive, said: "Where do I smoke? Only in my bedroom. Those who do not want to be exposed to passive smoking can leave the room." Her husband, however, retorted: "But what happens to the person inside the house?"

Madhav Rao disinherited from Scindia property

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Feb. 7. - The late Rajmata Vajayaraje Scindia of Gwalior did what was generally apprehended. She has disinherited her only son and the senior Congress leader, Mr Madhav Rao Scindia, from the property owned by the Scindia family.

Her will was read out today by her secretary, Mr Sardar Angre, at a crowded press conference. She died on February 7. The will says "I have not disinherited him (Madhav Rao) though my bequest may show I have done it."

The will is likely to have a ripple effect on Mr Scindia as it contains a severe indictment of his role. The will appointed Mr Sambhaji Rao C Angre and Mr S Gurumurthy (of the Swadeshi Jagran Manch) as joint executors and authorised them to take charge of all her estate including properties, assets, heirlooms, works of art, jewellery, furnishings, any rights in or over any unpartitioned property.

She defended her action in the will saying that "...the hard and true fact is that he (Mr Scindia) has disentitled himself and rendered himself unfit even to the right to cremate his mother's dead body and do the last rites which is the religious duty of every son."

The will continues, "Any mother can imagine how painful and agonising it is to disown her only son. But the way my son disowned all that the Scindias stood for in their long struggle in the country's defence left me with no option but to try and forget that I ever had a son."

To her three daughters - Union minister of state, Mrs Vasundhara, Mrs Usha and Mrs Yashodhara - and their progeny, the Late Rajmata has bequeathed the legal rights to her jewellery. However, the will says that this should be "kept with the collector in the manner and terms as that of the Gaekwad royal family of Baroda." The will is likely to cheer Dr JK Jain of Jain TV. It says that Dr Jain of Surya Fame, 'who has his Jain TV studios in the complex, will continue in the present position.' There was a controversy over the presence of the Jain TV's office in the sprawling Scindia villa in New Delhi.

The Jai Vilas Palace in Gwalior, which has been made part of a trust, along with Shanti Niketan, another building in the palace compound, should be converted into an educational centre.

THE STATESMAN

Rajmata's last testament portrays a palace at war with itself

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 7: Thirteen days after her death, Vijayaraje Scindia's embittered relationship with her son Madhavrao burst out into the open with the dramatic disclosure of her last will and testament.

Describing Madhavrao as the "most painful part of my life" in the will written in her own hand, the Rajmata of Gwalior said: "I have not disinherited him though my bequest may show I have done it. But the hard and true fact is that he has disenthralled himself and rendered himself unfit even to the right to cremate his mother's dead body and do the last rites (*kriyas*), which is the religious duty of every son."

Copies of the 12-page will, drawn up on September 20, 1985, were given to the press by her private secretary and four-decade-long confidant Sardar S.C.

Angre who is believed to be the root cause of the acrimony between mother and son.

Angre, a cousin of the Rajmata's husband, was instrumental in crafting her political career as well as the rise of the Jan Sangh and, later, the BJP in Madhya Pradesh. He served a term in the Rajya Sabha.

The copies circulated had the names of two witnesses, Prema Vasudevan and A. Janakiraman. Angre and swadeshi ideologue S. Gurumurthy were mentioned as executors. The statement said copies of the will had been sent in a sealed envelope to her solicitors in London, Lovell, White and King, and two others.

Reacting on behalf of the Scindias, Madhavrao's counsel, Abhishek Singhvi said: "It is an hour of grief for the family and we decline to comment."

Madhavrao had started his political career in the Jan Sangh but quit the

party after his estrangement with his mother. He joined the Congress after the Emergency.

"Any mother can imagine how painful and agonising it is to disown her only son — but the way my son disowned all that the Scindias stood for in their long struggle in defence of the country left me with no option but to try and forget that I ever had a son," Vijayaraje said.

"He just did not stop with merely surrendering to his political masters, but actually became their tool in order to harass me and my supporters. He foisted by his power and money false criminal



Sardar Angre and Madhavrao Scindia

cases on my loyal friends and relations merely because they were loyal to me, locked me out of my own house, got my private living apartments raided by the help of the police and his own staff in my absence under the allegation of theft, with the sole objective of humiliating me, his mother," she said.

Madhavrao had lit the pyre when the Rajmata was cremated in Gwalior. When questioned, Sardar Angre said: "This will was not in my hands. It came after the cremation. But I will carry out the rest of the rituals. In any case, the son

received from Sardar S.C. Angre in my public life, as a person I am greatly indebted to him for his unquestioned loyalty to me and to my family at all critical and testing times and the ease and smile with which he suffered all insinuations and hostilities of my own son who (after aid to hit me although willing to) made him and his family special target and used all his official and muscle power to harass and persecute this most loyal man of the Scindia Royalty," she said.

In contrast to the ill-will towards Madhavrao, the Rajmata appeared to be especially fond of former BJP MP and JAIN TV owner J.K. Jain. "He and his wife Ragini have always been a great pillar of strength to me in any hour of distress. They have been almost members of my family."

Her daughters merit a fleeting mention in the Rajmata's will and inherit only part of her jewellery. Unlike Madhavrao, Vasundhara and Yashodhara were of the same political persuasion as their mother.

cremating hardly makes a difference. Every body was there at the cremation." She had nominated Sardar Ranoji Rao Shinde or any of his brothers to perform the last rites. Shinde was a member of the Gwalior *gharana's* "stock" family, which meant he was of "identical blue blood".

Vijayaraje appears to have never forgiven Madhavrao for being hostile to Angre, on whom she lavished praise apart from bequeathing two stud farms at Jodhpur. She nominated him as a trustee of the Rajmata Vijayaraje Scindia Trust which also includes her daughters Usha Raje, Vasundhara Raje and Yashodhara Raje, S. Gurumurthy, the late N.K. Shejwalkar, a former Lok Sabha MP from Madhya Pradesh, and Appa Ghatate, a close friend of Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee.

"Apart from the unalloyed support I received from Sardar S.C. Angre in my public life, as a person I am greatly indebted to him for his unquestioned loyalty to me and to my family at all critical and testing times and the ease and smile with which he suffered all insinuations and hostilities of my own son who (after aid to hit me although willing to) made him and his family special target and used all his official and muscle power to harass and persecute this most loyal man of the Scindia Royalty," she said.

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LEGRAP

FEB 2001

Bill battles tobacco terror

BY DIPTOSH MAJUMDAR AND PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

Feb. 6: Dr Sharad Vaidya spent a lifetime fighting against tobacco. He died last November while returning from the Chicago Summit against tobacco use.

Three months after his death, the cancer specialist's crusade won a pathbreaking victory today with the Cabinet approving the draft of a Bill which contains several prohibitory clauses on sale and use of tobacco products.

The Bill proposes to ban smoking in public places. It will also outlaw "sponsoring of sports and cultural events by cigarette and other tobacco product companies", once ratified by Parliament during the budget session.

Piloted by the health ministry, the proposal was adopted unanimously at this morning's Cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee. Called the Tobacco Products (Prohibition of Advertisement and Regulation) Bill (See chart), it will replace the existing Cigarettes (Regulation of Production, Supply and Distribution) Act, 1975.

Cabinet spokesman Pramod Mahajan said the most important aim of the Bill was to prevent passive smoking. The government also said the law would "help to discourage adolescents from consuming tobacco products".

Such a ban exists only in three states. Delhi and Goa have enacted such regulations and a high court judgment in Kerala prevents smoking in public places.

The Bill has more teeth than the previous Act. However, the Centre does not feel that the new law will have immediate impact. "It will certainly not bring down smoking, only help arrest the

BANNED

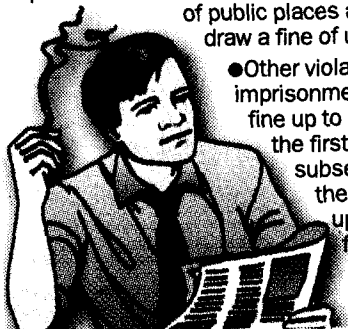
- Smoking in public places
- Advertisement of tobacco products
- Sale of tobacco products to those below 18 years of age
- Sponsoring of sporting and cultural events by cigarette and tobacco product companies

CODE OF CONDUCT

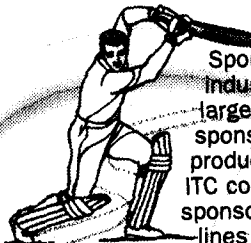
- Warnings on packages should be of same size as that of the largest panel on the package
- Warnings should be in English and in Indian languages
- Nicotine and tar content should be mentioned

PUNISHMENT

- Smoking in public places, sale of tobacco products within 100 metres of public places and sale to minors to draw a fine of up to Rs 100
- Other violations to invite imprisonment up to three years, fine up to Rs 1 lakh or both for the first conviction. For subsequent convictions, there will be jail term up to three years with fine, which may extend to Rs 2 lakh



WILL THE LAW AFFECT SPORT AND SHOWBIZ?



Sports sponsorship by tobacco companies is big business; industry estimates put it at around Rs 100 crore. ITC is the largest player; over the years it has brought its sports sponsorship under its umbrella Wills brand which covers products as diverse as cigarettes, apparel and sports goods. ITC could still get round the ban on advertisement and sports sponsorship by claiming that the Wills brand promotes other lines of products. However, there could be pressure on single-product companies like gutka maker Manikchand which recently promoted a media group's film awards.

PUBLIC PLACE

The law says a place becomes public when people have access to it as a right. But a road is not a public place - it is an open space.

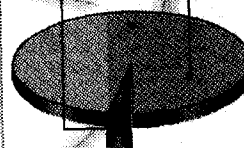
Public places include:

- Hospital
- Stadium
- Restaurant*
- Public park
- Public office
- Airport, rail station
- Auditorium

*Some restaurants have separate sections for smokers and non-smokers

THE AD PIE

Rupees crore per year	
Tobacco ad share	Ad industry total turnover
250	7,500



Tobacco companies also spend around Rs 200 crore a year on event promotions and gifts to dealers as well as customers, according to industry estimates

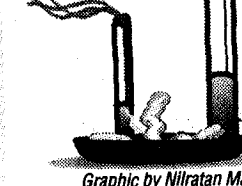
BENEFIT & COST

Expenses on medical care for tobacco-related ailments

Rs 13,517 cr

Excise from tobacco products projected this year

Rs 5,552 cr



Graphic by Nilratan Maity

growth in the number of smokers. In Thailand, where they have had sterner anti-smoking strictures for long, the number of smokers has increased marginally," a health official said.

The government does not expect its excise earnings from the sale of cigarettes, which stand at about Rs 5,550 crore a year, to fall dramatically. But in the years to come, the new law may have an adverse impact on the growth rate of tobacco firms. A health ministry spokesman said they expected the same to happen in respect of bidis, revenue from which is Rs 300 crore annually.

Of the estimated three million deaths in the world from tobacco-related ailments, nearly one-third occur in India. "Sharad spotted over 25 years ago the major reason behind chest and oral cancers was tobacco," said Nirmala, his wife and an anti-tobacco activist.

Tobacco giant ITC refused to comment on the ban. A company spokesman said it would be unfair to make a statement without studying the proposal in detail.

The ban, however, is set to have a major impact on ad agencies and sports organisations, the tobacco industry being one of the largest ad-spenders. Brand managers feel

the tobacco lobby will try to block the implementation of the law. "If the government is serious, it should ban common branding," Sushil Pandit of The Hive said.

Common branding is a cover for promoting a banned product. ITC, for instance, has a line of leisurewear called Wills, also a well-known cigarette brand.

Sports officials fear losing crucial revenue. "If the Centre brings in the legislation we have no option but to look for alternative avenues," a senior Board of Control for Cricket in India official said.

The industry appeared disgruntled. Assocham secretary

general Jayant Bhuyian said: "It appears that industry has not been consulted in drawing up a meaningful campaign to project the dangers of tobacco."

Only the ban on cigarettes can be enforced by the Centre, since of all tobacco products, only cigarettes are on the concurrent list. For bidi and gutkha, the states have both legislative and enforcement rights.

■ See Metro

Census work begins on Feb. 9

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, FEB. 6. The new millennium's first major census will begin on Feb. 9 and continue till Feb. 28. A revisional round will be conducted from March 1 to March 5.

Mr. C. Chandramouli, Director of Census Operations, said the census in the State was aimed to cover every person from a new born infant to the oldest person alive, irrespective of age, sex, religion, or socio-economic status.

About 1.20 lakh staff would be pressed into service, who would visit every household across the State with questionnaire, he told reporters here today.

Every census enumerator would cover a population of 650 in urban areas and 750 in rural areas, by visiting every house in his/her block. The enumeration of houseless persons would be carried out on the night of Feb. 28 when enumerators would be going around their areas to canvass the schedule from houseless people.



**लोकाभिमुख
PEOPLE ORIENTED**

To provide for changes on account of births or deaths after the enumeration, a revision round would be conducted for five days from March 1. For the first time provision had been made for people to scrutinise the filled-in schedule and affix their signature.

A comprehensive socio-cultural and demographic profile of the disabled would also be collected

in the census. Disabilities, he said, had been classified into five broad categories - sight, speech, hearing, movement and mental health. Proper training had been given to enumerators in getting information regarding disabled persons with the help of voluntary organisations.

Stating that it was not just a head-count of people, he said the purpose was to collect a whole range of information on the social, cultural and economic background of the people besides their mobility profile over the last ten years.

The enumeration, he said, would be crucial in forming the basis of future planning and in providing basic minimum services to the people. All information collected in the operation would be kept confidential under the Census Act 1948.

Mr. Chandramouli appealed to people to participate in the process freely and provide correct information to the enumerators.

THE HINDU

- 7 FEB 2001

Smoking in public to be curbed

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 6. The Union Cabinet today decided to curb smoking in public places and also gave its approval to ban advertisements of all tobacco products.

A comprehensive legislation in this regard, which would be introduced during the ensuing Budget session of Parliament, would also seek to ban sale of tobacco products to minors under the age of 18, and ban sponsorship of sports and cultural events by cigarette and other tobacco-product companies.

In other words, tobacco companies will no longer be able to use the excitement of cricket and other sports to entice new converts to the smokers corner.

Announcing the decision, the

Union Minister and Cabinet spokesperson, Mr. Pramod Mahajan, said the proposed legislation would specifically provide that no person engaged in tobacco-product related activity would advertise and no person having control over media would advertise tobacco products.

In addition, it would ensure that warnings on the package would be of the same size as that of the largest panel of the package, with the language of the warning in both English and the local language of the territory where it was sold.

While "minor offences" like smoking in public places and sale to minors would attract a fine up to Rs. 100, for other convictions, the punishment proposed was imprisonment

up to three years and fine up to Rs. 1 lakh or both for the first conviction and up to three years' imprisonment and fine of up to Rs. 2 lakhs for second and subsequent conviction.

Mr. Mahajan said it was estimated that India accounted for one-third of the three million deaths which occurred around the world every year due to tobacco-related ailments. Since presently only cigarette came under the Central list, the legislation would have all-India coverage only with respect to it. For other tobacco products, it would be applicable to the Union Territories and four States — Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Goa, which have passed resolutions in their legislatures seeking such a law, he added.

THE HINDU

- 7 FEB 2001

Netaji died of crash injuries in 1945'

SP 29/1
PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

LONDON, Jan. 28. — The controversy over Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's death seems to have "ended". A Japanese doctor who attended on him has certified that Netaji died on 18 August 1945, a few hours after being injured in a plane crash.

Dr Taneyoshi Yoshimi, captain (medical) of the Imperial Japanese Army, was interviewed by British Intelligence in Hong Kong after the Japanese surrender. A transcript of the interview was acquired from the British Public Records Office in London as a declassified document.

Dr Yoshimi, who now lives in north Japan, said Netaji died of "extensive burns and shock" despite best medical treatment.

"In August 1945, I was the senior officer at Nanmon military hospital, Taihoku, Formosa. Around 5 p.m. on 18 August, a truck with several men wounded in a plane crash drove up... Two of them were Indians, and the rest Japanese".

"One of the Japanese, a staff officer with the rank of Lt Col...informed me that one of the Indians, pointing him out, was Chandra Bose and that I was to give him the very best of treatment," Dr Yoshimi said.

"...I cleaned his injuries...dressed them. He was suffering from extensive burns all over his body, the most serious were on his head, chest and thighs. There was very little left on his head in the way of hair or other identification marks," he said.

After four hours, "I asked whether there was any statement, will, or such matter he wished to make. Bose answered 'nothing'. He seemed to be sinking into unconsciousness. Around 11 p.m. he died."

THE STATESMAN

29 JAN 2001

H10 12

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27, 2001

VALID CONCERN

27/1

THE PRESIDENT, MR. K. R. Narayanan, has in his customary Republic Day-eve national broadcast spoken out with characteristic candour against certain structural and *prima facie* regressive changes mooted — and being emphatically canvassed — in the basically sound system of parliamentary democracy put in place by the founding fathers of the Indian Constitution 50 years ago. In strongly disapproving of suggestions to reverse the salutary principle of universal adult suffrage and to go for a scheme of indirect elections — the obvious reference is to the 'consultation papers' released recently by the Constitution review panel — Mr. Narayanan has only reiterated his conviction, widely shared, that the so-called weaknesses and shortcomings of the Constitution, cited by the pro-review camp, have little to do with the system and whatever correctives needed really lie elsewhere — in the way it is worked by those charged with that responsibility and in the functioning of the auxiliary institutional and political subsystems. Telling indeed is the evocative parallel he drew between the suggested changes and the "guided democracy" tried in Pakistan by Field Marshal Ayub Khan, and the irony he pinpointed in invoking the name of Mahatma Gandhi to imbibe "shades of the political ideas" of that military dictator. In fact, he had struck a note of caution this time last year against any tinkering with the Constitution in the name of a 'review'. Now, in the context of the 'papers' put up by the review commission for a public debate, he has apparently felt constrained to voice his concerns in specific areas. Indeed, Mr. Narayanan put the 'universal adult suffrage' issue in perspective when he said it was "an article of faith" with the framers of the Constitution and that their decision to introduce it "in one go" was a revolutionary one. The negative aspects such as pervasive illiteracy notwithstanding, India's vast electorate has acknowledgedly shown a remarkable maturity in exercising its franchise, barring perhaps a few

exceptions. The real problem is that the voter is increasingly left with a choice of the 'devil and the deep blue sea' variety.

No less striking is the President's perceptive observation about the Constitution-framers' deliberate preference for 'responsibility', vis-a-vis 'stability', as the defining principle of the parliamentary system of democratic governance. Although made in a somewhat different context, his remark juxtaposing the two factors cannot but be seen as a denouncement of the 'stability' notion that the ruling establishment at the Centre has been rooting for through fixity of tenure for the Lok Sabha (and State Assemblies) and what is called a 'constructive vote of no-confidence' against an incumbent Government. Only the other day, at the golden jubilee function of the Election Commission, the Prime Minister, Mr. Atal Behari Vajpayee, had reiterated that point. Whether the President should have gone public with his dissent the way he did, suggesting an open confrontation and rift between him and his Council of Ministers, is certainly debatable but not the concerns that he has addressed. A fixity of term, for instance, will deny an incumbent regime the eminently sound democratic option of seeking a fresh mandate for a specific and legitimate cause, apart from spawning malpractices and pernicious trends that will render it a case of 'remedy being worse than the disease'. Known as much for his commitment to sustainable development as for his impatience with injustice to socially weaker sections, the President has not failed to press for due representation for women in legislatures or to drive home the point that the tribal population, likely to be displaced by huge irrigation or other projects, should be taken into "confidence" on the beneficial aspects of those schemes and, more importantly, programmes for rehabilitation and resettlement drawn up in consultation with the families concerned and executed in all sincerity.

THE

27 JAN 2001

The Kumbh

By Rajeev Dhavan

Fundamentalist politics has found an uneasy niche in the celebration of the Kumbh. This does a disservice both to the Kumbh and Indian secularism.

110-12
26/1

THE KUMBH is an event of staggering proportions. By the end of February, it is estimated some five crore people will have visited the Sangam at Allahabad. The six weeks of the Kumbh will generate a local economy of some Rs. 500 crores. To this can be added the cost of externalities including sums drawn from the public exchequer. The event has drawn a bewildering variety of people, including a young woman from Latin America plastered only with mud praying to the sun and a revered Japanese woman, Ms. Kiko Aikawa, who buried herself in the sand for several days. To the pomp, ceremony and colour exhibited by sants and sadhus, nagas and musicians can be added the quiet prayer of ordinary people uninhibited by caste prohibitions. Congregated on the banks of the Ganga and the Yamuna is a variety that speaks respectfully of the diversity of the Hindu faith to permit people to celebrate their faith in their own way. The Kumbh recurs every 12 years. In the 1950s, there was a stampede in which people were injured and died. The Kumbh of the 1960s was uneventful but impressive. From the 1980s, a tinge of politics has premeated the Kumbh. This time, the occasion of the Kumbh has been used to give support to the Babri Masjid controversy and to renaming Allahabad as Prayag. These are both political controversies. The Kumbh transcends centuries. It should not be permitted to be entrapped in the petty politics of our times.

An event of this proportion is a challenge to Indian secularism. What is the role of the state in relation to public events of a religiously celebratory nature? This is where Indian secularism is vastly different from American or any other kind of secularism. Secularism concerns itself with guaranteeing (a) freedom of thought, belief and worship, and (b) ensuring that the state maintains a neutrality towards all faiths. The first limb of Indian secularism has been interpreted in an expansive way to cover all kinds of practices and forms of worship. The foundation of this was laid in Justice B. K. Mukherjea's judgment in the celebrated Srirur Math case (1954) just before the

Kumbh of the 1950s. The Supreme Court devised an engaging formula that all "essential" practices and forms of worship will be especially protected because they go to the core of the faith. Unfortunately, this 'essential practice' test was deliberately misunderstood by several judgments by Justice Gajendragadkar in the Durgah Committee and Nathwara Temple cases (1962-63) so that non-essential practice even though part of the faith, received virtually no protection at all. This has materially affected freedom of religion. Thus, in the Babri Masjid case (1995) doubt was cast on whether prayer in a mosque was essential to Islam. Since

it was left to the Court to determine what an essential practice was, the Court

LAW AND SOCIETY

often determined whatever it wanted. Thus, the Supreme Court told the Anand Margis that the 'tandava' dance was not part of their essential practice. It took a brave and courageous decision by Justice Ruma Pal (then, a Calcutta judge) to demonstrate that the Supreme Court had been imperfect in its approach. Courts cannot redefine religious practices out of existence. However, courts are empowered to determine that some practices are not in conformity with the public interest. This is precisely what was eventually done in the Anand Margi case.

But, it is the second limb of secularism which requires neutrality that is at the core of many contemporary controversies. If 'strict neutrality' were followed, the state could not be associated with any aspect of the celebration and functioning of any faith. Thus, in America, such a strict view of neutrality has resulted in various municipal authorities refusing to fund, construct or permit the construction of a Christmas tree in the town square. This seems a contrast to the evangelical tone of President Bush's inauguration. But, what is the state's role in respect of religious institutions and mega events such as the Kumbh? If strict neu-

trality were followed, the role of the state would be more than a policing role. Eminent jurists have argued that the state cannot spend any funds for any religious event or institution. Hindu fundamentalists sometimes criticise the Union Government for providing facilitative support for Muslims to go to Mecca for the Haj. When the 2500th anniversary of Lord Mahavira was celebrated by the Union Government, a writ petition was filed by one section of the Jains that the whole exercise was religiously improper. Mr. Justice Deshpande of the Delhi High Court avoided the issue by declaring that the celebration was for all Indians not just the

Jains. This was not a satisfactory explanation. Expenditure spent for the

upkeep and restoration of temples has

been unsuccessfully challenged in courts.

But, on what basis is state financial support given for religious institutions and events? To begin with, there is a misconception that the Constitution prohibits its funds being spent for religious purposes. This is not so. The Constitutional restraint is that no specific taxes can be raised for religion. There is no restraint on expenditure — whether to facilitate the Haj, support for institutions or, perforce, events such as the Kumbh. This is of signal importance to Indian secularism and why it is different from secular ideologies evolved elsewhere in the world. Instead of following a strategy of strict neutrality, Indian secularism follows an approach of a participatory benign neutrality. The State celebrates the diversity of India without being associated with any particular faith. It is on this basis that support is given to the enclave of monuments and infrastructure at Bodh Gaya in Bihar and for Muslim, Hindu and Christian institutions and events to ensure their continuance with dignity. Without this support, many religious institutions and events would collapse.

So far, even though pointed political

criticism is highlighted towards support for Muslims pilgrims to the Haj, the maximal support has been given to Hindu institutions and events. This is inevitable. But it ill-becomes Hindu fundamentalists to deny such support to others on an equitable basis. The Kumbh is an example of the celebration of benign neutrality whereby the state has helped to coordinate the Kumbh and provide a range of infrastructure support other than just policing. This is something that Hindu fundamentalists should bear in mind. Hinduism has been a prime beneficiary of India's benign secularism; and not a victim of secular policies.

The Kumbh has generated two other legal controversies. The first relates to whether luxury tents can be permitted on the banks of the river just below the Allahabad bund which protects both the river channel and the city. This is before the Courts. The second targets photographers — especially the foreign media for 'invading' the privacy of worship. Both controversies have some legal substance in them. If the Kumbh is an egalitarian event, it must level out opportunities for all. The critical question is whether the luxury tents prevent equal opportunities for worship. This not how the issue is being approached by protesting sadhus flexing their power muscles. The issue of prying photographers goes to the root of the question of privacy even if the person praying does so in the open. Yet, pre-censorship is hardly the solution. It is for the Press Council to ensure that guidelines are laid down to ensure that the photographic celebration of unique events does not invade the privacy of men and women in prayer.

But, what is disturbing is not these controversies but the political manner in which they were generated. The Kumbh provided the occasion to declare when the temple in Ayodhya was to be built, whether Allahabad should be called Prayag and to increase the hegemony of sants and sadhus over media photographers and travel agents. Fundamentalist politics has found an uneasy niche in the celebration of the Kumbh. This does a disservice both to the Kumbh and Indian secularism.

THE HINDU

26 JAN 2001

40-1
26/1

Bharat Ratna for Lata, Bismillah Khan

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 25. The melody queen, Ms. Lata Mangeshkar, and the shehnai maestro, Ustad Bismillah Khan, were tonight awarded Bharat Ratna, the nation's highest civilian honour.

Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian honour, has been awarded to the sarod wizard, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan, santoor maestro, Pandit Shiv Kumar Sharma, the Germany-based western musician of Indian origin, Mr. Zubin Mehta, film-maker, Mr. Hrishikesh Mukherjee, writer-economist and former U.S. Ambassador to India, Mr. John K. Galbraith, Mr. Benjamin Arthur Gilman (public affairs, U.S.), Dr. C. Radhakrishna Rao (science and engineering, U.S.), Mr. Hosei Norota (public affairs, Japan), Mr. K. Sachidananda Murthy (literature and education, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh) and Prof. Manmohan Sharma (art, Indian classical instrumental).

Padma Bhushan has been awarded to the super-star, Mr. Amitabh Bachchan, film-maker, Mr. B.R. Chopra, composer and lyricist, Mr. Bhupen Hazarika, evergreen hero of Hindi movies, Mr. Dev Anand, and orthopaedic surgeon, Dr. Chittaranjan S. Ranawat, who had performed the knee-replacement surgery last year on the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee.

Ms. Lata Mangeshkar, who began her career as a playback singer at the age of 17 and has captivated the people across the globe with her golden voice for the past five decades, has already been honoured with the Padma Bhushan and the Dada Saheb Phalke award for her contribution to the field of film and music.

Ustad Bismillah Khan's "Mangal Dhvani" has marked the beginning of nation-wide telecast of Independence Day and Republic Day celebrations over the past several years. Even at the age of 84, Ustad Bismillah Khan, has retained the magic of his shehnai. He learnt shehnai under the guidance of Ali Bux and Ahmed Husain of Benaras and performed at the age of 14 at an All-India Music Conference in Allahabad in 1930.

His latest recital of "Mangal Dhvani" had enthralled the President, the Prime Minister, and a distinguished gathering at the Capital's Vigyan Bhavan on January 17 on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Election Commission.

Among other Padma Bhushan awardees are violinist Lalgudi G.



Bismillah Khan



Lata Mangeshkar



Padma Vibhushan: Shiv Kumar Sharma, Amjad Ali Khan and Zubin Mehta



Padma Bhushan: Anand, Bhanumathi and Amitabh Bachchan



Padma Shri: Mahesh Bhupathi and Leander Paes

Jayaraman, world chess champion, Mr. Vishwanathan Anand, Kuchipudi dancer, Ms. Yamini Krishnamurthi, veteran character actor, Mr. Pran, industrialist, Mr. Rahul Bajaj, journalist, Mr. Aroon Purie and lawyer, Mr. Ashok Desai. In addition, 20 others have al-

so been honoured with Padma Bhushan awards.

Padma Shri has been given to Leander Paes, Mahesh Bhupathi (tennis players) and 64 other personalities from different fields.

List of awardees: Page 10

President sees women as saviours of democracy, slams large dams in R-Day speech

'Stability not the key issue'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Jan. 25. — The President today criticised a particular change proposed for the Constitution, saying it had "shades of political ideas of Field Marshal Ayub Khan, father of military rule in Pakistan".

A commission appointed by the government to review the functioning of the Constitution had suggested in a widely circulated consultation paper that since a majority of representatives are elected by a minority of votes cast, "the first past the post (FPTP) system of elections stands seriously eroded". It suggests "a mismatch between FPTP and the multi-party system" and says: "Hung houses make stable government formation difficult."

In his address to the nation on the eve of the Republic Day, Mr KR Narayanan said: "At the heart of our democracy is the right of universal adult suffrage", clearly disapproving of suggestions for stability and uniformity in the political system, and electoral reform

which could usher in indirect elections.

The founding fathers of the Constitution, he said, had the wisdom and foresight not to overemphasise the importance of stability and uniformity of the political system and had "a profound faith in the wisdom of the common man and woman in India, thus consciously rejecting the system of restricted franchise and indirect elections" despite the country then being "in a state of abject mass poverty and mass illiteracy".

"This act of faith... meant that the governance of this vast country was not to be left in the hands of an elite class but the people as a whole. It is under the flexible and spacious provisions of our Constitution that democracy has flourished... and that India has achieved an unprecedented unity and cohesion as a nation," the President said, making no mention of the 80-odd amendments the Constitution has undergone.

On women's empowerment, he said it was a vital component for the working of democracy at the grassroots and

create a stir in society. "It is only logical to carry forward this process of empowerment of women to the state legislatures and to the central parliament."

"The empowerment of women in politics might well be a decisive factor that will purify and save the democratic politics of India from deterioration of standards and values it is experiencing today," he said.

He dwelt at length on the 'adverse' impact of development which "tends to widen the existing inequalities and create new inequalities", particularly among marginalised sections, the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

"It is well known how large river valley projects are uprooting tribals and causing them untold misery," Mr Narayanan said in an obvious reference to the Sardar Sarovar project.

"In eastern India, the exploitation of minerals like bauxite and iron ore are causing destruction of forests and sources of water," he said, elaborating on the need to ensure environmental protection and the rights of tribals in

the development rush.

The President relegated the government's most important recent political initiative, the unilateral ceasefire, to last place, almost as a cursory mention.

He commended India's economy as one of the fastest growing in the world, managing to accommodate the globalisation process without losing its distinct culture as a civilisation, or compromising its independence.

The strength of the public sector in India, he said, had made it possible for private enterprise to expand and flourish in the 21st century, an "era of young people".

"While making necessary changes in our policies, it is important to recognise the contribution made by India in its earlier stage of development," and yet "the spectacular growth of information technology is largely the achievement of the youth of India," the President said.

■ Editorial: R-Day rigours, joys, page 8
■ More photographs, reports, on pages 2, 3 & 6



Mr KR Narayanan and Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee with the Algerian President, Mr Abdelaziz Bouteflika, at the Rashtrapati Bhavan reception on Thursday. — API/PTI

THE STATESMAN

26 JAN 2007

India ranks 49th among 50 countries in globalisation

WASHINGTON: India ranked 49th out of 50 developed and key developing countries in terms of depth of globalisation achieved, being ahead of only Iran, while Singapore is on the top, a media report said.

A.T. Kearny, a foreign policy magazine, which produced an index to measure the extent of globalisation in the world, has put India almost at the bottom in globalisation but says NRIs play an "extremely important role" in sustaining its economy.

India scored particularly well on the indicator for transfer payments, which includes both official funds transferred from governments and international organisations as well as remittances from nationals living abroad.

"This suggests that India's overseas population plays an extremely important role in sustaining its economy, relative to overseas populations in many other countries,"

editor of the magazine *Moises Naim* said. India scored dead last on indicators for international travel and tourism and international telephone calls. "These results suggest that it has a long way to go in enhancing its people-to-people contact with the rest of the world."

For international telephone calls, there were 1,499 million minutes of incoming calls and 436 million minutes of outgoing calls. Minutes per capita per Year of International Telephone Calls were only 1.98.

India shows very low levels of internet penetration relative to other countries. With only one internet server per 100,000 people in 1998, India ranked behind many African countries in terms of internet infrastructure. In spite of pockets of high tech development, the number of internet users in India as a share of the total population remained among the lowest in the world.

Naim said globalisation is greater in countries which have civil liberties and political rights and are corruption-free. It acknowledges that Singaporean officials are "authoritarian but at least they are honest."

"Investors perceive public officials and politicians as less corrupt in more globalised countries such as Singapore, Finland and Sweden but more underhanded in closed countries such as Indonesia and Nigeria."

He said with the exception of the US, most large countries earned low scores overall on the globalisation index because of two reasons.

"Firstly, countries with large internal markets produce more of the goods, services and human talent that they require, so have less need to acquire these from abroad. Second, the method of calculating indicators considers each as a share of a country's economic output or of its population." (PTI)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

10 JAN 2001

Happy landing for S. Leone peacekeepers

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, January 4

AFTER PINNING down the Sierra Leone militia under a hellish hail of rockets and bullets, battle-hardened peacekeepers of the Indian Air Force (IAF) have returned home. And unlike the only previous occasion when attack helicopters were used in a peacekeeping operation (Sri Lanka - Operation Pawan), it's been a happy landing for 64 members of the 212-strong IAF contingent, who're back along with a battalion (58 Grenadiers) of the Indian Army following the Indian decision to pull out of the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL).

Three MI-35 attack helicopters with a retinue of four MI-8 and four Chetak choppers - were rushed to Sierra Leone seven months ago after 222 Indian Army peacekeepers and 11 military observers were held hostage by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels at Kailahun. Braving anti-aircraft gunfire and shoulder-fired missiles, the chopper contingent provided crucial air support which enabled the ground troops to dominate the RUF and rescue the hostages in Operation Khukri on July 15-16, 2000.

For many airmen, this was their first exposure to real combat. "We first plastered the RUF stronghold at Pendembu, en route to Kailahun, where paratroopers were dropped for the rescue act. This involved flying at a height of just 20 metres above the tree-tops, and evading missiles and continuous heavy machine-gun fire," recalls young squadron leader Rajiv Puri. Infra-red flares were used to deceive heat-seeking mis-



The MI 35 attack helicopter contingent back in New Delhi from Sierra Leone. Photo: Prakash Singh

siles. The airmen did not take any casualty.

The helicopter gunships, armed with rockets, anti-tank missiles and 57 mm and 23 guns, were tasked with carrying out pre-emptive strikes to facilitate ground movement of peacekeepers, providing covering fire to enable safe landing of MI-8 transport helicopters in combat areas, and interdiction of enemy reinforcements.

"Of prime concern was keeping open and secure the only road link between Daru (UNAMSIL Battalion Hq) and Kailahun," narrates Wing Commander Anil

Samtani, the commanding officer of the MI-35 squadron. "We really let them have it, using as much ammunition as we probably do in two years of training," reveals an excited young officer. "They were scared," he claims, with a measure of professional braggadocio.

But Wg. Cdr. Samtani emphasises that the strikes were surgical. "We were worried about (inflicting) collateral damage. A big problem was identification of targets. And we had clear instructions about where exactly we could engage the rebels," he says.

"The experience of working with

soldiers of other countries was rich, and we discovered pride in being Indian. We could easily count ourselves among the best-trained contingents," proudly preens Squadron Leader M. S. Chaudhary.

"We used Hindi during operations (intercepts left the RUF clueless). The British Air Force collaborated in Operation Khukri. They dropped some of our paratroopers from two Chinook choppers, and picked up a trapped British military observer. The trapped Indian troops declined the offer of being evacuated, because the two chop-

pers could lift only 80 persons, while their strength was 222. The Indians decided to stick together," recounts Chaudhary.

A fortnight after Operation Khukri, the IAF took on the Westside Boys, another rebel group with strongholds closer to Freetown, the capital city, giving them a dose of heavy metal. So, what's their most enduring memory of Sierra Leone?

"Freetown was a grim affair when we landed there. It was a bustling city when we left it last week," quips Puri. Tribute to the Indian peacekeeper?

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

5 JAN 2001

■ Bill Clinton visits India in March, 22 years after the last US Presidential visit; New warmth in Indo-US relations. PM Vajpayee reciprocates with a visit to US in September

2000 india HIGHLIGHTS

■ Cricket in crisis as match fixing clouds leading players. Hansie Cronje confesses following Delhi Police FIR. CBI report indicts four players; BCCI bans Azhar and Ajay Sharma for life, Jadeja and Prabhakar get five year ban

■ In three Miss U World

■ Ayo Decen of ministers named ir regarding mandir cre defeated in Lok Sabh

■ 35 Sikhs massacred in Chitti Singhpora, March 21
 ■ PM Vajpayee announces unilateral cease-fire during the month of Ramzan, later extending it by a month. On July 24, Hizbul Mujahideen too had taken a similar initiative, but withdrew it on Aug 8

■ Kar escap

■ 43 killed in train accident near Sarai Banjara in Punjab, Dec 2
 ■ SGPC chief Bibi Jagir Kaur charged with daughter's murder, Nov 13

■ Rajesh Pilot killed in road accident near Jaipur, June 11

■ SC clears controversial Narmada Dam project in Gujarat, Oct 18

■ PM Vajpayee undergoes successful knee replacement surgery in Mumbai, Oct 10

■ Bollywood producer N. Rizvi arrested for alleged underworld links, Dec 13

■ Veerappan kidnaps Kannada actor Rajkumar, July 31; Wide-spread public protests follow; Ordeal ends after many rounds of govt sponsored negotiations, Nov 15

■ Ex-Karnataka CM J.H.Patel passes away in Bangalore, Dec 12

■ Chhattisgarh becomes India's 26th state; Ajit Jogi is CM, Nov 1

■ Jayalitha gets 3-year rigorous imprisonment in Tansi case by trial court, Oct 9; Appeal pending in HC

■ BJD-BJP sweep Orissa polls; Naveen Patnaik is CM, March 5

■ Jyoti B after 24 y West Ben

■ India's population crosses one billion mark, May 11
 ■ Severe drought in Gujarat
 Minister P.R. Kumaramangalam dies in Delhi following brief illness, Aug 23
 ■ Malk Sydney Olympics, Sept 19
 ■ Narasimha Rao and Buta Singh convicted in JMM case
 most watched TV programme; Clones fail to make impact
 ■ Russian President Vlad ng challenger Jitendra Prasada, Nov 15
 ■ Sonia Gandhi elected Congress president trounced to dilute govt stake in Public Sector
 ■ Mumbai gangster Chota Rajan escapes from Bangkok hospital, Nov 23
 ■ Bill intr and wins World Chess Championship in
 Banks, Dec 13
 ■ 13 day strike paralyses Postal Services in Dec
 ■ Viswanathan Ankapal, Dec 26
 ■ Hrithik Roshan's alleged comments trigger violent protests in N

KRK Infographics

THE TIMES OF INDIA

2 JAN 2001

INDIA DOES NOT WANT WAR: ADVANI

Vajpayee for peace with all neighbours

By Our Special Correspondent

40-1
26/12

NEW DELHI, DEC. 25. Both the Prime Minister, Mr. A.B. Vajpayee, and the Home Minister, Mr. L.K. Advani, today talked of peace, and came close to declaring that India did not want a war with Pakistan. Keeping with the Christmas spirit of love and brotherhood, the leaders chose to tone down their pronouncements vis-a-vis Pakistan.

At a function to mark his birthday, Mr. Vajpayee said India wanted peace with all neighbours. He applauded the sense of unity in the country after the December 13 attack.

A more detailed and pointed response came from Mr. Advani, who stated that neither the Government nor the people wanted a war with Pakistan. However, he insisted that India wanted an end to Pak-sponsored terrorism. "India does not want war but an end to terrorism."

"The situation has developed in a manner as to make it possible for India, with the support of world opinion, to force Pakistan to abandon terrorism as an instrument of State policy," Mr. Advani told media-persons after inaugurating the advanced Category III-A Instrument Landing System, which allows aircraft to land in foggy conditions, at the Indira Gandhi International Airport.

Mr. Advani said it was not difficult to deal with terrorism; difficulties only arose when a state adopted it as policy. On the developments at the border, he said the Cabinet Committee on Security would meet on Wednesday to take stock of the situation.

On the alleged involvement of a Parliament House staffer in leaking information to a Pakistan High Commission employee, Mr. Advani said the latter had asked for an entry pass and also about security arrangements. "This is disturbing."

Asked whether India would hand over to Pakistan evidence of the involvement of Pak-based terrorist

groups in the December 13 attack, he said India had been saying from day one that it would not give evidence. "Why only Pakistan wants evidence and no other country does. Because every other country is convinced. Not only this episode but also others have shown that Pakistan has adopted terrorism as a State policy. Particularly in this case, all the attackers happened to be Pakistanis."

He ruled out once again Pakistan's demand for a joint probe, saying there could be no joint investigation with a State that made the preposterous statement that Indian intelligence agencies were behind the attack. When his attention was drawn to opinion polls which suggested that public opinion was for war, he said if the same people were asked whether they wanted war or an end to terrorism, they would prefer the second option. It all depended on how the questions were put to them.

Earlier, in his inaugural address, Mr. Advani said the move to destabilise India by spreading terrorism was being countered by the Government both internally and globally through public opinion against terrorism, more so after the September 11 attacks in the U.S. and the December 13 attack.

Some places were considered inviolable to security threats and Parliament House was one of them. "But terrorists have had the temerity of attacking Parliament and they will have to face the consequences. To achieve the goal of good governance, the nation will have to be free from hunger, corruption and fear, and the Government is taking steps towards that."

The Union Minister for Civil Aviation, Mr. Shanawaz Hussain, said that under the new global security scenario, airports were number one targets. Besides other measures, the Government had deployed the Central Industrial Security Force at 28 airports; soon they would cover all 68 airports in the country. "There will be no compromise on security"

THE HINDU

26 DEC 2001

Guerrillas trigger exodus of villagers in Macedonia

Kosovo, July 27

ALBANIAN REBEL gunmen were clearly visible last night on the edge of the city of Tetovo and on the Jazinec road, the main route to the Kosovo border.

In Drenovac, an eastern suburb of Tetovo, young men in khaki uniforms left their checkpoints but stood in the front yards of homes. A man, wearing green trousers and a khaki shirt, was hosing down the dust in front of a house.

Until Monday, Neprosteni was an ethnically mixed village of 1,500 people. Today it has just over 30 Macedonians left, and many of them are unsure if they will remain, despite the latest ceasefire. All but about 50 of the roughly 500 Macedonian inhabitants left before this week.

When fighting erupted, the remaining Macedonians were rounded up under the orders of the local National Liberation Army commander. One man is still missing. Vase Mihajlovski was arrested by guerrilla military police and accused of being a paramilitary. Local members of the NLA said that he was still

alive, but would not confirm his whereabouts.

Most of the ethnic Macedonian population says they were kept as the captive "guests" of their Albanian neighbours, and were only allowed to return to their homes, after the intervention of monitors from the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

Speaking in the presence of his Albanian neighbours, Vlado, 58, a former truck driver, described how he had wanted to leave Neprosteni with his wife and son when fighting broke out on Monday morning. "I wanted to go but there was shooting. Then three NLA men came to house and told me leave or the house would be burned down." Along with 20 others, he was put up by an Albanian neighbour. "They were taking care of me, giving me tea, coffee everything. I can't thank them enough," he said. But inside his house and away from his recent hosts, a different story emerged. The house has been ransacked, and valuables have been stolen, said Vlado. "I don't know what to say to anybody anymore," he said,

adding that his Albanian neighbours have accused him of storing five guns and ammunition at his home.

Xhevahir Sadikiri, a member of the local municipal council, said: "If the Macedonian police found an Albanian with that [cache of arms], they wouldn't let him stay here."

On the other side of the village, Mirjana and Borjan tell a similar story. "They [the rebels] broke the door down, and came in with their guns and told us to leave. We did not resist," said Mirjana. Clothes lie strewn across the floor all around her. In the hallway a needlework portrait of Marshal Tito lies smashed on the ground.

Outside, her car is missing. Like Vlado, she and her husband were put up in an Albanian house during the fighting and told that they were being kept there for their own safety. Whatever their intentions, Mirjana has now lost faith in her former neighbours. "They want us to go away so that everything can be theirs. We have lived together for years."

The Guardian

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES