

Hunger stalks Rajasthan village

By Parul Chandra
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Sanjay Sekhri

Neem-ki-Madhi (Baran): This village, like many in the drought-affected Rajasthan, has given up hopes of rains a long time ago. But now, there is no hope of getting any foodgrains too. Starvation is only too evident on the faces of the residents of Neem-ki-Madhi. The distended stomachs and spindly legs of children speak of severe malnutrition.

Three children lie covered in shawls outside a hut. 'Bimar' (ill) is the word the villagers use to describe the frail figures of Rajaram, Rajkumar and Mahesh. In another hut, an aged woman, ailing, lies huddled under a sheet.

Death hasn't come calling yet to this tiny village comprising just about two dozen houses inhabited by the impoverished Sahariya tribe. But starvation clearly has.

To the stories of hunger and starvation deaths of children emanating from villages in Shabad and Kishanganj, additional district magistrate (ADM) Shahbad Shanker Lal Bunker claims: "Nobody has died of hunger. The children who died had a history of fever and pneumonia." Mr Bunker then mentions the 'navratras' during which people fast and of "nirahar navratras" in which he claims people survive on a 'laung ka joda aur pani' (cloves and water).

The medical officer sitting next to him pipes up. "Even if you don't eat for 12 days, you won't die of starvation but dehydration." He goes on to cite the instance of 'rishis' who survive without food for days.

The drought has also ensured unemployment since most work as agricultural labourers.



The Sahariyas, a tribal group of Neem-ki-Madhi village in Rajasthan, face a bleak future. Starvation is common and death does not seem far away.

Few of the affected have found work in the relief work started by the state government and many are yet to be paid.

The Sahariyas are tribals concentrated in the Shahbad

DROUGHT DEATHS

and Kishanganj tehsils of the Baran district which is bearing the brunt of the drought with the deaths of some 20 children reportedly because of starvation.

Whether it is administrative inefficiency or the sheer remoteness of this tiny village in this south-eastern part of Rajasthan, food isn't reaching here.

"We are eating 'sama' (wild

grass seeds)," goes the common refrain. Much as the Rajasthan government would have everyone believe that 'sama' is the staple diet of the Sahariyas, it isn't really so.

Pounded into powder and rolled into dry rotis or simply mixed in water and drunk like a brew, the drought-affected in Baran district are forced regularly to eat something they once consumed only occasionally. Says Munni, "Only if there is something at home can we eat". Berries and bajra seeds too are being used to fill hungry stomachs.

Some of the villagers flash ration cards issued to below-poverty-line (BPL) families entitling each family to foodgrains at extremely subsidised rates.

As for the Antyodaya cards

meant to provide grains at rates cheaper than BPL, none in this village possesses one.

Most say they haven't got any grains from the public distribution system this year though entries in their cards speak otherwise.

Take Kalyan whose ration card indicates he was allocated 40 kg of wheat every alternate month since January but in reality has got nothing.

He says he did get 35 kg of wheat in August but the dealer chose to enter 70 kg instead on his card. Clearly, the dealer has diverted grains meant for them elsewhere.

Says Kalu, the sarpanch under whom Neem-ki-Madhi falls, "The situation is really bad. There is no fodder or grains. Starvation is actually there."

Hunger & death stench stalk village

MONOBINA GUPTA

Bhilkerla Dang (Rajasthan), Oct. 29: Swirls of dust choke the air as a Tata Sumo splutters over large chunks of rock sticking menacingly out of the land. The next minute, the vehicle lands in a huge crater with a deafening crash and churns up more dust as it struggles to climb out.

Welcome to Bhilkerla Dang, home to the Sahariyas, where the earth is parched, black, hostile and unyielding and where drought-stricken tribals have been left to fend for themselves or die.

The Sahariya children have been dying like fleas of late: primarily of hunger and also of infections in the stomach, lungs and chest. Eleven children have died in Bhilkerla Mal, barely 12 km away. The fear has travelled to this settlement — about 200 km from Kota — and the tribals

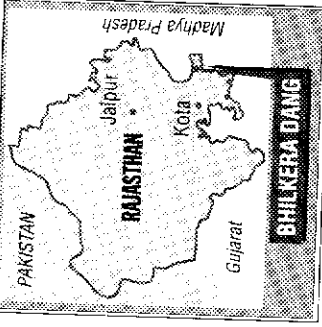
here are certain they are sitting on the jaws of death.

"The worst is still to come. In the next few months, the situation will be worse," says Ram Lal, pointing to the dry-as-dust, unfriendly expanse of land that has been wasted by the drought.

When you see the Sahariyas — a clutch of unwashed, unfermented, women and children — you wonder if any situation could be worse. A stink assaults you as you approach the settlement, a putrid smell of unclean bodies and crude tobacco.

The children look the most damaged. They cough a dry cough that never seems to stop. Their skins are infected with open sores. The infants keep wailing as if to protest the dirty degrading conditions.

Government officials blame the tribals for not practising birth control. But the parents



have no choice. They don't know how many of their children will survive and add to the number of working hands.

The drought this time has jolted even well-heeled peasants who have helplessly watched the fields dry up before their eyes. For the Sahariyas, at the bottom of the economic ladder, the sun has literally been a killer.

Even in the most perfect of times, these tribals struggle to

put together two square meals. This year, the drought is on a rampage.

There has been no work for the last few months. Usually, the Sahariyas travel outside their village to work for a couple of months and then return home with that money. This time, even the work has dried up. Their meals have dwindled to gruel of leaves or flour made into a paste.

There have been no deaths in Bhilkerla Dang so far. But the air of anxiety hits you as you enter the village. It is one in the afternoon. All the men, women and children are crowding around a *chaupal*. Some children are hanging around, eating *murmura* (puffed rice) distributed by *anganwadis* workers.

"If we do not get any work now, we have only God to take care of us," says Marandi Lal.

The government has announced an *akal rath* programme to provide work to starving villagers, but Bhilkerla Dang has been left out.

The story of starvation deaths among the Sahariyas is a story of marginalisation of tribals. When Rajasthan chief minister Ashok Gehlot denied the deaths were due to starvation, he had a point. The Sahariyas starve bit by bit 365 days a year. They are afflicted by the deadliest of all diseases: continuing and severe malnourishment that takes its toll every time there is a natural calamity.

Regardless of the grand Sahariya project initiated in the seventies, the tribals are living in misery — their condition is as wretched as it could get. They inhabit a twilight world between life and death where dawn brings no purpose and darkness is equally meaningless.

SC ruling

New Delhi, Oct. 29 (PTI): The Supreme Court today said state chief secretaries would be held responsible for future deaths due to starvation and malnutrition.

A three-judge bench headed by Chief Justice B.N. Kirpal said it was the duty of each state to prevent death from starvation and malnutrition.

The bench, which included Justices Y.K. Sabharwal and Arijit Passayat, said: "If the commissioners report to the satisfaction of the court that starvation deaths have taken place, the court will be justified in presuming that court orders have not been implemented and the chief secretary of the state or administrator of the Union territory will be held responsible."

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2002

HD-10
MR. BADAL'S TRIUMPH 12/11 9-8 10/2002

CYNICAL MANIPULATIONS AND intrigues are by no means new either to Punjab's Akali politics, notorious for factional feuds, or elections to the Shiromani Gurdwara Prabhandak Committee (SGPC), the apex body that controls the administration of Sikh shrines in Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh. But what marked out the elections to the SGPC's executive this time is the new benchmark these ugly features registered in the run-up to the poll, with the Congress Chief Minister, Amarinder Singh, contributing not a little to the murky development by his intrusive role, both at the political and governmental levels, his protestations notwithstanding. In the event, Mr. Amarinder Singh ended up not only getting a stiff note of warning from his party chief, Sonia Gandhi, against any attempt to overplay the Government's role but also suffering the embarrassment of seeing his bete noire and former Chief Minister, Prakash Singh Badal, reasserting his control over the SGPC. Mr. Badal's nominee and incumbent president, Kirpal Singh Badungar, got elected for another term defeating the candidate fielded by the rival Gurcharan Singh Tohra faction and by a margin that put paid to all talk of a serious erosion of his support base in the institution. To an extent, the Chief Minister's misadventure on the SGPC front, which reflected a not-so-subtle attempt to neutralise the authority of Mr. Badal by propping up the Tohra faction against him and using the levers of governmental power for that purpose, has blotted his record and may well blunt the edge of his campaign against the erstwhile Badal Government's misdeeds.

For Akali politics, the outcome is a clear testimony that Mr. Badal continues to hold the field in the SGPC without a real challenger. It was on becoming Chief Minister that through cleverly sequenced deft manoeuvres he got his own persons at vantage points in the Sikh religious structure, marginalising his arch rival, Mr. Tohra. The SGPC saw Mr. Tohra, who reigned supreme for two decades and more, being replaced by Bibi Jagir Kaur as its head and the

Akal Takht too witnessed a similar change of guard. That Bibi Jagir Kaur had to step down under unedifying circumstances is a different matter. But the fact remains that, despite all the factional squabbles and allegations of violations of the Sikh religious code, it is Mr. Badal who has had a decisive say in the matter of appointments and nominations to key positions. Neither the loss of governmental power nor desertions from his party, Shiromani Akali Dal, would appear to have made any significant dent, as of now, in Mr. Badal's sway over the SGPC or other centres of religious authority.

More basically, Akali politics, which has for historical reasons an underpinning of religion, has deteriorated to a level at which the various factions have few compunctions about totally obliterating the divide between the two domains and, worse, using priestly office and edicts to serve partisan political ends. In fact, if the institutions of supreme spiritual authority such as the Akal Takht — or even the SGPC for that matter — have had their stature and sublimity diminished, it is primarily because of this cynical game the political class has been playing, with even the high priests of gurdwaras remaining divided and acting according to their factional loyalties. This came into full view more recently during the chief ministerial tenure of Mr. Badal himself and some of its fallout is still lingering. Now, in the latest SGPC poll, while it may be true that Mr. Amarinder Singh had his own axe to grind, there could be no question of the Government being restrained from discharging its constitutional duty of ensuring that the fractious fight between rival Akali factions did not lead to any breach of public peace and order, apprehensions of which arose from the sort of mobilisation the two camps had threatened to make at the poll venue in the Golden Temple complex. In fact, the Badal faction too felt it expedient to indent on the ruling coalition at the Centre to send a team of "observers". The real remedy lies in divorcing religion and politics and scrupulously respecting the divide.

14 NOV 2002

THE HINDU

Badal faction retains SGPC

By Sarabjit Pandher

AMRITSAR, NOV. 12. Amid unprecedented security arrangements in the 'holy city' of Amritsar, the elections of the president, office-bearers and executive committee members of the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) ended peacefully, with the Badal faction retaining its hold without difficulty.

Kirpal Singh Badungar was retained as its chief when he easily defeated Sant veer Singh Madhoke, who was sponsored by the rival Akalis. Mr. Badungar polled 91 votes against Sant Madoke's 68.

In the 190-member house, the five head priests do not have a voting right, while nine members have died since the present house was constituted in 1996. Of the 176 active members, one



The SGPC president, Kirpal Singh Badungar, after he was re-elected on Tuesday.

member abstained, four voters of the Akali faction led by Simranjit Singh Mann, MP, boycotted the polls and, as per the directions of the Punjab and Haryana High Court, the votes

of 12 members disqualified by the Sikh Gurdwara Judicial Commission (SGJC) were kept in a sealed envelope. The election of his loyalist has come as a shot in the arm for the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) chief, Parkash Singh Badal, who fought a grim battle for his political survival.

While the elections passed off without any untoward incident despite the high drama that preceded it, the Badal faction nominees also won the posts of senior and junior vice-presidents and general secretary and a majority in the 11-member executive committee. Curfew-like conditions prevailed in the walled city. Shops around the Golden Temple were closed with the security forces setting up checkpoints all over.

Action against CM sought: Page 11

A boost to Badal, NDA

Chanchal Pal Chauhan
in Amritsar

Nov. 12. — The victory of the Shiromoni Akali Dal in the SGPC polls has come as a boost to the beleaguered National Democratic Alliance which has been suffering reverses in recent elections.

The success of SAD candidate, Mr KS Badungar, as SGPC chief for the second time in a row has come as a shot in the arm for its president, Mr PS Badal.

Mr Badungar secured 91 votes defeating his rival Baba SV Singh with a margin of 23 votes. The voting began at 1 p.m. and ended at 4 p.m. and the results were announced amidst tight security.

The NDA delegation led by Union minister for labour Mr SS Verma, which scrutinized the polls, expressed satisfaction. The other members of the team were Mr PC Thomas (IFDP), Beatrix D'Souza (Samata Party), Ms Anita Arya (BJP) and Mr Zora Singh Mann (SAD).

Mr Badal who had suffered a setback in the Delhi Sikh Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee a few months back had manoeuvred a NDA team to oversee the elections, having a high stake in the Akali politics.

"We were fully confident of a victory and the elections have given the seal of approval. We wanted to give the Congress government and Mr Tohra a befitting

reply. Both were hand-in-glove to control religious bodies for their political ends," Mr Badal said.

The cheering SAD activists and SGPC members loyal to Mr Badal

The defeated faction led by Mr GS Tohra, who has headed this body for the longest period, got more votes than expected. Its candidate secured 68 votes more than expected.

The third major group led by the Lok Sabha member, Mr S S Mann, who enjoyed the support of four members, boycotted the election. Mr Mann left the venue much before the voting began.

The tussle between the Akalis and the Congress is likely to intensify with the newly elected president, Mr Badungar demanding that the chief minister, Captain Amarinder Singh, resign.

"The government's interference in the Sikh religious affairs was a matter of great concern. Such direct involvement calls for resignation of Captain Amarinder Singh whose evil designs to curb our freedom has failed. He has resigned twice on the issue of interference and it is right time that he himself put in his papers to save the dignity of our religion," Mr Badungar said after the results were announced.

The SAD also swept the posts of senior and junior vice-presidents and the general secretary. A big victory procession was taken out by the winners around the city after paying obisence at the Golden Temple.

Amritsar which has been turned into a fortress by the heavy deployment of the police and para-military forces is likely to return to normal with the end of the elections. Today all roads leading to the venue were sealed and commercial establishments including the "sarais" of the SGPC were vacated in apprehension of a breach of peace.



Mr Parkash Singh Babal (right) celebrates the election of Mr Kirpal Singh Badungar (left with garlands) in Amritsar on Tuesday. — AFP

raised slogans, describing the results as a victory over the Congress government. After a harrowing fortnight which saw the members hounding for cover in Haryana and Himachal to escape horse-trading and government pressure, the win was celebrated with the raising of naked swords.

"We may have lost in the numbers game but the result has vindicated our stand for a change in the leadership. Our tally has increased significantly with many members clearly reposing faith in our policies. It is just luck that we could not repeat the Delhi feat," remarked Mr Tohra.

13 NOV 2002

THE STATESMAN

Badal defies order, enters Amritsar city

HO By Sarabjit Pandher

9-8- Punjab are slated for Tuesday.

12/11
AMRITSAR, NOV. 11. As the count-down began today for the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee (SGPC) elections, the Shiromani Akali Dal president, Parkash Singh Badal, stormed Amritsar city with over 100 of his men defying prohibitory orders promulgated by the State Government, which for a change appeared to have gone on the defensive.

To prevent any untoward incident on Tuesday, the polling day, the holy city of Amritsar has been converted into a huge cantonment. All roads leading to the city and inside were heavily barricaded as security personnel searched vehicles for weapons or "mischievous" elements. Though people complained of being put to inconvenience, there was no visible tension at the social level.

Mr. Badal, who reached Amritsar by road, defied all orders under section 144 Cr.P.C. Except outside the Golden Temple complex, the NSG commandos accompanied Mr. Badal, though the Chief Minister, Amarinder Singh, at a recent press conference had announced that the Akali supremo would not be allowed any guards except those from the Punjab police, within the limits of the Amritsar revenue district.

The SGPC members loyal to Mr. Badal reached the Raja Sansi airport in the afternoon in a chartered aircraft.

Those who accompanied the group included Mr. Badal's son, Sukhbir Singh, and nephew, Manpreet Singh. The Union Ministers, Sahib Singh Verma and S.S. Dhindsa, and the MPs, P.C. Thomas and Arti Arya, also arrived as part of an NDA team to observe the elections, which

The slogan-shouting Badal supporters were bundled into three waiting buses. Leading the convey, Mr. Badal reached the gate of the Golden Temple complex adjacent to the rest houses for the pilgrims, but could not proceed further as there was a heavy deployment of police and the entrance was barricaded. Though police had set up a number of checkpoints en route, the convoy was not stopped anywhere. Mr. Sukhbir Singh's "youth brigade" threw a protective human chain to escort the members to the Guru Hargobind Niwas, which was occupied by the Badal loyalists despite the administration having effected a vacation of all inns in the Golden Temple complex.

After reaching the newly constructed inn, Hargobind Niwas, Mr. Badal was closeted with his supporters, who as is the age old practice, authorised him to take the decision regarding nominating the next presidential candidate, other office-bearers and members of the executive committee.

Sonia 'pulls up' CM

In Chandigarh, the Chief Minister sought to stress that his party had no stakes in the results of the SGPC elections. He defended the decisions of his Government as an attempt to avoid any breach of law and order. It is being viewed that the State Government has softened its stance after being "pulled up" by the Congress chief, Sonia Gandhi.

In a related development, the Punjab and Haryana High Court stayed the arrest of the former SGPC chief, Bibi Jagir Kaur, who was being proceeded against for power theft.

CM under fire: Page 13

12 NOV 2002

Badal won't seek anticipatory bail

Statesman News Service

CHANDIGARH, Oct. 20. — The former Punjab chief minister, Mr Parkash Singh Badal, who is likely to be arrested by the state government on charges of financial and administrative fraud, today refused to seek anticipatory bail to prevent arrest.

The chief minister, Capt. Amarinder Singh, has already said that once some "fool-proof evidence" is collected by the state vigilance bureau against Mr Badal, the former chief minister, along with some of his family members, will be arrested.

On the government's stand, the Shiromani Akali Dal leader said: "The government is all set to arrest me. It has been trying to do so for last eight months. The suspended PPSC chairman, MR RP Sidhu, was asked to talk against me. The arrested four ministers of my government were told to do the same. Though the government has not been able to prove my involvement in any embezzlement so far, it has traumatised me."

He further said: "The government has been tapping my



Mr Parkash Singh Badal

telephone calls and monitoring my movement. My supporters are being harassed."

The former chief minister called for a mass agitation, beginning on 15 November, in protest against the Congress government's recent decision to withdraw power subsidy to the agriculture sector and the unabated repression against the SAD and BJP leaders. This was decided at a two-day meeting of the SAD's political af-

airs committee. ^{21/10}
"We will start with dharnas and demonstrations which will culminate into jail bhara programmes. The government has already breached trust of the people by interfering into Sikh religious matter. We have been asking the government to desist from providing security to our members in the SGPC but the police are following our party members. Consequently, we had to take shelter in Haryana. The government's primary objective is to erase us. But now we will fight the final battle," he said.

The SAD gave an ultimatum of 25 days to the government to rollback the power tariff decision, pay Rs 20 as bonus with the Minimum Support Price and pay compensation of Rs 5,000 per acre to all drought-hit farmers in the state.

The government said it would not reverse its decision, which was proposed by the Punjab State Electricity Regulatory Commission. The government cited poor financial health of the state as the reason for imposing power tariff.

THE STATESMAN

21 OCT 2012

Breaking point

gxb Navin on a dangerous course 12/12

The more Navin Patnaik finds the ground slip under his feet, the more he resorts to desperate measures. The BJD which he heads is sharply divided between a handful of loyalists and a majority of rebels who are determined to force a change in leadership. This explains the spate of arrests in Orissa involving essentially dissidents who have lined up with senior leaders like Ramakrushna Patnaik and Nalinikanta Mohanty to virtually declare war on the chief minister. The unrest has been sparked further by protest rallies which have rocked the state and to which the only answer from Navin has been suspension of rebels. The arrests are in all probability a warning to members of his own party that he is prepared to use force if necessary to stem dissent. This marks the decline of a leader who entered politics with enormous goodwill helped by the mantle of his illustrious father. What has happened is the opposite. There is a good deal of alarm that the chief minister thinks nothing of using the police to crush dissent: it will be a miracle if Navin can use these tactics to improve his standing. g.b. on m

The police force is needed to tackle the growing menace of Naxalites, many of whom have crossed over from Andhra Pradesh. The tribal districts have become a happy hunting ground for them because the state government has not made the slightest effort to solve land disputes or make social welfare programmes effective. The continuing spectre of poverty in the villages is a telling example of non-performance. What is worse, the chief minister does not seem to have a plan for dealing with Naxalites who have become champions of the poor by default and believe in violence as an instrument of power. This can only lead to further unrest and, combined with the war within the BJD, pose a serious challenge to the administration. The BJP, a partner in the ruling alliance, has every reason to doubt Navin's capacity to control an explosive situation. The state Congress is perhaps only waiting for the BJD to destroy itself so as to stage a comeback. But that can be no consolation.

THE STATESMAN

1 2 DEC 2002

BJD expels 3 MPs, Naveen faces acid test

Nageshwar Patnaik
Bhubaneswar 16 NOVEMBER

THE ruling BJD president and Orissa chief minister, Mr Naveen Patnaik, on Saturday, expelled three rebel Lok Sabha MPs from the party's primary membership for six years. Mr Patnaik had suspended them in August this year. The expelled MPs are Ms Kumudini Patnaik, Mr Jagannath Malik and Mr Pravat Kumar Samantray. Mr Patnaik later left for New Delhi, where he has convened a meeting of all Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs on Sunday.

Undaunted by the expulsion, the rebel MPs plan to convene a

parallel meeting at the residence of the party's leader in the Lok Sabha, Mr Prasanna Acharya, in New Delhi. The BJD general secretary, Mr Damodar Rout, said the MPs were expelled for hatching a "conspiracy" to "dethrone" Mr Patnaik. He, however, evaded queries on whether the expulsion decision had the sanction of the party's political affairs committee (PAC). "I am only ventilating the party president's decision," he said.

Mr Patnaik has been under pressure from the loyalists to take disciplinary action to contain the rebels. Rebel MPs and several legislators are up in arms against the party chief for what they called



NAVEEN: FUTURE STRATEGY

his "non-performance" and "autocratic style" of functioning as chief minister and leader of the

"Naveen Patnaik, as such, has no power to take such action against MPs without the PAC's approval. His only activity, unfortunately, has been confined to suspending and expelling people and weaken the party," he remarked.

He refused to attend Sunday's meeting convened by Mr Patnaik at his New Delhi residence. "I do not understand why he has convened a meeting in New Delhi when he has not convened the PAC and BJD state executive meetings in Bhubaneswar for more than two years. We are meeting in the afternoon to chalk out our future strategy," he pointed out.

The rebels, who have vowed to oust him from power very soon, recently became majority and replaced Arjun Sethi, now Union water resources minister, with Mr Acharya as the new BJD leader in the Lok Sabha.

Mr Patnaik tried his best to stem the rot, but had little success when the Lok Sabha Speaker recognised Mr Acharya as the BJD parliamentary party leader. BJD has 10 MPs in the Lok Sabha and four in the Rajya Sabha. Six Lok Sabha MPs are now in the rebel camp.

Mr Acharya described Mr Patnaik's action as "arbitrary" and said it will have no bearing on the MPs status in the Lok Sabha.

Naveen axe on Ramakrushna

Sandeep Mishra
Bhubaneswar, September 22

FORMER FINANCE Minister of Orissa Ramakrushna Patnaik has been expelled from the primary membership of Biju Janata Dal for six years on charges of "open indulgence in serious anti-party activities," BJD secretary-general Damodar Rout said in a Press release.

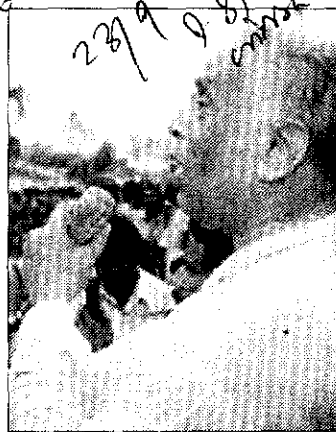
Patnaik's expulsion follows his projection as future Chief Minister by BJD dissidents at Friday's meeting in Hinjili, the Chief Minister's constituency, two days ago. There Ramakrushna openly challenged Naveen accusing him of being corrupt, autocratic, a burden on the people of Orissa and remote controlled by a retired bureaucrat.

Reacting to the expulsion, Ramakrushna on Sunday said, "I am still in the BJD and very much a member of the Legislature Party. I am a founder-member of the party and nobody can expel me."

"I am rather thankful to Naveen. As a disciplinarian I could not have exposed the Government in the Assembly. Now I can unmask the Chief Minister and lay bare his Government on the floor of the House," he added. The House meets for the monsoon session on Monday.

Dubbing Naveen as a "frightened goat", Ramakrushna said his expulsion is "unconstitutional and undemocratic."

During the initial months of the BJD-BJP Government in the State, Ramakrushna was one of the closest aides of Naveen.



Ramakrushna Patnaik
Crushed confidence?

Ramakrushna, who resigned from Naveen's Cabinet on August 6, the day the Ministry was expanded, had also dared Naveen to expel him from the BJD at the Hinjili meet.

At Hinjili, the Kodala legislator was declared as the leader of the anti-Naveen group by expelled BJD leaders, including Dilip Ray, former Minister Nalini Kanta Mohanty, legislator Manas Mallick and suspended BJD MP Prabhat Samantaray.

Earlier, Kumudini, along with Samantaray and Jajpur MP Jagannath Mallick, was suspended from the party. The three, along with three other MPs — Prasanna Acharya, Bhartruhari Mahtab and Prasanna Patsani — last week revolted against the BJD leadership and replaced Arjun Sethi with Acharya as the BJD Parliamentary Party leader.

23 SEP 2002

THE HINDU TAN TIMES

Nero Naveen *9-81 anm*

He's busy battling his partymen as Orissa finds itself in the doldrums

FOR the second time since he came to power, Orissa Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik finds his authority challenged, with six of his party MPs declaring a virtual war against him. Earlier former union minister Dilip Ray — who was summarily expelled by Patnaik from the party — had gone on to win a Rajya Sabha seat despite the latter's attempts to prevent this. It is Patnaik's style of functioning that has brought things to this pass. The demand for the removal of his nominee, Arjun Sethi, as the leader of the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) Parliamentary Party, was a mere ruse. The rebels were actually targeting Patnaik. His detractors were really giving him a taste of his own medicine. He had hoped to pre-empt a split by suspending three MPs last month. However, his intervention backfired. The dissidents lured him into a false sense of security and struck when the time was ripe. In the ten-member BJD Parliamentary Party, now only four MPs are left with Patnaik. This will certainly reduce his leverage with the NDA.

The expulsion of key political rivals from the party may have worked for Patnaik at first but with the number of the disgruntled on the rise, the chief minister certainly needs to rethink his strategy if he wants to survive. The message is clear:

despite enjoying a popular mandate, he has lost the confidence of his partymen. The founding members of the BJD, the very ones who had promoted him as the inheritor of the Biju legacy, are now bayoning for his blood. The chief minister made the mistake of thinking that he is larger than the party but Naveen Patnaik is no Biju Patnaik. And though he says that the rebels pose no threat to his leadership, he will be hard pressed to protect his flanks in the coming days. His detractors have, in fact, already made their next move. They have engineered a split in the 70-member strong BJD legislature party. It is true that the arithmetic is not in their favour at this stage, but who knows about tomorrow?

Orissa, then, looks set to witness another bout of hectic horse-trading. The trouble is that it is the people of the state who have to bear the adverse consequences of this in-fighting. With the chief minister engaged in battling his own partymen, the administration is in the doldrums and the state's development is all set to be sacrificed at the altar of political expediency. It is time, therefore, for Patnaik to give up his politics of confrontation and learn to carry his party colleagues along in the larger interests of the state.

Rebels drive home oust-Naveen plans

Sandeep Mishra
Hinjili, September 20

REPRESENTED BY Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik in the Orissa Assembly, the sleepy town of Hinjili today woke up to an unprecedented show of Naveen-bashing as prominent expelled and suspended BJD leaders propped up Ramakrushna Patnaik as future Chief Minister.

In a major show of strength by anti-Naveen leaders, Ramakrushna and his MP wife Kumudini launched a vituperative attack on the Chief Minister from atop a makeshift stage formed with two truck carriers at Hinjili's market square. They were assisted in this job by Rajya Sabha member Dilip Ray, Kendrapara MP Prabhat Samantaray, former Minister Nalini Kanta Mohanty and Dhamra legislator Manas Mallick, even as thousands thronged the streets to witness the event.

While Kumudini and Samantaray were suspended from BJD in August, Ray, Mohanty and

Mallick are all expelled BJD leaders. Upbeat over their recent success in changing the BJD parliamentary party leader, the leaders vowed to mobilise the entire State against Naveen. "We will take our struggle to the streets and occupy the State Secretariat soon," they said and added that the Hinjili meeting marked the beginning of the struggle to oust Naveen from Orissa politics.

Ramakrushna, who resigned from Naveen's ministry last month, dared the BJD President to suspend him from the party. "I am a founder-member of the BJD. I had made Naveen the BJD chief. Who can suspend me? If they (Naveen's group) dare suspend me then I will organise a mass convention and dismiss Naveen from BJD."

In his first direct attack on Naveen in a public meeting, the former Finance Minister accused the Chief Minister of being corrupt, surrounded by a coterie, indifferent to people's cause and remote-controlled by a retired bureaucrat.

Ramakrushna alleged that the Chief Minister in connivance with some Ministers and bureaucrats had received crores as kickback to sign the tripartite agreement in the power sector and privatise Nalco.

Alleging that Naveen along with Energy Minister Surya Narayan Patro and some others, received a kickback of Rs 400 crore to sign the agreement, Ramakrushna said he resigned from the Ministry because he opposed signing of the agreement and also due to the entry of four "thieves" in the Ministry. He said he would lead a mass struggle to stall the privatisation of Nalco and expose Naveen's vested interests in selling off the aluminium major, Ramakrushna said the Orissa bandh observed on September 19 at Naveen's behest evoked little response because the Chief Minister was party to the privatisation move.

Amidst heavy police presence, the senior BJD leader minced no words to lambast the khaki-clad men and said his supporters had been arrested on false charges in the run-up to the rally. Ray, who is said to have engineered the revolt by six MPs against Naveen earlier this week, said he was apologetic for "burdening Orissa with Naveen".

He said all those who have been expelled or suspended from the BJD would fight to remove Naveen.

Mallick said the revolt of six MPs in the BJD Parliamentary Party would soon be followed by a similar revolt in the BJD Legislature Party.

THE REBELS' GROUSE



- Ramakrushna accused Naveen of being corrupt and indifferent to the people's cause
- He alleged that the CM received crores as kickback to sign the agreement to privatise Nalco
- He vowed to stall Nalco privatisation and expose the CM's vested interests

Violence mars Orissa bandh

900 pro-bandh activists arrested, including MLAs

HT Correspondent & PTI
Bhubaneswar, September 19

ABOUT 900 people were arrested today during the dawn-to-dusk statewide bandh called to protest privatisation of the National Aluminium Company (Nalco).

Police rounded up pro-bandh activists who were picketing in front of Government offices, and blocked roads and squatted on railway tracks. They stalled traffic for over an hour near Nalco's corporate office on the Gangadhar Meher Marg. Police arrested several Left and Intuc leaders, including some BJD MLAs.

The bandh, called by several Central trade unions, has been supported by all non-BJP parties. While the ruling BJD had extended its total support to the strike, its coalition partner BJP had opposed it, saying the bandh would not serve any purpose.

DGP NC Padhi said barring a few incidents of violence in Bhubaneswar, Cuttack, Jajpur and Balasore, the bandh was peaceful. CPM cadres allegedly damaged a four-wheeler, an autorickshaw and three two-wheelers at the Station Square area of the city, while another group of BJD activists allegedly damaged vehicles on the Sachivalay Marg.



Police arrest a BJD activist during a blockade at the Rajmahal Square in Bhubaneswar on Thursday.

HT PHOTO

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik did not attend office at the State Secretariat expressing solidarity with the bandh. All private and Orissa State Road Transport Corporation (OSRTC)

buses remained off the road.

JD(S) leaders beaten up: Two Janata Dal(S) leaders, who were among the pro-bandh supporters taken into custody on Thursday,

were allegedly assaulted by some BJD supporters at a temporary lock-up in Bhubaneswar for questioning the bona fide of the regional outfit to the cause of today's bandh.

Orissa burns over Nalco

96-3 209
| State shuts in protest, Cabinet takes a day off

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
BHUBANESWAR, SEPT 19

ORISSA Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and his cabinet colleagues stayed away from office today in support of a BJD bandh against the privatisation of National Aluminium Company Limited (Nalco).

DGP D.N. Padhi said more than 2,800 supporters of the bandh, which was total across the state, were arrested. Educational institutions and business establishments were closed and train services affected. Traffic on highways was thin.

The bandh affected work at Nalco's corporate office in Bhubaneswar but the company's installations in Angul were functioning, officials said.

Police said most of the arrests were made when pro-bandh activists were picketing government offices or obstructing road and rail traffic. Violence was reported from



Protesters burn tyres on road during Orissa bandh called by different political parties and trade unions in Bhubaneswar on Thursday. PTI photo

Bhubaneswar, where vehicles were damaged. Groups belonging to the BJD and the Janata Dal(S) clashed.

Panchayat Raj Minister Damodar Rout, Health Minister Prafulla Chandra Ghadei, School and Mass Education Minister Surendranath Nayak, Minister of State for Finance Panchanan Kanungo and former minister Debi Mishra sat on a dharna at A.G. Square. Only MoS for Animal Resources Draupadi Murmu, of the BJP which opposed the

bandh, attended work.

Cuttack wore a deserted look with few vehicles on the roads and shops closed. Badambadi, the city's main bus terminal, was empty. Work at Orissa High Court was affected.

In Rourkela, banking, insurance and Central government offices were forced to close down. The Utkal Express was detained by an hour and could move only after the GRP rounded up the protesters. The Rourkela Steel Plant was the only exception in the city, regis-

tering 97.2 per cent attendance in the 'A' shift.

The BJD congratulated the people for supporting the bandh. "The people have come out strongly to express their sentiments against the privatisation move and have made the bandh successful," BJD secretary general and Panchayat Raj Minister Damodar Rout said.

The bandh evoked a positive response in the industrial town of Brajaraj Nagar and Biramitrapur and in Sambalpur, Berhampur and Balasore.

2 5 SEP 2002

EXPRES

Double trouble for Navin

Statesman News Service

BHUBANESWAR, Sept. 8. — Mr Ramakanta Mishra, Leader of the Opposition, today lambasted the state government for failure on all fronts. He said the Opposition parties would strive to corner the government on all important issues in the forthcoming monsoon session of the state Assembly. These include the power crisis in the state, drought, Nalco privatisation and the alleged hunger deaths.

Mr Mishra said the government had failed to provide food security to people. The Rajya Sabha's petition committee had received 158 complaints of starvation deaths in KBK (undivided Koraput-Bolangir-Kalahandi) districts, he said. Instead of providing free rice, the state government had raised the price of PDS rice from Rs 4.75 to Rs 6.30. This, at a time when the state was reeling under drought.

Protests over Nalco disinvestment

Janata Dal (S) president Mr Ashok Das today said the chorus of protests against disinvestment of Nalco was a "fraud on the people of

Orissa" and an attempt to shelve all pending probes including the one related to Nalco's controversial takeover of the unviable International Aluminium Private Limited.

Mr Das charged Mr Navin Patnaik with not opposing the disinvestment of Nalco because of the scam involving the takeover of IAPL by Nalco. He claimed at a press meet that Nalco was forced to buy IAPL, an incomplete and unviable project, at the behest of Mr Patnaik, who was then Union steel and mines minister. A probe into the deal was pending, he said.

Mr Das said if Nalco was privatised, Mr Patnaik would get a breather as no official probe could be made into a deal by a private company. The proposed disinvestment of Nalco has drawn flak from all political parties including the BJD which has threatened to launch an agitation. The Opposition has, however, dismissed the BJD's protests as an eyewash.

Former chief minister and Union minister Mr Nilamani Routray has warned Mr Vajpayee in a letter of a rout for the BJD-BJP in the next elections if the alliance went ahead with the proposed disinvestments.

THE STATESMAN

9 SEP 2002

Orissa Assembly demands ban on VHP, Bajrang Dal

BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 18. Congress members in the Orissa Assembly today demanded the resignation of the Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, over the storming of the Assembly by activists of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Bajrang Dal on Saturday last. Members cutting across party lines condemned the incident and demanded a ban on the VHP and the Bajrang Dal.

The Leader of the Opposition, Ramakanta Mishra, who compared the vandalism with the terrorist strike on Parliament, said their action amounted to a murder of democracy. The BJD-BJP Government had no moral right to continue and the Chief Minister must quit, he said.

The Janata Dal(S) member, Ashok Das, Pradipta Panda of the CPI(M), Nityananda Pradhan (CPI) and Lalatendu Bidyadhar Mohapatra (Congress) demanded a ban on the VHP and the Bajrang Dal.

Stating that the incident had totally exposed the inefficiency



Student activists courting arrest demanding a ban on the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, in Bhubaneswar on Monday. — Photo: Aneel Mishra

of the Government, Mr. Mishra said instead of suspending policemen at the lower level, action should be taken against the Chief Secretary, Home Secretary and the Director General of Police for the glaring security lapse.

Earlier, the House dispensed with the question hour and took up discussion on the incident through an adjournment motion moved by some Opposition

members. In his initial statement, Mr. Patnaik shared the feeling of outrage of the members over the unfortunate incident and said they must decide whether the enquiry into the ghastly incident should be conducted by a House Committee or a judicial probe was required. "We will go to the root of the problem and whoever, big or small, will not be spared," he said. — PTI

THE HINDU

15 MAR 2002

9-89

Orissa suspends policemen HD-1

By Prafulla Das

BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 17. The Orissa Government today placed a number of police personnel under suspension for negligence in duty following the attack on the Assembly on Saturday. Around 500 activists of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, the Bajrang Dal and the Durga Vahini had stormed the Assembly building and indulged in vandalism.

Addressing presspersons after his return from New Delhi today, the Chief Minister, Naveen Patnaik, said, "Some policemen, including two Deputy Superintendents of Police, have been suspended and action is likely against more officials." Although he did not announce their number, reliable sources said that 18 policemen had been placed under suspension.

18/3

Mr. Patnaik, who met the Chief Secretary, D.P. Bagchi, the DGP, N.C. Padhi, and several of his Cabinet colleagues soon after his arrival, went round the Assembly premises to inspect the damage.

"Such a dastardly act should be condemned strongly and stern action should be taken against the culprits who indulged in this shocking incident," Mr. Patnaik said. "There is more to it than meets the eye," he said, hinting that the attack was pre-planned and that it had the complicity of some of his detractors.

Incidentally, the BJP Legislature Party was inside the building when the mob went on the rampage. The State BJP president, Manmohan Samal, the Union Tribal Affairs Minister, Juel Oram, and party MLAs were taking part in the meeting

to discuss the coming Rajya Sabha polls.

Asked whether the incident would sour the relationship between the Biju Janata Dal and the BJP, Mr. Patnaik said it was too early to pass judgment. On the demand for a judicial probe into the incident, he said the matter was being investigated and any further action would be announced by him in the Assembly on Monday. The Crime Branch of the State police is investigating the case.

As announced by the Assembly Speaker, Sarat Kumar Kar, on Saturday, the Chief Minister will make a statement in the House on Monday. The issue would also be discussed in the form of an adjournment motion.

Meanwhile, the 67 persons arrested for the attack were remanded to judicial custody by a

local court. Those arrested include the State VHP president, Bipin Bihari Rath, the State Bajrang Dal chief, Bhuban Mohan Jena, and nine women. They have been booked on charges of rioting, arson, trespass, assault and damage to government property, according to the Deputy Inspector General of Police, Sushil Pradhan.

VHP condemns attack

PTI reports from New Delhi: The VHP regretted the storming of the Assembly by its activists but sought to defend them, saying "pseudo-secular policies" of people working in the political field have made the country's youth "restive".

"We regret yesterday's incident at the Orissa Assembly. We do not approve any attack on our democratic institutions," the VHP spokesman, Veereshwar Dwivedi, said.

Bus blast in Ghatkopar leaves two dead, 32 injured

TIMES NEWS NETWORK 9.8

Mumbai: Two persons died while 32 others, including two women, were injured when a bomb exploded in a BEST bus near the Ghatkopar (west) railway station at 6.25 p.m. on Monday. The injured persons were rushed to Rajawadi Hospital.

The bomb exploded when the single-decker bus, operating on route 416 from that station to Amrut Nagar, off LBS Marg, was about to drive away from the bus stand. At the time of the blast, only the driver and the conductor were inside the bus, both of whom were injured. Most of the injured were pedes-

trians and passengers who were waiting to board the bus.

The explosion was so massive that the rear part of the bus was completely blown off. According to eye-witnesses, the blast could be heard a few hundred metres away. BEST inspector Baburao Godse said there was a deafening sound and metal shards flew all over the road.

The glass windows of neighbouring shops were also damaged. The explosion occurred during peak hour when thousands of office-goers usually exit the station and board BEST buses to reach their destinations. The road is also choc-a-bloc with hawkers

and there is a perennial traffic jam. Both the BMC and the police have failed to rectify the situation despite repeated complaints from local residents.

Immediately after the blast, the police cordoned off the area. The bomb blast squad reached the spot at about 7.30 p.m. All telephone lines in the area were jammed. Central Railway's suburban stations were held up outside Ghatkopar for about 20 minutes as the railway way switched off power as a precautionary measure following the blast. Supply was restored by 6.50 p.m. and services normalised. Although the blast took place outside the station, its impact

was felt on platform number 1. CR sources said. The platform's roof was also damaged.

Minister of state for home Kripa Shankar Singh and Mumbai police commissioner M.N. Singh visited the spot for the blast. A police alert has been sounded throughout the city, especially since 14 and the anniversary of the Babri masjid demolition are around the corner. Ghatkopar is a BJP stronghold, with the party's Prakash Mehta having been re-elected to the state assembly.

An eye-witness said the blast had created panic in the area. Hundreds of peo-

ple rushed to the station. "The sound was so loud that I heard it on the other side of the station," a local resident, Hiren Fofaria, noted.

Mr Singh said the situation was under control and appealed to people to maintain calm. Sources in the police said there was no intelligence tip-off of possible violence. "We were asked to step up security near places of worship. It is possible that because of that the persons behind the blast chose to create the explosion near the station, where security is not heavy. The peak hour was chosen obviously to cause severe widespread damage," a senior police official said.

THE TELEGRAPH

3 DEC 2002

Govt must go, says Sena-BJP

Saffron alliance up in arms against Bhujbal's defence of Konkan attack

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Citing a "total collapse" of law and order in the state, the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance on Sunday called for the dismissal of the Democratic Front government. The saffron combine is incensed by the attack on Sena leader Narayan Rane's house at Kankavali in Sindhudurg district on Saturday by a mob of NCP activists and the justification of the violence by deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal.

An NCP activist, Satyavijay Bhise, was murdered, allegedly by Shiv Sainiks, on Friday night after which NCP activists set Mr Rane's house and other properties on fire.

Mr Bhujbal, who is in charge of the home portfolio, stated that the anger of his party members was understandable considering the fact that Shiv Sainiks had brutally murdered Bhise. He said Bhise was murdered since his brother had been recently elected to the zilla parishad defeating a nominee of Mr Rane, Rajan Teli.

The Sena has a strong hold over the Konkan belt and this is sought to be challenged by the NCP. The situation in Kankavali was tense but under control on Sunday.

A Sena-BJP delegation led by Uddhav Thackeray and Nitin Gadkari on Sunday called on governor Mohammed Fazal and submitted a memorandum demanding that the DF government be sacked and President's rule imposed in the state.

"Never in the history of the state has a home minister justified violence. Mr Bhujbal's justification of the mob attack on Mr Rane's house shows the government's complicity in the violence. The safety of the common man will be in jeopardy if this government is allowed to continue," he said.

BJP leader and former deputy chief minister Gopinath Munde, who is touring Nashik, also denounced Mr Bhujbal's statement. At the same time, he condemned Bhise's murder.

● 'Sena must end politics of terror', Page 10

Karzai security cloaks Masood anniversary

REUTERS
KABUL, SEPTEMBER 9

THOUSANDS of Afghans gathered in Kabul's Sports Stadium on Monday to witness the unveiling of a huge portrait of legendary resistance leader Ahmad Shah Masood to mark the first anniversary of his death. Throughout the city, black flags hung from shop awnings and Masood's portrait adorned windows.

Security was tight after last week's assassination attempt on President Hamid Karzai and a car bomb attack in the capital. Karzai, who narrowly escaped with his life when a gunman opened fire in Kandahar on Thursday, is on his way to New York to join world leaders marking the anniversary of the September 11 attacks.

These attacks have been blamed on remnants of the ousted Taliban regime and the al Qaeda network it sheltered.

A year ago on Monday Masood, who led the Northern Alliance which held out against the hardline Islamic regime in his redoubt of the Panjsher Valley North of the capital, was blown up by suspected al Qaeda members posing as journalists.

The charismatic 48-year-old, who also fought against the Soviet invasion of the 1980s, is a hero to his ethnic Tajik kin, who formed the bulk of the Alliance and took many of the key positions in the post-Taliban transitional government.

His appeal is less strong among the Pashtun, Afghanistan's largest ethnic group, from which the Taliban drew its support. People in Kabul also remember Masood's part in the civil war of the early 1990s when he led one of the factions battling for control of the city.

The widespread destruction wrought during that bitter internecine fighting can still be seen today.



Masood's 13-year-old son, Ahmad Shah Masood, addresses a crowd in Kabul on Monday. Reuters

The Sports stadium where Masood's portrait was to be unveiled was once used by the Taliban for public executions. Afghan police and international peacekeepers searched people entering the arena, as Defence Minister Mohammad Qasim Fahim, formerly Masood's intelligence chief, looked on with other

Cabinet ministers.

In the Panjsher Valley, unarmed soldiers lined the winding dirt track which runs North towards Masood's shrine, set high on a hill amid the stunning mountain peaks which he made his fortress. The burned and rusting hulks of Soviet tanks and armoured personnel carriers are testament to the bravery and guile of his men, who would sweep down from the hills and ambush their prey.

In villages along the road from Kabul to Bazarak, Masood's picturesque birthplace, tents were erected and animals slaughtered to give as gifts to the poor. In Khost, fighting between rival factions died down on Monday, according to officials. More than 15 people were reported killed and more than 51 wounded on Sunday in clashes between men loyal to a renegade warlord and those supporting the Khost governor.

NDIAN EXPRESS

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Houses adjourned over Oppn demand for Sanjay Dutt's arrest

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Both houses of the state legislature had to be adjourned on Monday with the proceedings being dominated by the controversy over film star Sanjay Dutt's alleged conversations with gangster Chhota Shakeel.

The legislative assembly was adjourned thrice while the council had to be adjourned twice when members raised the issue and demanded Dutt's arrest.

The Mumbai police had recently submitted tapes to the court of a special judge here in connection with the Bharat Shah case. The tapes allegedly contained telephone conversations between the Karachi-based Chhota Shakeel and some Bollywood personalities, especially Dutt, in November 2000.

Senior BJP leader Gopinath Munde told the legislative assembly on Monday that he had not released Dutt in 1997. As deputy chief minister in the erstwhile Shiv Sena-BJP government between 1995 and 1999, Mr Munde had held the home portfolio. "Sanjay Dutt was released by the Tada court," he stated in reply to deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal's remark that Mr Munde had ordered the release of the actor.

Raising the matter during zero hour, Mr Munde said the telephone tape had raised serious questions about the law and order situation in the state. Mr Munde was backed by leader of the opposition Narayan Rane, who said that the state government owed a lengthy explanation to the house.

Reluctant to take up the notice for adjournment motion, speaker Arun Gujarathi insisted on going ahead with the day's agenda, which included a clutch of calling-attention motions and a debate on the drought situation in the state. The speaker's reluctance angered the Sena-BJP legislators.

The discussion then turned into a legal wrangle between Congress member Janardan Chandurkar, who is close to Dutt's father, Sunil Dutt, and Sena-BJP leaders. Raising a point of order, Mr Chandurkar said the house could not take up the



Actor Sanjay Dutt enters the Tada court premises at Arthur Road jail in Mumbai on Monday.

issue as the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) court judge had ruled against any such public discussion and its coverage by the media.

"The house is supreme and sovereign to discuss any issue," Mr Munde retorted. "The MCOCA court's ruling cannot affect the assembly," Mr Rane added. Mr Chandurkar insisted on referring to Kaul and Shakti, a learned tome on parliamentary procedural rules.

Mr Bhujbal then remarked that Dutt had been released in 1997 at the behest of Mr Munde. This led to the third adjournment.

Earlier, the Sena-BJP combine mercilessly grilled minister of state for home Manikrao Thakre on a spate of questions. Mr Gujarathi succumbed to strident pressure from the opposition and withheld a question, a ruling which, according to legislative conventions, amounts to pulling up the minister for lack of preparedness.

All Set To Enter Rajya Sabha As BJP-Sena Nominee

Alexander resigns as Maharashtra governor

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 9 JULY

MAHARASHTRA governor P.C. Alexander, who put in his papers on Tuesday morning, is all set to enter the Rajya Sabha as a BJP-Shiv Sena nominee. In a coup of sorts, the Opposition saffron combine in Maharashtra has also managed the support of the ruling Congress' ally, the NCP, for Mr Alexander's candidature.

The Congress had strongly opposed the candidature of Mr Alexander when his name was considered for the post of President. In this backdrop, the support from the NCP will create more complications in the Congress' already troubled relations with Mr Sharad Pawar's outfit. NDA leaders here also did not rule out the possibility of Mr Alexander getting a "prized assignment" in the Vajpayee government. Mr Alexander will contest the seat which has fallen vacant following the death of NCP



ALEXANDER: OFF THE BLOCKS

leader Mukesh Patel.

Mr Alexander, who has completed nine years in the Mumbai Raj Bhawan, submitted his resignation to deputy prime minister L.K. Advani on Tuesday morning. In his interaction with reporters after the meeting, the governor refused to divulge reasons for his resignation, but made

it clear that he was not in the race for vice-president. The 81-year-old former bureaucrat, who served as principal secretary to both Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, was the NDA's original choice for the President's post. Stiff opposition from a powerful section within the BJP was also one of the reasons for the withdrawal of his name from the race.

A former Indian High Commissioner to Britain, Congress-appointed Alexander had established good rapport with Shiv Sena-BJP government in Maharashtra on account of which his governorship was extended by the NDA government at the end of a five-year term in 1998 and was formally re-appointed for a second term. He also shares an excellent rapport with Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Mr Advani.

The entry of Mr Alexander — a Syrian Christian from Kerala — to the Rajya Sabha through the saffron route is also expected to help the BJP refurbish its image among minorities.

The Times

THE STATESMAN

10 JUL 2001

THE TOLL OF POLITICAL "INNOCENCE"

THE CONFIDENCE VOTE secured by the Democratic Front Government in the Maharashtra Assembly has underlined the shallowness of the claims by the BJP-Shiv Sena combine that several MLAs from the ruling combine were willing to cross over to its fold. The brazen attempts by the BJP-Shiv Sena combine to wrest power in the State have been thwarted. But then, there is no way that the ruling combine can stave off criticism over the means adopted to achieve this. The manner in which the MLAs of the two parties (the Congress and the NCP) were herded away and put up in holiday resorts (in the name of shielding them from those engaged in political poaching) has exposed them to ridicule. Some of the images beamed across the nation by television channels, of MLAs bobbing up and down in swimming pools, enjoying feasts in resorts, will only add to the growing public disenchantment with the members of the political class, who are perceived as increasingly and brazenly self-indulgent. The leaders of the two parties would have served their own cause better if only they had refrained from such indulgence.

There are lessons for the political leadership of the Congress-NCP combine from the experience during the past fortnight and more importantly from what could be described as the immediate provocation to the crisis. That is the decision by the Peasants and Workers Party (PWP) to withdraw its Ministers from the coalition Cabinet. The PWP, consistently opposed to the BJP-Sena combine, had objected to the reinduction into the Cabinet of Sunil Thatkare, belonging to the NCP, after he was found to have been instrumental in striking deals with the Sena-BJP combine to capture the district panchayat in Raigad. That the leaders of the Democratic Front, a combine that was born out of an understanding to keep the BJP-Sena combine out of power, did not find the PWP's objections valid enough is reflective of the ideological innocence among them. It is this tendency of giving short shrift to ideological and politi-

cal commitment and letting their MLAs strike deals in their own way (even if such a deal went against the grain of their own stated positions) that is behind the rot. Hence, it became necessary for the leaders to resort to such shameless measures as shifting the MLAs (and some Ministers too) to places out of reach of the rival camp. The sad spectacle of as many as seven MLAs of the ruling combine (mostly supporters of Mr. Thatkare) offering support to the BJP-Sena combine even when it became imminent that they could lose their membership in the State Assembly is indeed a reflection of the extent of the depoliticisation within the party establishment.

Yet another aspect of the developments in Maharashtra, leading up to the Assembly Speaker, Arun Gujrathi, declaring the seven MLAs as disqualified, even before the confidence vote was taken up, is open to debate. The outcome of the confidence vote could have been different if the seven rebels were allowed to participate in the House proceedings and had they voted against the party whip. All this, however, does not accord any legitimacy to the complaints by the BJP-Sena leaders. After all, they too did not do anything honourable during the past fortnight. The charge of abduction (by the Congress MLA, Padmakar Valvi) against Gopinath Munde and the shamelessness with which Narayan Rane went about enlisting support from MLAs belonging to the ruling combine have knocked the bottom off their claims to principle. Meanwhile, the Chief Minister, Vilasrao Deshmukh, and his Deputy, Chhagan Bhujbal, will serve the cause of the Democratic Front and the spirit behind such an experiment only if they agree to keep Mr. Thatkare out of the cabinet and work in real earnest to ensure the PWP's return to the Cabinet. In the same way, the leaders of the Congress and the NCP too will have to educate their ranks about the dangers posed by the majoritarian agenda of the BJP-Sena combine so that they refrain from striking deals with such parties at the local level as it happened in Raigad.

14 JUN 2002

Vilasrao wins trust vote

Statesman News Service

5/14/6

MUMBAI, June 13. — The Congress-led Democratic Front government today won the trial of strength in the Maharashtra Assembly. The vote of confidence motion moved by chief minister Mr Vilasrao Deshmukh was carried through with 143 MLAs in favour and 133 against. The five members of the Peasants and Workers Party as announced late last night didn't participate. The Assembly proceedings were completed in 27 minutes. A minor scuffle broke out between supporters of Shiv Sena-BJP and the NCP near the Mantralaya following the DF government's win.

The Speaker, Mr Arun Gujarathi's ruling at 8 a.m. disqualifying seven rebels ensured smooth sailing for the Vilasrao government. Ahead of the scheduled meeting of the Assembly at 11 a.m. the Speaker announced disqualification of five MLAs of the Nationalist Congress Party, Mr Narayan Pawar, Mr Shivajirao Naik, Mr Narsing Patil, Mr Shirish Kotwal and Mr Vinay Kore as well as Mr Desmond Yates, a nominated MLA who withdrew support to the government and Mr Gangaram Thakkarwad who split the two-member Janata Dal (S). However, the Speaker left double-defector Mr Padmakar Walvi's case undecided since he returned home safely.

Meanwhile, a Bombay High Court Bench comprising Chief

Turn to page 6

THE STATESMAN

14 JUN 2002

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Machan
SFB

VILASRAO:

(Continued from page 1)

14/6

Justice CK Thakkar and Ms Justice Ranjana Desai today posted a petition by the seven disqualified MLAs against the Speaker's ruling for 20 June. The court directed the petitioners to serve a copy of the petition to Mr Gujarathi, within seven days.

As the House assembled, the BJP's Mr Gopinath Munde tried to raise the matter of disqualification of seven MLAs but the Speaker disallowed any discussion on his decision. Mr Munde wanted to tell the Speaker that the MLAs have moved the High Court for relief. His plea failed to impress Mr Gujarathi. The Opposition also wanted discussion on the vote of confidence motion moved by Mr Deshmukh. Mr Gujarathi said he would permit debate if both sides agreed to it. The ruling DF benches didn't favour any debate and sought vote immediately. Amidst the thumping of desks the motion was carried through.

Later Mr Munde described the Speaker's behaviour as "undemocratic and politically motivated." He alleged that Mr Gujarathi completed the hearing within two days without giving sufficient time to the Opposition to put up their contention effectively. He said, "The Speaker's action before the Assembly sitting scared several DF MLAs who otherwise were ready to vote against the motion." Mr Munde also claimed that the Opposition asked "such MLAs" not to defy the DF lest they would also invite disqualification.

The chief minister accused the Opposition of using money and muscle power to bring down his government. Deputy CM Mr Chagan Bhujbal said the law would take its course in dealing with the complaint filed by Mr Walvi against the Shiv Sena-BJP leaders about his abduction. The government would not be vindictive, he said.

Scuffle over win: After the government's victory, slogan-shouting NCP men started throwing stones outside the leader of the Opposition, Mr Narayan Rane's house opposite the Mantralaya. A scuffle broke out between supporters of Shiv Sena-BJP and the NCP.

Police had to resort to lathicharge and burst teargas shells to disperse the mob but not before a motorbike inside the compound of Mr Rane's house was set afire. The Sena-BJP workers were prevented from approaching the house of Mr Vasant Daykhare, deputy chairman of the Legislative Council, who belongs to NCP.

A defensive BJP today said the DF government should not blame the BJP and the Shiv Sena for their inability to contain dissidence and stressed that the BJP didn't make any effort to destabilise the state government, SNS adds from New Delhi.

THE STATESMAN

14 JUN 2007

Congress MLA 'escapes' from Sena-BJP camp

Shashank Mhasawade
Mumbai, June 12

"ABDUCTED" CONGRESS lawmaker in Maharashtra, Padmakar Valvi, today escaped from "the clutches of the Shiv Sena-BJP" camp. Valvi, a tribal activist, announced to the media today that he continued to support his party and was under threat from the Shiv Sena-BJP leaders who wanted him to make statements in favour of the saffron brigade.

Valvi, flanked by Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh and his Deputy Chhagan Bhujbal, narrated the entire episode of his detention by the Sena-BJP to the media at Sahyadri, the state guest house in Mumbai.

"Vasant Suryavanshi, the Bharatiya Bahujan Mahasangh MLA, is a great friend of mine. When I came to know that he had switched sides and was supporting the Sena-BJP, I thought of bringing him back. When I stepped out of the MLAs' hostel, BJP MLA Girish Mahajan approached me and promised to arrange a meeting with Suryavanshi. When I went with Mahajan, I realised I had been abducted and taken to the Matoshree Sports Club and was confined to a room by the Sena leaders," said Valvi.

He then said that Sena leader Narayan Rane and BJP leader Gopinath Munde pressurised him to make statements against the Government and in favour of the Saffron alliance.

"Some of them were carrying weapons. I was under tremendous pressure and I apologise to the media for causing all the inconvenience due to my earlier statements," he said.

The MLA said that he managed to write a letter to the Chief Minister using a pack of playing cards. "I dismantled the pack and wrote on the back side of it. I used a pen with green ink, which I managed to hide from the Sainiks. That letter can be verified by handwriting experts — it will prove that I have written it. When two

PWP to abstain from voting

THE PEASANTS' and Workers' Party (PWP) on Wednesday decided that its five MLAs would abstain from voting during the vote of confidence for the DF Government on June 13. This decision will reduce the Government's margin by five.

HTC, Mumbai

senior police officers came to the club to record my statement, I told them to convey my condition to Governor Dr P C Alexander and gave them the letter to be handed over to the Chief Minister. It worked well," recounted Valvi.

Today, when he was taken to the State Legislature building, the Vidhan Bhavan, for a hearing before Assembly Speaker Arun Gujarathi, Valvi saw it as his last chance for an escape. "I told the Speaker that I was always with the party and I was abducted. I also requested him to provide me with police security," he added.

Valvi is likely to file a complaint with the police naming Rane, Munde and other leaders from the saffron camp.

Home run for captive MLAs

After a week of fun and frolic, around 100 "captive" legislators of the ruling Democratic Front in Maharashtra are being taken in batches to Mumbai, in time for the vote of confidence scheduled on Thursday.

The first, comprising hard-core loyalists, was expected to leave late on Wednesday night. Another group of legislators, mostly fence-sitters, will leave tomorrow morning by around eight. This group would be taken straight to the Maharashtra Assembly for the crucial vote of confidence.

THE HINDUSTAN

13 JUN 2002

Deshmukh in Bangalore to watch over MLAs

Scribes barred from spa-turned-fortress

HT Correspondent
Bangalore, June 9

MAHARASHTRA'S CONGRESS and NCP legislators, in "high spirits" and relaxing at a Bangalore health spa, today received a pep talk from their leader, Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh.

After allowing the media in during the last two days, there was a sudden clampdown today with none allowed into the fortress-turned spa.

Deshmukh told reporters outside his legislators were in high spirits and impatiently waiting to express support for his leadership. "The magic number (majority) is very much with us."

Deshmukh said a meeting had been scheduled for Tuesday with the Peasants and Workers Party (PWP) where a reconciliation of sorts was expected. "If the Left parties, the Janata Dal and the PWP want to prevent a BJP-Sena Government from taking over they have no choice but to vote for the Congress," he

said. In all, there are 101 legislators of the Congress and the NCP at the spa.

"They are with me", Deshmukh said. If he were so confident why did he have to herd them to Bangalore? The visiting Chief Minister said this was done to prevent street-fights in Maharashtra. Moreover, "Bangalore is safe. Our friends are in government here. It is a beautiful place," he quipped. Deshmukh said his party feared that if the legislators were in Maharashtra they would be prevented by the Sena-BJP from reaching the Assembly on June 13 to vote for the Government. "That is why we want to ensure that they reach the Assembly directly from here in full spirits and vote for the Government."

To repeated queries whether he would be removed from leadership, Deshmukh said AICC president Sonia Gandhi and Vavalur Ravi had made it clear there would be no such change.

On the issue of MLA Padmakar Valvi's forceful deten-



Vilasrao Deshmukh
Troubled times

tion, the Chief Minister said he should go to the Governor himself and clarify the situation. Deshmukh said Valvi supported the Congress but was unable to say that due to the presence of "goonda security" around him. "He is from a Scheduled Tribe and an advocate and must be allowed to go free," Deshmukh said.

The BJP-Sena combine is trying to use underhand tactics to split our party and pull down the Government, Deshmukh alleged.

Business backs CM

Sujata Anandan &
Anand Adhikari
Mumbai, June 9

CHIEF MINISTER Vilasrao Deshmukh need no longer spend sleepless nights over the fate of his Government all alone. He has with him the powerful business community in Maharashtra which says that trade and investment have picked up in the past eight months and that a change in leadership is highly undesirable lest it affects the industrial climate again.

Gujarat has done enough damage to trade and industrial production and India's business barons hoped Maharashtra would offer them a steady environment for gains. Obviously, the events of the past week that have destabilised the State Government have jolted the business community. After the initial state of inertia, they seem to have swung into action and are said to be rallying behind the Chief Minister. As a result, Vilasrao now finds some friends in his own ministers

who have decided that his Government must be saved at all costs. The subtle shift in position seems to have happened after the business community in the State, it is said, made it clear to the top leadership of the Congress that a change at this juncture was "extremely undesirable".

But they may not have been talking just about the replacement of the Chief Minister. They are more worried that a change of government will mean the return of Shiv Sena's Narayan Rane, a man under whom extortions were at their highest and who did not even hesitate to place calls to the underworld from the Chief Minister's Office (his connections to Chhota Rajan are legendary).

Sources said whatever the gaps in the performance of the current Government, they had noticed the return of discipline in the past two years and a half and that organised crime was non-existent during the Congress-NCP regime. And the businessmen wish to keep it that way.

FRIDAY, JUNE 7, 2002

THE CRISIS IN MAHARASHTRA

THE DEMOCRATIC FRONT in Maharashtra, consisting of the Congress and the Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) apart from a few regional outfits and Independents, seems to be cracking. The fissures that appeared a few months ago, when the CPI(M) announced withdrawal of support and the Peasants and Workers Party (PWP) deciding subsequently to withdraw its Ministers from the State Cabinet, now seem to have widened and are threatening to pull down the Vilasrao Deshmukh dispensation. The events in the past couple of days, culminating in at least four MLAs belonging to the NCP announcing withdrawal of support to the Government, had left the Governor, P. C. Alexander, with no other option but to ask Mr. Deshmukh to prove his majority on the floor of the Assembly. The ruling combine has been reduced to a minority and a confidence vote is only in the fitness of things. It is another matter whether the PWP MLAs (as well as the couple of MLAs belonging to the CPI-M) would cast their votes against the Government in the Assembly. The two parties have, after all, been consistent in their opposition to the BJP-Shiv Sena combine (despite having walked out of the Democratic Front) and it remains to be seen what position they will take particularly if faced with the prospect of a BJP-Sena combine managing a majority and staking claim to form a Government in the event of Mr. Deshmukh's Cabinet being voted out.

Be that as it may, the crisis within the Democratic Front is only the culmination of a long trajectory of events following from the inability of the political leadership of the NCP to commit itself to secular and democratic values. Sharad Pawar himself is to be blamed for this. That Mr. Pawar refused to lead his own ranks (and more importantly his party's MLAs) in the campaign against the majoritarian challenge is obvious. The presence of at least four of the NCP MLAs along with the BJP's Gopinath Munde and the Shiv Sena's Narayan Rane (when they met the Governor) is indeed a reflec-

tion of the fact that Mr. Pawar's approach to party-building did not go beyond a personalised campaign against Sonia Gandhi and in this sense was bereft of any ideological commitment. It is another matter that the NCP leader is now having to bend over backwards to keep his flock together (including herding his party MLAs away from Mumbai) and ensure that more MLAs from his party do not walk over to the BJP-Sena camp between now and June 11, when Mr. Deshmukh moves the confidence vote in the Assembly. The statement by Mr. Munde that the four NCP MLAs were part of a group of 17 (all belonging to Mr. Pawar's party) who were sympathetic to the BJP-Sena cause over the years is indeed a comment suggesting how brittle the NCP is as a party.

It is this aspect that raises concern and the reality is as harsh in several other States as it is in Maharashtra. The fact that the BJP leader was willing to be so brazen about his plans is only one more instance (after the party reduced ministerial berths to rewards for support in the Uttar Pradesh Assembly in 1997) where the party has shown its contempt for the party system. It is the same game that the two sides in Maharashtra's political discourse are playing now. While the Chief Minister, Mr. Deshmukh, sought to shore up the ruling combine's strength in the Assembly by inducting three of the Independent MLAs into his Cabinet, the BJP-Sena leaders' response to it is clearly a loud message to those who missed the bus (from the NCP) that they can look forward to Cabinet berths if they help the combine form the Government. The party system which is of critical importance for democracy to sustain is being dismantled and destroyed in the process. One cannot but see the developments as they unravel in Maharashtra with a sense of *deja vu* for it was such a course that the members of the political class resorted to in such States as Uttar Pradesh and Bihar that contributed immensely to the weakening of civil society in those States over the years.

07 JUN 2002

THE HINDU

Prove majority, Deshmukh told

By Our Special Correspondent

9-88 Deshmukh
HO-1

MUMBAI, JUNE 4. The Maharashtra Governor, P.C. Alexander, has asked the Chief Minister, Vilasrao Deshmukh, to prove his Government's majority on the floor of the Legislative Assembly "quickly" and certainly within the next 10 days. Accompanied by the Deputy Chief Minister, Chagan Bhujbal, Mr. Deshmukh who met the Governor on his summons agreed immediately to convene a special session. The dramatic turn topped a day of hectic political activity when the coalition Democratic Front Government tried to shore up its strength by inducting three Independents as Ministers even as more and more MLAs were quitting the Government.

There were conflicting claims of majority support by both the ruling front and the Opposition Shiv Sena-BJP combine — the latter was gaining support by the hour. Mr. Deshmukh claimed the support of 147 MLAs and the rivals "at least 148" in a House of 288.

Dr. Alexander found the rival claims too close to be taken at face value and hence the decision to summon the Assembly. Horse-trading had started and a startled Nationalist Congress Party leader, Sharad Pawar, who left for New Delhi this morning, returned post-haste to shore up the coalition.

Earlier in the day, hours after Mr. Deshmukh

inducted three Independent MLAs into the Government, four NCP MLAs met the Governor in the company of the BJP's Gopinath Munde and the Shiv Sena's Narayan Rane and told him that they too were withdrawing support. They are Narayan Pawar, Shivajirao Naik, Narsingh Patil and Vikas Kore.

Obviously, the induction of three Independents — Patil (Cabinet rank), Vinayak Jadhav-Patil and Shivajirao Kardile (both Minister of State) — did not check the withering away of support.

The Opposition claimed the support of 148 MLAs, including six independents, who have switched sides. Gangaram Thakarwad of the Janata Dal (Secular) has split his two-member legislature party and formed his own Maharashtra Janata Dal and moved into the Sena-BJP camp. The other Janata Dal (S) member, Dada Jadhavrao, is a Minister of State. The four NCP MLAs who withdrew support, are part of the "17 such MLAs from the NCP who have been our sympathisers for nearly three years", says Mr. Munde. The four cannot be "faulted under the anti-defection law since they merely withdrew support", Mr. Munde claimed.

Mr. Deshmukh told *The Hindu* that the CPI(M) and the Peasants & Workers Party, despite withdrawing support, "would not be voting with the Opposition because they know it would bring the Sena-BJP misrule back to Maharashtra."

05 JUN 2002

THE HINDU

Deshmukh govt in crisis

Press Trust of India

MUMBAI, June 3. — The two-and-half-year-old Democratic Front government in Maharashtra was plunged into a crisis with seven Independent MLAs withdrawing support tonight. The Peasants and Workers' Party had pulled out yesterday.

The seven MLAs met the Governor, Dr PC Alexander, and submitted a letter withdrawing support. The MLAs were accompanied by the Shiv Sena leader, Mr Gajanan Kirtikar, Raj Bhavan sources said.

However, the chief minister, Mr Vilasrao Deshmukh, said: "We still enjoy a majority and will be able to prove it on the floor of the Assembly".

9/6/2002
He said: "I have the support of 147 MLAs (in a House of 288). For a majority, the backing of 145 members is needed." As per his information six Independents have withdrawn support.

Mr Deshmukh insisted that his government had the support of the Congress, NCP as also four members of the RPI, two of the JD(S) and six Independents.

The PWP, whose three ministers had pulled out of the ministry last week, had yesterday decided to withdraw support to the Congress-NCP led coalition.

The Janata Dal (Secular) had earlier in the day deferred its decision on withdrawing support to the DF government but agreed in principle to go ahead with such a move along with the PWP and CPI-M.

5/11 4/6
The crisis was sparked by re-induction of the NCP leader, Mr Sunil Tatkare, into the cabinet, despite protests from the PWP.

There was a flurry of activity in the NCP camp late tonight. The Deputy Chief Minister, Mr Chhagan Bhujbal, and the NCP president, Mr Sharad Pawar, were closetted in talks.

The NCP has 61 MLAs, Congress 74, Shiv Sena 69 and the BJP 56 MLAs. The Janata Dal (S) has two members, PWP five, CPI-M two, Native People's Party one, RPI (Gawai) one, Bharipa Bahujan Mahasangh three, Gondwana Ganatantra Party one and the SJP one.

The Sena-BJP combine will urge the Governor to convene a special session of the Assembly and ask Mr Deshmukh to prove his majority, the sources said.

04 JUN 2002

THE STATESMAN

Three Maharashtra Ministers quit

By Mahesh Vijapurkar

MUMBAI, MAY 30. Three Ministers of the Peasants and Workers Party (PWP) resigned from the Vilasrao Deshmukh-led multi-party coalition Maharashtra Government, but the party did not withdraw its support, thereby making the ruling establishment to scout for support from 10 independents. Otherwise, the Government would be reduced to a minority.

"Our number" — just five MLAs of whom three were Ministers, evidently disproportionate to their number but placing high value on their support for the coalition — "is not such that it can retain stability for this Government for long or force it into instability," one of them said. However, whether to move out entirely out of the coalition, like the CPI (M) with its two MLAs did some months ago, "is to be decided yet. We just want to give a jolt to this set-up now."

If the PWP decides sooner or later to withdraw support, the strength of MLAs in the ruling coalition would drop from 147 in a House of 288 — there is one vacancy to be filled yet — to 142 and the Independents, so vulnerable to lures and pelf, can swing the balance.

Of the dozen Independent MLAs, only two are openly in support of the BJP-Sena Opposition and the rest have been with the Democratic Front, with just one of them with a ministerial berth so far. Fortunes of some of them could now brighten.

The immediate provocation for the three Ministers — Ganpathrao Deshmukh (Cabinet rank) and Meenakshi Patil and Mohan Patil (Ministers of State) — was the reinduction of Sunil Tatakare who was asked to quit the Government for his failure to enable PWP to gain control once again of its stronghold, Raigad Zilla Parishad. When NCP found, on a formal inquiry by the party that he was not responsible, his reinduction was announced.

To the PWP, power in Raigad was more important than the

State Government and it decided to quit the Ministry hours before Mr. Tatakare's reinduction, insisting that Mr. Deshmukh not ask them to defer or review their decision. For the record, they said at a press conference that the members of the coalition, notably the Congress (I) and the NCP had at the local-body levels, joined hands with BJP and Sena and this compromised their strong secularist stand. Their discomfort, they said, has been manifest.

At a press conference, Mr. Ganpathrao Deshmukh spoke of the growing discomfort of the PWP in the ruling alliance where the common minimum programme met with scant respect and often, promises could not be kept for one reason or the other.

He spoke of failure to harness Krishna river waters, poor management of the power sector and inability to keep commitments to farmers on the payment schedule of the price for cotton bought under the monopoly cotton purchase scheme. "Therefore we see no reason to be Ministers."

But did not the party come to this alliance led by Congress (I) and NCP because it wanted to keep the Sena-BJP out of the reckoning for power?

To this Mr. Ganpathrao Deshmukh said: "We were not pre-poll allies of any party, much less the NCP. We only had local-level seat adjustments. And it is not the responsibility of the PWP alone to keep the Sena-BJP away from power. Others are equally responsible and have to behave accordingly."

Notwithstanding the protest resignations, Mr. Vilasrao Deshmukh went ahead with the swearing-in of Mr. Tatakare and told correspondents that he was yet to accept the resignations and, therefore, the issue of forwarding them to the Governor "at this moment did not arise." He, like the ally Nationalist Congress party, would like to try and persuade them to remain in the coalition and the Government.

THE HINDU

31 MAY 2002

Sena's march sparks fresh violence in Kalyan

By Ranjit Khomne
Times News Network

KALYAN: Curfew was imposed in Kalyan (West) on Friday evening after a mob burnt shops and establishments belonging to members of the minority community.

The trouble followed an unruly morcha by 3,000 Shiv Sainiks, who marched through the Shivaji Chowk area to protest Tuesday's violence in the town's Rohidaswada area. Ignoring the pleas of their leaders, Thane Sena chief Raghunath More and the party's Thane MP Prakash Paranjpe, the marchers stoned the window panes of a house opposite the office of the deputy commissioner of police, even as members of the State Reserve Police Force (SRPF) and the Rapid Action Force (RAF) stood by. The marchers later handed over a memorandum to Thane police commissioner S.M. Shangari.

Fresh violence was reported at 6.15 p.m. opposite the office of the Kalyan-Dombivli municipal corporation near Shivaji Chowk despite a heavy police presence. The police said that the warehouse of a marriage tent supplier on the ground floor of the Yakub Manzil building was set ablaze. The flames spread to a neighbouring lodge and a maternity home. Ten fire engines were pressed into service and the fire was still burning at 9.30 p.m.

Shaken Kalyan residents criticised the police for allowing the



Shiv Sainiks march through a street in Kalyan on Friday.

morcha to be conducted despite tension in the town. But a police official contended that "unless the anger of the Sainiks was allowed to dissipate by allowing their morcha, more problems would have resulted".

The morcha was ostensibly called to demand the arrest of Nationalist Congress Party corporator Iqbal Shaikh, who is wanted for the rioting and arson that took place on Tuesday night in Rohidaswada, a colony of cobblers in the old township. Local residents allege

that Mr Shaikh, wanting to settle political scores, had instigated the rioters, which had led to the death of Sena worker Ashok Walunj (34). Walunj's home and that of several others in the locality were set ablaze. Walunj's aunt, Ambibai (65), died of shock when she saw him being killed. Another woman, Nusrat Chowgule, died in the police firing. Samir Shaikh, a tonga-driver, was stabbed in a retaliatory attack the same night. His condition is said to be serious. Before Friday's incidents, the police had placed 120 people under preventive detention and arrested 40 others for Tuesday's arson and rioting, said Kalyan DCP Kiran Shelar. More than 100 persons had been named in Tuesday's first information reports about the riots, of whom 90 had already been arrested. Four companies of the SRPF and two of the RAF had been stationed in the troubled areas.

13 APR 2002

Three killed in Kalyan violence

Situation tense but under control, says Kripashankar

By Ranjit Khomne
Times News Network

KALYAN: Three persons were left dead in Kalyan and curfew was imposed in the Bazarpath area on Wednesday following a tiff between a rickshaw driver from the minority community and a passenger from the majority community a day earlier, sparking off a night of violence and rioting.

Houses and shops were set ablaze and groups threw stones at each other. Incidents of stone-throwing were reported as late as Wednesday afternoon in the Rohidaswada area in the old township.

A mob pulled Shiv Sena worker Ashok Walunj (34) out of his house on Tuesday night and lynched him, even though he had reportedly nothing to do with the autorickshaw incident. His aunt, Ambika Walunj (65), who watched his murder, reportedly died of shock.

As groups battled each other, the police opened fire in the air, allegedly killing a woman named Nusrat Sheikh. Inspector G.T. Mali of the Bazarpath police station was injured in a mob attack, said Kiran Shelar, the zonal deputy commissioner of police. The police, led by commissioner S.M. Shangari, rushed additional forces to the spot and brought the situation under control in the early hours of Wednesday.

Around 10 a.m. on Wednesday, minister of state for home Kripashankar Singh—who rushed here from Aurangabad—gave mediapersons a tour of the troubled area. He told reporters that the police had fired 14 rounds to control the rioters on Tuesday night, but he denied that anyone had been killed in the shooting.



A policeman strikes a protester who had pelted stones at police officers in Kalyan, 55 km north of Mumbai, on Wednesday after an outbreak of trouble between two groups a day earlier. (Another photo on Page 3)

Mr Singh said that 1,500 policemen, including members of the Rapid Action Force and the State Reserve Force, had been stationed in the area. "I am in constant touch with chief minister Vilasrao Deshmukh on the phone. We have also ordered a statewide alert in order to prevent any untoward incidents anywhere," he said. He added that the situation in Kalyan was tense but under control.

However, a couple of hours after Mr Singh briefed the media, fresh incidents of stone-pelting were

reported. At about 1 p.m., even as reporters were visiting the burnt houses and shops, some people started hurling stones at the police force stationed on Ambedkar Road, which leads to Rohidaswada, a colony of cobblers. Lathi-wielding policemen chased away the trouble-makers.

Mr Singh, who was at the state rest house with the Thane police commissioner and district collector I.S. Chhahal, rushed to the spot. He then ordered that the entire town be put under curfew. Mr Chhahal said a report about the

loss of property would be submitted to Mr Singh by Thursday.

Curfew for most of Kalyan was lifted at about 6 p.m. after Mr Walunj's funeral, but restrictions remained in force in Bazarpath.

Although the altercation over the rickshaw fare was said to have provoked the violence, local residents alleged that the riot had been pre-planned. They said that the rioters decided to strike knowing that many Shiv Sena workers were in Shirdi attending their party's convention.

► Political rivalry alleged, Page 3

11 APR 2002

THE TIMES OF INDIA

Shah speech sparks row

The Governor's Address today was marked by turmoil from protesting Trinamul benches, says our reporter in Kolkata

Feb. 27. — Trinamul Congress MLAs today clashed with securitymen inside the Assembly when they prevented the Governor a smooth exit after his Address.

As the Governor rose to deliver his address, Trinamul MLAs walked out of the House to protest the government's inaction over release of a Trinamul MLA lodged in an Islampur jail. The Speaker later said the atmosphere was not conducive to such talks.

After having read out his 45-minute Address, Mr Viren J Shah began his walk down the corridor when irate Trinamul MLAs blocked his passage. They demanded the release of Mr Abdul Karim Choudhury, Islampur MLA, and sought an explanation from the Governor over why the matter was not incorporated in the speech.

Securitymen sprung into action when Trinamul MLAs obstructed the Governor and stopped him from walking down to his car. At this, Trinamul MLAs Mr Jyotipriya Mallick, Mrs Sonali Guha and Mr Arunava Ghosh protested "police high-handedness".

CPI proposes

KOLKATA, Feb. 27. — The CPI has decided to prepare a prescription to improve the LF government's functioning. This comes close on the heels of the CPI-M treatise titled *Left Front government and our tasks* approved at its state conference.

Mr Manju Majumder, CPI state secretary, said the plan for preparing the party's version of an improved LF government — an election pledge — had been made at the party's state conference last month. The CPI avowedly does not see eye-to-eye with some major policy initiatives of the government. — SNS

Security personnel caught Mr Ghosh by the scruff of his neck and pushed him to a corner. Mrs Guha was dragged towards the main entrance and came to blows with securitymen. Pandemonium then broke out as other Trinamul MLAs joined in the melee. Special Branch officers failed to exercise control and the House turned into a battleground.

The Governor could not get into his car parked inside the Assembly because of the jostling. The car was driven out. Mr Shah, encircled by securitymen, walked to Auckland Square, only to be confronted with three more Trinamul MLAs before he could finally board the vehicle.

THE STATESMAN

28 FEB 2002

Saffron alliance sweeps civic polls in Maharashtra

Mumbai
12 FEBRUARY

A SPLIT in anti-saffron votes due to fighting between Congress and the NCP and issues like terrorism and national security helped the Shiv Sena-BJP combine retain the Mumbai and Thane civic bodies and wrest Nashik from its rivals. The NCP notched up a majority in Ulhasnagar, a suburb of Mumbai, and Congress emerged as the single largest party in Solapur. In the 227-member BMC here, the Sena maintained its hold, winning 99 wards, a little less than the 103 it had in the dissolved house. The BJP has won 35, while the Congress managed 60 and NCP 11. The Samajwadi Party got 10 and independents bagged 11 wards. Polling was postponed to February 17 in Mazgaon ward No 24. The Congress improved its tally in BMC from 49 in the last civic body to 60.

Buoyed by the results, Sena supremo Bal Thackeray said the



THACKERAY: NEW HUES

party's next target will be the state assembly. In Thane, the saffron combine prevailed with the Sena gaining substantial ground despite rebellion from supporters of late party leader Anand Dighe and bagged 46 wards so far. The BJP won 13. The NCP and Congress won 22 and 11 seats, respectively.

9/11 note
The decision of the Shiv Sena and the BJP to contest jointly helped the alliance capture the Congress stronghold of Nashik. In the 108-seat civic body, the Sena made significant gains capturing 37 wards, followed by the BJP with 22, while the Congress picked up only 17 in a township hitherto known as its bastion. Independents and others bagged nine.

The NCP also could not make any mark in Nashik, where it got only 23 wards. The NCP swept the polls in Ulhasnagar, though the swing is attributed to the merger of Ulhasnagar People's Party, founded by Tada-accused Pappu Kalani, with NCP. In Ulhasnagar, NCP has bagged 42 seats, keeping other parties far behind. The Sena won 10 seats, Congress nine and BJP eight. The Congress, however, emerged as the single largest outfit in its bastion Solapur winning 42 seats. The saffron combine gave a good fight in the 98-member civic body bagging 40 seats. — PTI

The Economic Times

Madrasa pickings for LF partners

The madrasa fallout has won LF partners some major concessions that Big Brother had been denying them, says our reporter from Kolkata

Feb. 7. — In what seems to be the latest episode in the madrasa fallout, chief minister Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee's 'bungling' over the issue has helped the junior Left Front partners extract from Big Brother two concessions they were being denied.

Front partners argued at the LF Committee meeting that the controversy may not have erupted at all had the chief minister discussed the issue at least with some

'Buddha is a coward'
KOLKATA, Feb. 7. — Trinamul leader Mr Pankaj Banerjee today called Mr Bhattacharjee a "coward" who didn't have the courage to own up to his statements. State BJP leader Mr Asim Ghosh also deemed the back-track "unfortunate". — SNS

of his senior ministers from the coalition's constituents. The same

thing had happened during the Peco debate, they said.

The two incidents, the partners contended, strengthened their argument that a Cabinet core committee comprising senior ministers from the four con-

stituents — the CPI-M, CPI, FB and RSP — alone can save the LF from unsavoury situations and ensure better coordination.

The partners have been clamouring for the formation of such a

committee for over a decade, but the CPI-M's numerical strength in the Assembly poured cold water on the demand. But yesterday Mr Bhattacharjee readily agreed to constitute the panel.

The partners also forced the CPI-M to concede its demand for a pre-Budget discussion in the LF committee so that they can have a say in the Budget. Yesterday, the CPI-M conceded, and fixed the date for discussion for 26 Feb.

USIS probe net cast

KOLKATA, Feb. 7. — Adil Hassan and Rohan Alam alias Maniti, were remanded in police custody till 20 February. They were produced at Bankshall Court today. They were brought to the city from Hazaribagh yesterday.

Police said Adil and Mani knew Jamaluddin Naseer — an accused in the American Center attack case. A detective department official said more information may be extracted from Naseer once his associates are arrested.

DCDD Mr Soumen Mitra said police are looking for four persons. He refused to name them but claimed that they could provide vital clues. CID officials said they were in touch with the Jammu Police to procure details on some militants. "We are sharing information on the activities of some militants based in Kashmir," a senior CID official said.

In a bid to achieve a breakthrough, police are planning to use "decoys" to nab Sadaquat. — SNS

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POLLS IN MANIPUR HD-8

AFTER A SPELL of Central rule, caused by the irrepressible urge of the members of the political class in the region to shift political allegiance, Manipur will have a Government in a few weeks from now. The context in which the Radhabinod Koiram Ministry bowed out of office and the violent agitation in the State against the Union Government's moves to extend the ceasefire agreement with the NSCN (I-M) to a few districts in Manipur too have added a complex dimension to the poll scene. Rather than concerns pertaining to governance and the performance of the Koiram Ministry, the poll discourse is bound to be dominated by concerns of ethnic identity and such issues that have dogged the Northeast for long. And this certainly is a cause for worry over the prospects of normality being maintained during the election campaign. For this reason alone, the administration will have to remain vigilant. While ethnic and other emotive concerns are bound to be played up by the various actors in the course of their campaign, any let-up in vigilance will lead to further distortion of the democratic discourse. The impact of such a development is, bound to be felt even in the post-poll situation in the region.

Given this harsh reality, the electoral players in Manipur will have at least now to spell out their stand on the larger issue of the Naga peace process. That the issue and the developments in this regard — whatever little has been done in the past five years during which period the Union Home Ministry has been engaging Thiungaleng Muivah and Isak Chisi Swu of the NSCN (I-M) in talks — will have to be brought into the electoral discourse. This alone will draw the prominent players in the State's political stage to come out clearly on their own positions on the peace talks. The fact that the Naga peace process also involves settlement of the stated demand by the

NSCN (I-M) for a "greater Nagaland" and the repeated statements by Mr. Muivah and Mr. Swu that they continue to stand by their demand make it imperative for the parties with some presence in Manipur — the BJP, the Samata Party, the Congress (I) and the Manipur People's Party — to build a consensus among the people of Manipur against playing up to passions and indulging in violence of the kind witnessed in Imphal in the aftermath of the extension of the Naga ceasefire agreement in July 2001.

Be that as it may, the election scene in Manipur should cause concern on another count too. Apart from the armed mercenaries of the NSCN (I-M) whose presence is substantial in at least four districts of Manipur — Ukhrul, Tamenglong, Chandel and Senapati — there are several other gangs consisting of youth, heavily armed, across the State. This indeed is a factor that the civil administration in the State will have to watch carefully. While a section of these armed groups is actively engaged in effecting a boycott of the poll process, it is possible that players in the electoral arena lean on such elements to vitiate the exercise. It is in this context that the poll scene in Manipur provides a chance to the mainstream political parties to put might into the task of restoring the political process in the State as well as in the region. This task is easier said than done. The democratic discourse has been distorted to such levels that parties and labels have been rendered redundant in the past few years and this has contributed immensely to the crisis there. Hence it is imperative for the political leaders to introspect and display their commitment to the party system and democracy rather than tread the same path they have done in the past three decades. The elections in Manipur provide an opportunity for them to chart a new course that will ensure their own relevance in the region.

THE HINDU