

Judicial probe into Nagappa death ordered

Our Political Bureau
BANGALORE 16 DECEMBER

In a bid to take the sting out of the demands for a CBI inquiry into the mystery behind the death of JD(U) leader Nagappa in forest bandit Veerappan's custody, the S.M. Krishna ministry has decided to start a judicial probe by a Karnataka High Court judge.

The Karnataka Cabinet, which held a special meeting on Monday morning, decided to request the Karnataka High Court chief justice to spare the services of a sitting judge or alternatively suggest a retired high court judge for ascertaining the veracity of allegations regarding the tragic end to the 106-day kidnap drama.

Karnataka's health and information minister Kagodu Thimmappa, who briefed reporters after the Cabinet meeting, said the chief minister will write to the high court chief justice to spare the services of a sitting judge or suggest a suitable retired judge to conduct the inquiry.

The terms of the probe will be decided in due course, he said, pointing out that the government wants to get to the truth of Nagappa's death in view of various allegations and suspicions publicly aired by different quarters.

Veerappan, who had kidnapped the former JD(U) minister from his farmhouse in Kamagere village in the Chamara-janagar district near Mysore, had in his sixth cassette blamed the Tamil Nadu special task force (STF) for the killing of Nagappa, after a bloody encounter in the forest on December 5. The Kar-

nataka government had received the tape on December 8. The STF had denied the claims and said its operations had been suspended at Karnataka's request. Veerappan had said Nagappa was killed at the end of 106 days. However the subsequent discovery of 30 fired cartridges and other personal belongings, including a diary maintained by the JD(U) leader, in the Chengadi forest, in the vicinity of the spot where the decomposed body was found, had



NAGAPPA

given room for suspicions and speculations on whether the Tamil Nadu STF either singly or jointly with its Karnataka counterparts had engaged the bandit in an encounter leading to the former's death.

The bereaved family of Nagappa, as well as leaders of political parties and heads of various religious mutts had also given credence to these rumours and publicly demanded a CBI inquiry in view of the interstate ramifications.

Though the Krishna regime has summoned a special session of both Houses from December 23, mainly to discuss the killing of Nagappa and the Veerappan issue. The accusations of the bereaved family and heads of religious mutts had forced the government to indulge in some damage control exercise by announcing the judicial inquiry.

The religious mutts and Nagappa's family had said the JD(U) leader's kidnapping was not handled as well as the drama involving Kannada matinee idol Rajkumar, who was released after 108 days two years ago. The government feels it can ill afford to antagonise the Tamil Nadu.

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'HE WAS BLINDFOLDED AND SHOT'

Nagappa laid to rest amid mob fury, tension

10/12

By Sharat S. Srivatsa

KOLLEGAL, DEC. 9. The body of the former Karnataka Minister, H. Nagappa, who had been kidnapped by the forest brigand Veerappan, was laid to rest at his farmhouse at Kamagere, in Chamarajanagar district, this evening amid angry scenes, even as the post-mortem examination showed that he had been shot at from point-blank range.

Quoting one of the doctors who conducted the post-mortem examination, sources said that Nagappa was blindfolded and made to recline against a boulder before being shot. Eyewitnesses, who were part of the team which went into the Chengadi forests in search of Nagappa on Sunday, said he was found dead blindfolded, with his hands tied behind his back. But the examination could not establish the kind of weapon used and no bullet was found on the body.

A Janata Dal leader, Nagappa, was kidnapped from his house in Kamagere village of Kollegal taluk on August 25.

State honours rejected

Nagappa's last rites were performed at his farmhouse amid expressions of anger and grief. A mob went on the rampage in Kamagere, Ramapura, Cowdahalli, and other towns of Chamarajanagar district.

Family members rejected the "full State honours" offered by the State Government for Mr. Nagappa and no Government representative was allowed anywhere near the farmhouse.

The former Ministers and JD



The body of the JD(U) leader, H. Nagappa, who was found dead in the Chengadi forest on Sunday. — PTI

(U) leaders, P.G.R. Sindhia, Byre Gowda, M.P. Prakash and Nage Gowda, were roughed up by villagers. The leaders were even locked up for some time. The Union Ministers belonging to the State, V. Srinivas Prasad and Ananth Kumar, were prevented from reaching the village. The Minister for Sugar, M. Mahadev, could not make it to the venue either.

Stone-throwing, arson

Earlier, there were emotional scenes at Ramapura as Mr. Nagappa's body was handed over to his family members. A huge crowd gathered around the van

in which the body was to be taken to Kamagere and prevented it from leaving. The people demanded that they be allowed to have a glimpse of the body and, soon, grief gave way to anger.

A jeep parked at the Ramapura police station was set on fire and the mob went on the rampage, throwing stones and indulging in arson. Police burst teargas shells and fired in the air.

Similar scenes were witnessed all along the road from Ramapura to Kamagere. Three police vans following the van carrying the body were targeted. When the situation went out of

control, police retreated from the scene. On reaching Kamagere, Mr. Nagappa's body was kept in the portico of his house for the people to pay their last respects. A shamiana erected outside the house was dismantled by the mob. The van which brought the body and a police vehicle were set afire.

A peaceful bandh was observed in Mysore city, Chamarajanagar, Kollegal, Gundlupet, and Yelandur taluks. Train services between Mysore and Bangalore were suspended.

In Bangalore, the Chief Minister, S.M. Krishna, said the STF's of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu had resumed their operations against Veerappan. The brigand would be either killed or nabbed by the joint forces of the Centre and the two States, he added.

'Will go all out for Veerappan'

By Our Staff Reporter

COIMBATORE, DEC. 9. The combined Special Task Force of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka will go all out in the hunt for brigand Veerappan, according to the Joint Commandant, Walter Dawaram.

Talking to reporters at Sathyamangalam STF camp here tonight, he said the operation by these forces had been not given up during the last 100 days. It was only suspended temporarily. Earlier he had a meeting with the former DGP and the current Security Adviser to the Government of Karnataka, Srinivasulu.

Mr. Dawaram said that Mr. Srinivasulu had come with the specific objective of finalising the strategies and modalities of the operation to be carried out.

Asked about the offer of assistance by the Central Government, Mr. Dawaram and Mr. Srinivasulu said that the forces were well-equipped in terms of numerical strength. However, in course of such co-ordination meetings, "we would decide on the technical assistance, logistics and gadgetry required from the Centre."

To a question on Veerappan's charge that the Tamil Nadu STF's operation had resulted in the death of the hostage, a visibly agitated Mr. Dawaram said, "we don't have time to listen to the criminals who have sent any number of cassettes. You can enquire him on the charges when we get him alive".

'Centre ready to help nab Veerappan'

By Anita Joshua

NEW DELHI, DEC. 9. The Central Government today offered to help the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu Governments nab the forest brigand, Veerappan, in a joint operation even as the uproar in Karnataka over the killing of the former Minister and Janata Dal (U) leader, H. Nagappa, by Veerappan found an echo in the Lok Sabha with BJP members demanding the resignation of the Karnataka Chief Minister, S.M. Krishna.

Voicing the concern expressed by members during the 40-minute heated discussion in the Lok Sabha, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, said the Government was willing to provide all help possible within Constitutional parameters to the two States to put an end to Veerappan's brand of terrorism.

Given the accusations made by the BJP benches against the Karnataka Government, Mr. Mahajan said "had it been easy to nab Veerappan, he would have been caught earlier". As for Central intervention, he said the Government was prepared to provide manpower — be it police, NSG or the Army — to conduct the joint operation.

Raised by the former Prime Minister, H.D. Deve Gowda, during zero hour with a plea not to politicise the matter, the discussion became heated as the BJP leader, V.K. Malhotra, sought the resignation of Mr. Krishna, whom he accused of being more bothered about the Gujarat elections than the fate of Mr. Nagappa.

Rejecting the demand, the Congress accused the BJP of doublespeak for not making a similar demand when the Akshardham temple in Gujarat was attacked by militants.

Nagappa's body found

By A. Jayaram

BANGALORE, DEC. 8. In a shocking turn of events today, the former Karnataka Minister and Janata Dal (United) leader, H. Nagappa, was found dead in the forest today. He had been abducted by the forest brigand, Veerappan, on August 25 from his house in Kamagere village, in Kollegal taluk of Chamarajanagar district.

Earlier in the day, Veerappan had sent a cassette, his sixth, claiming that when he was "attacked" by the Tamil Nadu Special Task Force (STF), he had asked Mr. Nagappa to flee.

The Karnataka Home Minister, Mallikarjun Kharge, confirmed the death of the former Minister and the recovery of his body this evening. The Chief Minister, S.M. Krishna, who is away in Delhi after campaigning for the Congress in Gujarat, is rushing here tomorrow.

Reports reaching here said the body was found in the Thobare Hills near Kuratti Hosoor village, adjacent to the Chengadi forest in the Ramapura police station limits.

Mr. Kharge warned of action against "whoever is responsible for the killing of Mr. Nagappa". He could not say whether Mr.



The Karnataka Home Minister, Mallikarjun Kharge, with Nagappa's son Preetham (right), and son-in-law, Kiran Patel, prior to receiving the sixth cassette from Veerappan in Bangalore on Sunday. — Photo: T.L. Prabhakar

opened due to the operation by Tamil Nadu and it will be known only after the investigation."

The Government's Security Adviser and former State police chief, T. Srinivasulu, said Mr. Nagappa had died on Thursday and that the recorded cassette talked of an encounter with the Tamil Nadu STF that day.

With Tamil Nadu quickly denying that its STF personnel had an encounter with Veerappan — Mr. Kharge too held the same view — there are doubts over the encounter theory. It is believed that Mr. Nagappa was done to death by the brigand who had been setting deadlines for sending emissaries and also for payment.

Earlier, the news of the sixth cassette from Veerappan had raised hopes in Mr. Nagappa's village of a happy ending to the 106-day-old abduction crisis. Some family members of Mr. Nagappa were in the city and they rushed back to Kamagere after hearing about the cassette.

There were reports that Veerappan had abandoned Mr. Nagappa in the forest. In fact, Mr. Nagappa's son-in-law, Kiran Patel, had spoken in this vein to presspersons at Mr. Kharge's residence. Reports reaching here from Kamagere said that

after the cassette was received, hundreds of villagers had entered the forests hoping to find Mr. Nagappa. Immediately, an STF party led by the Superintendent of Police, Arkesh, began combing operations.

On hearing the news that Mr. Nagappa's body had been found in the forest, about 500 people surrounded it and did not allow anyone connected with the Government to come near it. The Minister for Animal Husbandry, M. Mahadev, who is the Minister in-charge for Chamarajanagar district, was confronted by an angry mob. Tension gripped Kollegal taluk and police were on their guard.

Mr. Nagappa was the Minister of State for Agricultural Marketing in the J.H. Patel Ministry. He was defeated in the 1999 Assembly elections. Born on Janu-

ary 15, 1937 at Kamagere, he was a science graduate. He was first elected to the Assembly in 1967 on the Congress ticket from Hanur. He is survived by his wife, Parimala, son, Pritham and a daughter.

Mr. Nagappa's wife and children had made desperate attempts to secure his release and to persuade the Government to work for a negotiated release. They had met Ms. Jayalalitha and also the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, appealing for help.

The distraught Government has declared a holiday for government offices, schools and colleges in the State on Monday as a mark of respect to Mr. Nagappa. He will be given a State funeral.

Krishna appeals for calm: Page 11



H. Nagappa

Nagappa was shot dead or had died of his ailments. Only the post-mortem examination, to be conducted at Kamagere on Monday, would reveal the truth.

Mr. Kharge said the operations of the STF against Veerappan had been resumed in the forest.

Asked about Veerappan saying in the cassette that the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalitha, was to be blamed if anything happened to Mr. Nagappa, Mr. Kharge said: "We have to see if it is his hand or whether the incident has hap-

Jayalalitha orders joint operation

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, DEC. 8. Following a request from her Karnataka counterpart, S.M. Krishna, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalitha, today ordered an "effective and conclusive joint operation" against the forest bandit, Veerappan.

In a telephonic conversation with Ms. Jayalalitha after receiving news of the killing of Mr. Nagappa, Mr. Krishna wanted Tamil Nadu to start the joint operation "without further loss of time." Tamil Nadu had suspended the joint operation at the request of the Karnataka Government as there were fears it could affect the safety of Mr. Nagappa.

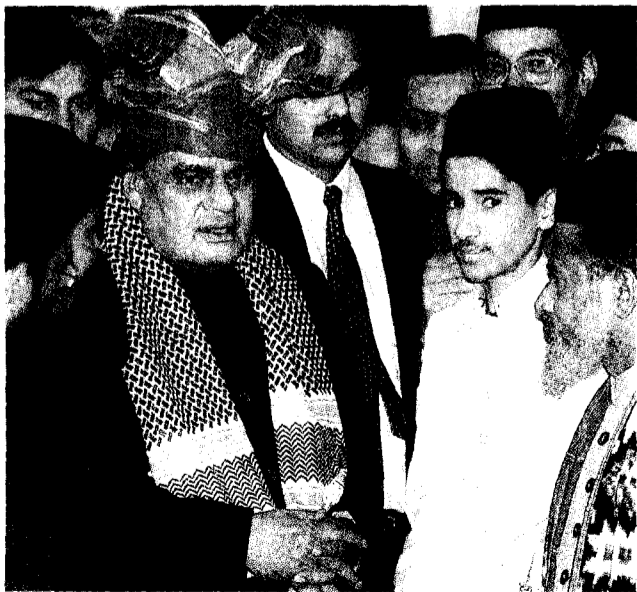
In a statement, Ms. Jayalalitha said the killing of Mr. Nagappa "brings to light the urgent need for the two States to work together to capture the forest brigand who has been responsible for numerous bloody murders of innocent persons for several years and to put an emphatic halt to his dastardly acts of violence and crime."

Referring to reports of an encounter between the Tamil Na-

du STF and Veerappan, she said: "It is unfortunate that some mischievous elements are now trying to foment trouble by spreading rumours that it was the Tamil Nadu STF who were responsible for this encounter in which Mr. Nagappa lost his life. This is totally untrue. The Tamil Nadu STF had no role to play in Karnataka after the joint operations were called off on the request of the Government of Karnataka. The Tamil Nadu STF were in no way connected with this incident which took place nearly 40 km into Karnataka territory."

A press release said the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, in a telephone conversation with Ms. Jayalalitha tonight, requested her to start a concerted effort along with the Karnataka Government to nab Veerappan and assured her assistance from the Centre.

Ms. Jayalalitha assured Mr. Advani that the STF in Tamil Nadu would be fully geared to take up the joint operations, as the State had always adopted a definite strategy and resorted to firm action within its territory in its efforts to capture Veerappan.



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, being greeted by Muslims at the Id Milan party, hosted at his residence in New Delhi on Sunday. — Photo: V.V. Krishnan

Captive dead, Veerappan stokes embers

OUR BUREAU

Dec. 8: The body of former Karnataka minister H. Nagappa was found in a jungle this evening hours after his captor Veerappan hinted at an encounter with Tamil Nadu police, injecting a potentially explosive element into tense relations between the two neighbouring states.

Setting aside their differences for the time being, the political leaderships of both the states

as well as the Centre scrambled tonight to put up a united front and appeal for peace.

Karnataka has declared a holiday for schools, colleges and government offices tomorrow as a precautionary measure. All trains between Bangalore and Mysore and some from Tamil Nadu to the neighbouring state have been cancelled.

The Tamils in Karnataka had been at the receiving end of earlier Kannadiga backlashes against Veerappan, who traces

his roots to Tamil Nadu and has been linked to extremists based there. A few incidents of violence were reported late tonight in Nagappa's hometown.

The two states also announced the resumption of a joint drive — which had been suspended at Karnataka's initiative because of political complications and against the wishes of Tamil Nadu — to catch the bandit "dead or live".

Deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, too, tried to calm tem-

pers, saying in Ahmedabad that "prima facie" Veerappan's claim of an encounter "seems absolutely false". Advani spoke to the chief ministers of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, Jayalalithaa and S.M. Krishna, who have assured him of their cooperation.

Krishna, whose differences



Veerappan



Nagappa

the two states came under further strain when Veerappan claimed in an audio cassette that the hostage was no longer in his

with Jayalithaa on the Veerappan hunt are well known, called her from Delhi this evening.

Already tense over the Cauvery water dispute, the relations between

the two states came under further strain when Veerappan claimed in an audio cassette that the hostage was no longer in his

custody after they were both injured in an encounter with a Tamil Nadu special task force squad on Thursday. Veerappan had sent the cassette to Nagappa's family last night.

This evening — the 106th day of the 66-year-old Janata Dal (United) leader was discovered in the Changdi jungles, about 100 km from Bangalore, near the Karnataka-Tamil Nadu border.

Sources in the Karnataka home ministry said Nagappa's

body was decomposed and that the former minister could have died at least two days ago.

Jayalithaa dismissed Veerappan's claim and said the Tamil Nadu force had no role "in this encounter", which allegedly took place 40 km inside Karnataka.

Initially, Karnataka home minister Mallikarjun Kharge seemed to virtually repeat Veerappan's claims. He said the decomposed body with multiple wounds was found in jungles in Chamarajanagar district, 6-7 km

from the place Veerappan had mentioned in the tape.

He, however, added that a post-mortem would be carried out tomorrow to find out whether Nagappa had fallen to bullets as claimed by the brigand. Nagappa was a diabetic.

The tragic end to the crisis was in marked contrast to a similar abduction of Kannada film icon Rajkumar in 2000. Rajkumar was released after 108 days amid whispers that a huge ransom had been paid.

9-8 Karnataka

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THE ABDUCTION CRISIS

9-8 Karnataka

THE KARNATAKA GOVERNMENT'S plan of sending the Tamil nationalist, Kolathur Mani, to negotiate the release of the former State Minister, H. Nagappa, who was abducted by Veerappan three months ago, is fraught with all manner of difficulty. The very dishonesty and hypocrisy of withdrawing cases against someone who has recently been charged in a string of cases with actively assisting Veerappan in his nefarious activities is one aspect of the matter. But the issue is also caught up in legal complexities and the Karnataka Government may well discover that releasing Mr. Mani is not going to be smooth or easy. It was only two years ago, that the Supreme Court shot down attempts by the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu Governments to secure the release of Rajkumar by dropping TADA charges against a number of so-called Veerappan associates — a condition laid down by the brigand for the Kan- nada filmstar's release. In response to a public interest litigation filed by the father of a Karnata- ka sub-inspector killed by Veerappan, the Court held the decision of the lower courts to grant bail to the TADA detenus was not "good in law" and not in keeping with the requirements of the pro- vision in the Code of Criminal Procedure (name- ly Section 321), which permits the prosecution to withdraw cases against accused under certain conditions.

The Supreme Court's ruling made it clear that it was opposed to the provision being used to cut what it called "a package deal" — one which has the appearance of a mere ploy and which re- flects the prosecution's complicity with the ac- cused. On the face of it, the overall circumstances of the present situation and the one which evoked the ire of the Supreme Court are similar. In both cases, what is being sought is the release of those accused as demanded by Veerappan. During the Rajkumar kidnap case, this was attempted by dropping the TADA charg- es against the accused. In this event, what is being contemplated is withdrawing a few cases pending in different Karnataka courts in which

Mr. Mani has been charged under laws such as the IPC and the Indian Explosives Act. Since Mr. Mani has been charged along with other Tamil nationalists in the cases, the implications of withdrawing them go far beyond the release of the Periyar Dravida Kazhagam leader himself. The Karnataka Government must be aware that any decision it takes in the direction of securing Mr. Mani's services as an emissary to negotiate Mr. Nagappa's release will be challenged judi- cially. Already, Abdul Kareem, the very person who successfully challenged the Mysore special court's order granting bail to the TADA accused in the Veerappan associates case, has threatened to block the Karnataka Cabinet's decision to withdraw cases against the Periyar Dravida Kaz- hagam activist, who incidentally was part of a group that supposedly secured Mr. Rajkumar's release after the Supreme Court slammed the door on the proposed barter of hostages for detenus.

It is obvious, just as it was during the Rajkumar kidnap, that there are enormous pressures on the Karnataka Government to adopt whatever mea- sures within its power to secure Mr. Nagappa's release. Such pressures have increased manifold with the delivery of Veerappan's latest missive, in which he set a 12-day deadline for the release of Mr. Mani and threatened to behead his captive if this demand was not met. If the Karnataka Gov- ernment, which earlier refused to send Mr. Mani as an emissary, now seems prepared to succumb to Veerappan's blackmail, it is because of the ferocity and ugliness of the brigand's threat. Dealing with a situation like this — where the possible loss of innocent life has to be weighed against the perils of giving in to illegal threats — is never easy. It is a predicament that the Govern- ments of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu have found themselves in more than once with respect to Veerappan. It is also a predicament that high- lights the simple truth that the only escape from being subject to such dilemmas over and over again is to nab the brigand.

THE HINDU

26 NOV 2002

CASES TO BE WITHDRAWN

Karnataka Govt. decides to send Kolathur Mani

By Our Special Correspondent

BANGALORE, NOV. 23. The Karnataka Cabinet on Saturday decided to withdraw cases against Periyar Dravida Kazhagam activist, Kolathur Mani, and send him as emissary to the forest brigand, Veerappan, to negotiate the release of the former Minister, H. Nagappa.

Earlier in the day, an all-party meeting convened by the Government arrived at a consensus that Mani should be sent as the emissary as demanded by Veerappan in his latest cassette sent to the Government.

While three of the cases are pending in the Supreme Court, two are stated to be pending before the lower courts in Chamaraajanagar and Mysore.

Veerappan has threatened to kill Mr. Nagappa, held captive by him in the Kollegal forests for over three months, if the State Government does not send Mani as emissary. He has given a 12-day ultimatum to the Government. However, the Government is confident that he will extend it on realising that it is sincere in its efforts to obtain the release of Mani.

The Cabinet, which met for nearly two hours soon after the conclusion of an all-party meeting that discussed the issue, de-



The Karnataka Chief Minister, S.M. Krishna (left) having a chat with K.H. Srinivasa and Narayanaswamy (right), both of the JD(S), and P.G.R. Sindhia (2nd left) at an all-party meeting in Bangalore on Saturday. — Photo: K. Gopinathan

cidied to go by the advice of the Opposition leaders who said that under the prevailing circumstances, Mani would be the best bet to go as emissary since the brigand had been mentioning his name repeatedly. He had sought Mani as emissary in four of the five cassettes sent after Mr. Nagappa's abduction.

A consensus was reached at the all-party meeting on sending Mani. The Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Assembly, Jagadish Shettar, and the President of the JD(U) State

unit, C. Byre Gowda, MLA, said they were opposed to STF operations against Veerappan.

Briefing presspersons after the Cabinet meeting, the Minister for Information and Health and Family Welfare, Kagodu Thimmappa, and the Minister for Law and Parliamentary Affairs, D.B. Chandre Gowda, said the Government would direct the public prosecutors to move the courts concerned to withdraw the cases as per the provisions under Section 321 of the Criminal Procedure Code.

Krishna says sorry to SC

CM still not out of troubled waters

HT Correspondent
Bangalore, October 28

THE RELEASE of Cauvery waters to Tamil Nadu today sparked off protests in Karnataka's Mandya and Mysore districts, leading to the arrest of 600 agitators, including several politicians.

The police said among those arrested were former Congress MP G Made Gowda, former Janata Dal Ministers Nage Gowda and B Somashekhar. The chief of the State Farmers' Association Puttanaiah was also arrested.

Throughout the day, the two districts were tense with several incidents of stone-throwing and road blockades. The police made lathicharges at a few places and arrest several hundred activists. Heavy police presence was maintained in both districts with Rapid Action Force personnel in full deployment.

About 50 farmers, who attempted to jump into the Kapila river near Nanjangud, were among those arrested. The KR Sagar and Kabini reservoirs — from where water is being released to Tamil Nadu — have been fortified with heavy security. According to reports here, farmers from several villages in the two districts are said to be making a beeline for the two reservoirs to prevent the water release.

Rail and road traffic between Mysore and Bangalore were paralysed. Educational institutions were closed in the two Cauvery belt districts. Meanwhile, senior Ministers of the Krishna Government met the Chief Minister to review law and order and also the security arrangements in the two districts.

Though the Supreme Court has given Krishna a reprieve, the State Government is now left



Chief Minister SM Krishna speaks to President Abdul Kalam during the inauguration of the IT fair in Bangalore on Monday.

with having to grapple with the law and order problem in the two southern districts that threatens to intensify, if today's incidents are any indication.

Meanwhile, Krishna tendered an unconditional apology to the Supreme Court for disobeying the court's order on releasing Cauvery waters to Tamil Nadu, adds a New Delhi report. Krishna told the apex court through his counsel, Anil Divan, that Karnataka has started releasing 10,000 cusecs of river water to Tamil Nadu.

In an affidavit, the Chief Minister also urged the court to drop the contempt proceedings against him and others on the plea of Tamil Nadu that Karnataka had deliberately disobeyed the order to release water to the State. A Bench, headed by Chief Justice

BN Kirpal, kept the affidavit on record, directing Krishna to file another statement before it with details of the quantity of water Karnataka has been releasing. The Bench fixed November 1 for the hearing.

The Bench said: "We are happy to know that a constitutional crisis has blown over," even while expressing displeasure over the past conduct of the State. Representing Tamil Nadu, senior counsel KK Venugopal said the apology and the statement on releasing water was only "lip service."

He said *kuruwai* crops in Tamil Nadu were fully destroyed for want of water. He said the state should compensate the loss of crops. To this, the Bench said: "We have not yet accepted the apology. It is only on record."

Coimbatore blast accused shot dead

Statesman News Service

BANGALORE/ CHENNAI, Sept. 29. — Imam Ali, one of the prime accused in the 1993 and 1998 bomb blast cases, was shot dead along with four associates, including a woman, in a joint operation by the Tamil Nadu and Karnataka police in Bangalore early today.

Ali, wanted for the 1993 and 1998 bomb blast cases in Chennai and Coimbatore, died in an exchange of fire with the police after he refused to surrender. The police had surrounded the house where the terrorists had taken refuge.

Sharpshooters from the Tamil Nadu Special Task Force were assisted by the Karnataka reserve police in the operation. It was a long seven-month chase for the Tamil Nadu police, which had launched a massive manhunt in Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and

Tamil Nadu to catch Ali, carrying a reward of Rs 5 lakh on his head.

Mr Ashutosh Shukla, deputy inspector general of police, Coimbatore, told reporters in Bangalore that Deputy Prime Minister Mr LK Advani, Union minister Mr Murli Manohar Joshi and VHP chief Mr Ashok Singhal were on Ali's hit list.

Mr Shukla said the Tamil Nadu police had foiled his plans once in July this year when he was on his way to Allahabad to assassinate Mr Joshi and Mr Singhal. On 7 March this year, Ali and his associate Hyder Ali staged a sensational escape from police custody with the help of a militant group near Thirumangalam police station in Madurai. While Hyder Ali surrendered two days later, Ali eluded the police dragnet, he said.

After the demolition of the Babari

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30 SEP 2002

THE STATESMAN

Farmers on way to Kabini reservoir lathicharged

By Sharath S. Srivatsa

H.D. KOTE (MYSORE DT.), SEPT. 15. Police fired in the air and lobbed teargas shells to disperse more than 8,000 farmers from T. Narasipura at H.D. Kote Handpost today.

Over 20 police officials and

hundreds of farmers were injured and scores of vehicles damaged as the farmers resorted to stone-throwing. At least five farmers received grievous injuries.

Trouble started when personnel of the Rapid Action Force and the KSRP wielded

"lathis" on the farmers led by Mallesh and Kurubur Shanthakumar, before resorting to firing in the air, at the Rajendra Prasad Circle.

The farmers, who reached the spot in more than 50 lorries under police escort, led by the Mysore Police Commissioner, C. Chandrashekar, demanded that they be allowed to proceed to the Kabini Reservoir at Beechanahalli, 16 km from the handpost.

The efforts of police to bring the arrested leader of the Cauvery Hitarakshana Samithi, G. Made Gowda, to persuade the farmers to drop their agitation were not successful. Mr. Gowda and the KRRS leader, Puttanaiah, had been taken into preventive custody earlier, after they defied the provisions of Section 144 imposed in the H.D. Kote taluk.

When the farmers, raising slogans against the Karnataka Government, the Centre and the Supreme Court, started pressing forward, the KSRP personnel charged at the crowd that had gathered on the Mysore-H.D. Kote Road.

sore-H.D. Kote Road.

Even as police were chasing the farmers away, policemen guarding the Deputy Commissioner, Kumar G. Naik, and the KSRP Inspector-General, Shankar Bidri, were attacked and stoned by another group of farmers on the Saragur Road. While the KSRP personnel tried to disperse the farmers on Mysore Road, the RAF personnel fired teargas shells, some of which landed in a residential colony, forcing the residents out. The angry farmers, who were chased away by the RAF personnel, damaged two KSRTC buses.

Police also beat up the farmers in lorries who were awaiting directions from their leaders before arresting them. Windowpanes of more than 15 lorries were damaged in police action. The vehicles of the Deputy Commissioner, the Inspector-General, KSRP, and a few other private vehicles were damaged in stone-throwing by the farmers.

Later in the evening, Mr. Gowda and Mr. Puttanaiah were released.



Police caning farmers to prevent them from reaching the Kabini reservoir in Mysore on Sunday.

16 SEP 2003

THREE SENIOR IPS OFFICERS JOIN STF

Karnataka awaits word from Veerappan

By K.V.Subramanya

BANGALORE, AUG. 30. The Karnataka Special Task Force involved in the anti-Veerappan operations was strengthened today with the induction of three senior IPS officers.

The Inspector-General of Police (Intelligence), K.S.Suresh Babu, the IGP (Computerisation), S.T.Ramesh, and the Deputy Commissioner of Police (Central), Bangalore City, Gopal B. Hosur, have been asked to assist the STF.

The three officers left for the Gundal camp this afternoon. Mr. Hosur, once the STF commandant, had been seriously injured when he was shot at by Veerappan.

The Karnataka Government is yet to decide on its strategy to secure the release of the former Minister, H. Nagappa, held hostage by Veerappan in the absence of any communication from the brigand.

Although rumours were rife that Veerappan had sent a second cassette, official sources here told *The Hindu* that the Government had not received any.

"The Government is waiting for the next cassette from the bandit so that it can plan its moves, mainly about sending an emissary to Veerappan," sources said. The cassette may arrive in a day or two.

Worried over Mr. Nagappa's safety, the Government has decided to wait for word from Veerappan before taking the next step.

There are reports that the Government has chosen K.R.Subbukrishna, a Mysore advocate, as an emissary to Veerappan. Mr. Subbukrishna had represented the TADA detenus,



The Karnataka DGP, V.V. Bhaskar (left), who is leading the STF operations against Veerappan, at the Gundal Operational HQ on Friday. Subhash Bharani, ADG (Law and Order) is seen.

who were alleged associates of Veerappan, in court. He is said to have expressed his willingness to venture into the forests.

When contacted by *The Hindu* on Friday night, Venugopal, advocate, who had volunteered to negotiate with Veerappan for the release of Mr. Nagappa, said he was already at work identifying sources to contact Veerappan. He said he had been asked by the Chief Minister, S.M. Krishna, in Bangalore on Thursday to be the emissary if he managed to establish contact with the brigand.

But those well versed with "Veerappan matters" say that the brigand will himself name the emissary.

Sharath S. Srivatsa reports from Mysore:

The Director-General and IG of Police, V.V. Bhaskar, told *The Hindu* at Gundal in Kollegal taluk today that the primary objective was to secure the safe release of Mr. Nagappa by loca-

lising the movements of the Veerappan gang. Mr. Bhaskar, who is leading the combing operations, said the STF aimed at nabbing Veerappan and his gang. A number of officers, who worked in treacherous terrains in the past, had been drafted for the operation.

The public would be alerted not stray into the forest area in view of the combing operations as also to inform the administration on any movement and logistics support to the bandit.

The operations had been launched with a network of intelligence and people in the forests, including Soligas. Although thousands of tribals lived in the forests, the operation would not harm anybody.

"As the DG, I categorically deny having received a second cassette from Veerappan. Neither the family members of Nagappa nor the IG, Southern Range, Umapathy, informed us about the cassette."

KRISHNA, JAYALALITHAA DISCUSS STRATEGY

Special Central forces sought to nab Veerappan

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 27. Karnataka and Tamil Nadu today urged the Central Government to provide para-military forces trained in jungle operations to supplement the efforts of their Special Task Forces to track down the forest brigand, Veerappan, whose latest abduction — of a former Karnataka Minister — has once again brought his unlawful activities into focus.

The two State Governments have also sought "technical intelligence support" such as surveillance aircraft, interception equipment, helicopters and remote-sensing equipment.

Tamil Nadu has suggested that the Union Government nominate a coordinator to ensure timely availability of the above equipment.

An agreement to this effect was reached at a meeting the Karnataka Chief Minister, S.M. Krishna, had with his Tamil Nadu counterpart Jayalalithaa here this evening at Tamil Nadu House, ahead of the Cauvery River Authority meeting convened by the Prime Minister.

Mr. Krishna told correspondents later that both the State Governments would send a joint request seeking Central assistance to the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani.

The Deputy Prime Minister, who was in Bangalore today, was "already seized of the matter," he said.

Describing his meeting with

the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister as "very cordial", Mr. Krishna said they had discussed a general strategy on tackling the Veerappan menace. While refusing to elaborate, he asserted that the strategy was aimed at "pursuing our objective".

The Tamil Nadu Government, in a press release, said that during the meeting Mr.

Krishna had narrated the circumstances in which the abduction of the ex-Minister, H. Nagappa, took place on August 25, and its fall-out.

Ms. Jayalalithaa explained the various steps taken by her Government to nab Veerappan. Mr. Krishna had concurred with her suggestions. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister assured Mr.

Krishna that her Government would extend full cooperation to Karnataka to "find a quick end to the kidnapping episode and also to nab Veerappan at the earliest".

Both the Chief Ministers agreed that there should be greater coordination between the STF's of the two States at the field level.

JOINT STF OPERATIONS FROM TODAY

By R. Krishna Kumar

MYSORE, AUG. 27. Joint combing operations by the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu Special Task Forces against the forest brigand, Veerappan, will start on Wednesday.

This was decided at a high-level meeting of top STF officials held at the Gundal STF Camp near Kamagere in Kollegal taluk in Chamaraajanagar district today. Senior officials discussed the strategy.

The Karnataka Home Minister, Mallikarjuna Kharge, presided over the meeting. The Director-General and Inspector-General of Police, Karnataka V.V. Bhaskar, Jyothi Prakash Mirgi, IGP, the Additional DG (Law and Order), Subhash Bharani, the Karnataka and Tamil Nadu STF chief, R.P. Sharma and Nataraj, attended the meeting.

The Karnataka STF today stepped up the combing operations and fanned out across M.M.Hills, Bundal, Burude and the adjoining forest ranges. Sources said that about 500 STF personnel had been deployed around Palar, Ponnachi, Ramapura, and the M.M.Hills along with the regular STF units stationed in these places even as additional forces were roped in. This was apart from the 40 units pressed into service within hours of Veerappan abducting the former Minister, Nagappa, on Sunday.

In a significant development, the former chief of the Karnataka STF, Kempaiah —

whose removal the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, said had emboldened Veerappan — reached Kollegal last evening to be part of combing operations.

Three officials of the rank of Deputy Superintendent of Police, who were part of the crack team under Mr. Kempaiah, have also been recalled. They include Mandappa, Thammaiah, Maadappa and Bommal, all of whom were shifted out of the STF.

I was cheated: Veerappan

Our Bangalore Staff Reporter writes:

The contents of the audio cassette sent by Veerappan were made public here today. In the tape addressed to the Karnataka Chief Minister, S.M. Krishna, Veerappan has threatened that he would kill Mr. Nagappa if the STF tried to nab him and his associates.

In the cassette, which barely runs for 40 seconds, Veerappan said Mr. Krishna and the former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, M. Karunanidhi, had "cheated" him by not fulfilling the promises they had made when the Kannada thespian, Rajkumar, was abducted.

The elusive bandit has also demanded the release of his "well wishers" who are in jail. However, he has not mentioned any name.

He has also said that he would send another cassette in a week, and this indicates that the kidnap saga will drag on for some days, sources said.

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KRISHNA SEEKS MEETING WITH T.N. CM Veerappan sends cassette

By Our Staff Reporter

BANGALORE, AUG. 26. The Karnataka Chief Minister, S. M. Krishna, said today that he had expressed his desire to meet his Tamil Nadu counterpart, Jayalalithaa, in New Delhi on Tuesday to request her cooperation in the release of the former Karnataka Minister, H. Nagappa, from the forest brigand, Veerappan, who kidnapped him on Sunday night. The two Chief Ministers will be in the Capital for a meeting of the Cauvery River Authority to be chaired by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee.

Speaking to presspersons after an all-party meeting here, Mr. Krishna said his office had contacted the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Secretariat to arrange for a meeting between the two leaders.

Earlier, Mr. Krishna, who arrived from Belgaum with the Home Minister, Mallikarjuna Kharge, went to the Vidhana Soudha for a special Cabinet meeting on the issue.

R. Krishnakumar reports from Mysore:

Police said that Veerappan had sent a cassette with a set of demands in exchange for the safe return of Mr. Nagappa, who was abducted from his farmhouse at Kamagere. But the contents of the tape are not yet clear. The micro-cassette was handed over at a farmhouse in Kamagere from where it was delivered to Mr. Nagappa's wife, Parimala Nagappa, last night.



The farmhouse at Kamagere, near Hanur from where the former Karnataka Minister, H. Nagappa, was abducted. (Right) His wife, Parimala, recalling the harrowing events.



Though Ms. Nagappa was tight-lipped about the cassette, police sources confirmed its receipt. The cassette was handed over around midnight but could not be played in the absence of a dictaphone. Intelligence sources said that though it was

too early to speculate on the contents of the cassette, the possibility of political demands such as the release of Cauvery water to Tamil Nadu could not be ruled out. "However, these would only be to camouflage his major demands such as the re-

lease of Sivasubramaniam (Nakkeeran reporter) or Nedumaran (leader of the banned Tamilar Desiya Iyakkam)."

Personnel of the Special Task Force of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, meanwhile, met at M.M. Hills today to chalk out their next course of action. Sources said that 40 units of 20 personnel each of the STF, civil and law and order departments of police had been pressed into service. Earlier, the Chamarajanagar Superintendent of Police, Harishekar, led the combing operations in the Gundal and Burude forest ranges which is close to the point where Veerappan and his men were last sighted with their hostage boarding a private bus "Udaya Ranga" on the Kollegal-Satyamangalam highway.

A large crowd, which gathered in front of Mr. Nagappa's house on Sunday, burnt a bus.

T.N. police on alert

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By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, AUG. 26. Police officers in Tamil Nadu have been alerted to take all steps to prevent any law and order incident following the burning of a Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation bus in Karnataka in the wake of the kidnapping of a former Minister, H. Nagappa, by the forest brigand, Veerappan, on Sunday night.

The day passed off peacefully though the usual tension in the border areas, which accompany such incidents, prevailed.

As a precautionary measure, police had been alerted so that law and order continued to be maintained, the Director-General of Police, B. P. Nailwal, said. Operation of buses from Tamil Nadu to Karnataka had been suspended in view of the incident.

Jayalalithaa blames it on Karnataka

By Our Tamil Nadu Bureau

CHENNAI, AUG. 26. Virtually blaming Karnataka for the kidnapping of its former Minister, H. Nagappa, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, today said the removal of the Karnataka Special Task Force chief, Inspector-General Kempaiah, known for his "tough" attitude, had emboldened the forest brigand, Veerappan, to commit the latest "outrage."

Talking to reporters at the Secretariat here, she said the Karnataka Government had downgraded the post of STF chief after removing Mr. Kempaiah when he was going after Veerappan. Asked if she was blaming the Karnataka Government, she said she had given the facts.

After a delegation led by the leader of the

banned Tamilar Desiya Iyakkam, P. Nedumaran (now under arrest) and his associates, and another delegation of journalists had met the Karnataka Chief Minister, S.M. Krishna, the Karnataka Government had removed Mr. Kempaiah without citing any reason. Although she did not know what the delegations told Mr. Krishna, they seemed to have managed to bring him round to their way of thinking.

After Mr. Kempaiah's removal, the relations between the Tamil Nadu STF and the Karnataka STF were not smooth, she said.

Ms. Jayalalithaa denied that she had any further information about the kidnapping or the message sent by Veerappan. On whether the State Government planned to send emissaries, she said the situation had not arisen for that. The question was hypo-

thetical, she added. (The last time Veerappan made demands for the release of the activists of the Tamil nationalist groups, TNLA and TNRT, the Supreme Court had intervened and stopped the release of the TADA detenus. The court had also pulled up the Karnataka Government for wanting to release the prisoners in the interest of law and order.)

Ms. Jayalalithaa, who left for New Delhi to participate in the Cauvery River Authority meeting, said she would discuss the Veerappan issue if it came up during her meeting with Mr. Krishna.

Immediately after getting information on the abduction, the Tamil Nadu STF sealed off the district borders at Thimbam, Kadambur and Bargur areas with armed STF personnel.