

Political Jamboree Continues To Be Played Out In Full Public View

BJP to get tough with UP dissidents

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 11 NOVEMBER

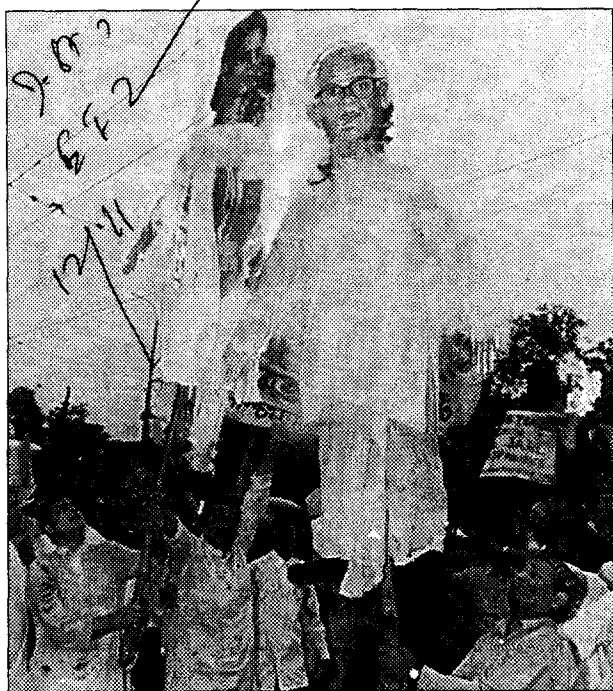
THE BJP has finally discovered its spine and asked the state unit to approach Uttar Pradesh Assembly Speaker Kesari Nath Tripathi for disqualifying its rebel MLAs. The Speaker is expected to use the precedent set by his Maharashtra counterpart Arun Gujarati and show the door to the 10 party MLAs.

The BJP's decision to get the rebels sacked from the Assembly was cleared at a meeting the party president had with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and deputy prime minister L.K. Advani here on Sunday night. The meeting concluded that the situation has gone out of hand and that the extreme step of expulsion from the Assembly was the only way to stem rebellion in its Uttar Pradesh unit.

The party leaders here do not attach much significance to the conciliatory noises coming out of the rebel camp. They are of the view that the decision of the rebels to endorse the candidature of arms dealer Suresh Nanda was a brazen act of defiance and that any delay in taking disciplinary action will only complicate matters. For the record, party president M. Venkaiah Naidu, maintained that he was open to discussions with partymen who are willing to abide by party discipline. At the same, he said the party will not show any leniency to those who have crossed the lakshman rekha. Although the leadership on Monday put up a brave front, a section in the party is worried about the possible political fallout. For, a majority of these rebel MLAs belong to the Thakur community, a group that is increasingly getting restive in the BJP. The recent ministry compounded matters when their rivals, the Brahmins, cornered a majority of the ministerial berths.

The development does not augur well for the BJP in the caste-polarised Uttar Pradesh. For the party, a consolidation of the upper caste vote bank is crucial for any future political project.

The lowering of the numerical strength in the Assembly will only increase the leverage of the BSP and Mayawati in running the Lucknow government.



ALL FIRED UP: Samajwadi Party activists burn effigies of Uttar Pradesh governor V.K. Shastri and chief minister Mayawati at Esplanade on Monday. — Mona Chowdhury

Nanda nomination papers rejected

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THE Election Commission today threw out of the window the complaint by arms dealer and Rajya Sabha aspirant from UP, Suresh Nanda, that the rejection of his nomination papers was wrong.

Returning officer R P Pandey, while rejecting his nomination papers for the RS biennial election, said Mr Nanda was found to have "fraudulently" got his name entered in the electoral rolls for Ghaziabad. On examination it was revealed that the application under Form 6 for inclusion of his name in the rolls was received by the ERO on October 30, 2002, but was not processed as required under rule 26 of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960 and no statutory notice was given for inviting objections to the application. The subsequent order by the ERO in-

cluding his name in the rolls was made on October 31 itself, which was in violation of the rules that require such an order to be issued only after seven days from date of such a statutory notice.

"Since Nanda is not an elector in the state and also as the affidavit submitted by him was not in the original form his nomination was found illegal and hence rejected," Mr Pandey told reporters in Lucknow on Monday. He had complained to the Election Commission on Sunday that he had signed the withdrawal papers "under duress" and that it should not be acted upon. Mr Pandey said he received a communication from the EC on Monday morning saying the necessary procedure was not followed for registering the name of Mr Nanda in the electoral rolls. With this, the decks are now cleared for the unopposed election of 10 candidates.

Anti-defection law suits rebels

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THE Bhartiya Janata Party's move to seek the disqualification of 10 rebel MLAs in UP has an element of irony, for it expects Speaker Kesari Nath Tripathi to exercise those very powers which the party refused to recognise when they were first used by Maharashtra Speaker early this year.

The BJP wants the punishment on the ground that the 10 MLAs violated the anti-defection Act by informing the governor about their intent to vote against the Mayawati government and, in some case, by proposing the candidature of arms dealer Suresh Nanda.

The petition reflects an understanding of the anti-defection law which the party seemed to lack when it disputed the disqualification of rebel Congress and NCP MLAs in Maharashtra. That time the party questioned the law on the ground that it intended to violate the whip — one of the offences laid down under the anti-defection Act — and vote against the Vilasrao Deshmukh government in a trial of strength. The party passionately argued that the ambit of the anti-defection only covered "real" and not intended/planned violations of the party whip by legislators and, that the Speaker had erred in punishing the legislators for announcing outside the House what they planned to do.

It extended moral support to the aggrieved MLAs when they unsuccessfully appealed their disqualification — a factor that helped the Deshmukh government survive the trust vote — by Maharashtra Speaker Arun Gujarati in courts.

Just a few months later, however, the BJP expects Mr Tripathi to follow the Maharashtra precedent since sanctified by the judiciary. The disqualification of Maharashtra MLAs and its anticipated repeat in Uttar Pradesh is just another instance of the innovative ways in which the Anti-Defection Act has been applied. The framers of the law, conceived by the Rajiv Gandhi regime as an antidote to then rampant malaise of defections, had initially proposed to proscribe all instances of juggling of party affiliations which didn't feature at least half of the total strength of the MLAs. The threshold was lowered to one-third after many, notably the late Madhu Limaye, cried foul that the Bill in its pristine form would have heralded the era of "tyranny of whip."

In the days since its passage, the law has been used in ways unanticipated by its makers, and to the benefit of both the whip wielders as well as those who seek to defy it. Those responsible for innovations are located across-the-board, with few reluctant to shrink from using a precedent that they may have rallied against in a previous instance. If the ruling of Maharashtra Speaker gave fillip to the champions of whip's supremacy, former Lok Sabha Speaker Shivraj Patil pulled in the other direction with his controversial ruling about "split" being a continuous phenomenon rather than a one-time affair. The view taken by Mr Patil created more room for those wanting to shake off their affiliation since they could violate the party whip or stage defection even before they had touched the one-third mark.

It helped the Rao government by legalising a split in Janata Dal, and was criticised by the BJP and others. Just a few years later, the precedent was invoked by Mr Tripathi to help the Kalyan Singh government when he legalised a disputed "split" in the BSP.

12 NOV 2002

The Economic Times

Case under Section 420 filed against BJP rebels' candidate

Nanda 'quits' RS poll fray

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

LUCKNOW/NEW DELHI, Nov. 9.

— Farce overtook the run-up to the Uttar Pradesh Rajya Sabha elections today, with all the ingredients in place since the morning. There was drama and confusion about the eligibility of the BJP rebels-backed candidate, arms-dealer Mr Suresh 'BMW' Nanda; his self-proclaimed "withdrawal" from the race after allegedly being roughed up in the office of the Assembly Secretary; and the Election Commission staying the scrutiny of nomination papers. Ten Upper House seats from the state will go to the biennial elections and one for by-election on 18 November.

Mr Nanda announced his "withdrawal" later this evening, leaving 10 candidates for 10 seats. The Assembly secretary in Lucknow, Mr RP Pandey, who is also returning officer, said Mr Nanda had submitted his withdrawal from the biennial and by-election, in the proper proforma. But this cannot be declared officially till the scrutiny was completed. The RO earlier had sought had reasons for the objections to Mr Suresh's candidature.

The UP administration and EC were at odds throughout the day over certain claims that Mr Nanda had made. The administration charged him with forgery and a case has been registered under the provisions of Section 420 of IPC at the Kavi Nagar PS, Ghaziabad.

Mr Nanda had been accused by officials for having used unfair means to get his name registered in the electoral list. However the EC, after an inquiry, decided that the entry of Mr Nanda's name in the rolls was "correct" and the cancellation by the district administration was "wrong". The EC has also cleared the way for taking cognisance of Mr Nanda's withdrawing the nomination papers.

In what turned out to be the climax, at the time of scrutiny in the Assembly today, the arms-dealer — often criticised for using 'money power' to enter politics — got a taste of 'muscle power' when he was reportedly heckled by some MLAs present. But later he denied anything "ungentlemanly" had occurred.

Mr Nanda's name was included in the voters' list during a recent drive for revising electoral rolls in UP. In the records, he was shown as resi-

dent of KG-94, Kavi Nagar, Ghaziabad, a property owned by a certain Mr Satish Goel. To enlist his name, a voter has to make a declaration that he is ordinarily a resident of that area. If he is a tenant, then the owner of the property has to countersign his claim. On the basis of such certification, a voter's certificate was issued to Mr Nanda, which he used to file his nomination. When objections were raised about this, it was referred to the district administration for verification.

Local officials told the district magistrate that Mr Nanda is not a resident at the address furnished. The SDM (Sadar) was then asked to inquire. Mr Satish Goel's wife told the SDM that she never signed any paper claiming Mr Nanda to be a tenant, and claimed the signature was forged. On the basis of this an FIR was registered.

Mr Nanda's withdrawal obviates the need for a contest and brings relief to the BJP-BSP combine. As candidates took to celebration, Mr Pandey said scrutiny could not be carried out because Mr Nanda had complained that "vested interests" were keen to oust him from the race.

■ Another report on page 10

10 NOV 2002

THE STATESMAN

LALJI TANDON OFFERS TO STEP DOWN

BSP suspends MLA for dissidence

LUCKNOW, NOV. 7. Ahead of the Rajya Sabha polls, the ruling Bahujan Samaj Party in Uttar Pradesh suspended one of its MLAs for raising the banner of revolt even as Lalji Tandon made a conditional offer to step down as the BJP Legislature Party leader to meet a main demand of the party rebels.

The BSP MLA, Jai Prakash Yadav, revolted against the party leader and Chief Minister, Mayawati, accusing her of functioning in a "dictatorial" manner and was promptly suspended from the party. Besides, police have filed two cases against him.

Mr. Yadav aired his views to the Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, whom he met along with the rebel BJP legislator, Ravindra Pundir. In a memorandum to the Governor, he demanded the convening of a special session of the Assembly for a trial of strength for the Mayawati Ministry and alleged he was being "victimised" by the Government for raising the banner of revolt.

Mr. Yadav said resentment was brewing in the BSP and Mr. Pundir claimed that about 50 BSP MLAs were "fed up" with

Ms. Mayawati's leadership and were ready to join rebel ranks.

Later talking to newsmen, he said a case was filed against him at the Gola police station after he reached late at a BSP meeting convened by Ms. Mayawati recently.

"The Chief Minister got angry with me as I reached late at the meeting and a fake case was filed against me at her behest," he said.

Mr. Yadav said that although the Governor had not given him any assurance, he had conveyed to him that the present Government was working in an "undemocratic and unconstitutional manner and victimising all those expressing their views against it".

Interestingly, the rebel BSP legislator and the BJP dissident were accompanied to the Raj Bhavan by Samajwadi Party workers and at least one legislator, but they did not go inside to meet the Governor.

No dissidence: Mayawati

Meanwhile, talking to reporters in New Delhi, Ms. Mayawati denied there was any dissidence in the BSP and said cases were filed against Mr. Yadav follow-

ing complaints from people in his constituency that he had held out physical threats.

"It is true that Mr. Yadav has joined the BJP rebels... But my Government would not spare anyone, including party MLA or MPs, if they indulge in unlawful activities," she said.

She said she had received complaints against Mr. Yadav from various sections following which FIRs were filed against him.

"To save himself from arrest, Mr. Yadav is now trying to associate himself with rebels."

On the candidature for the Rajya Sabha seat which fell vacant following the resignation of T.N. Chaturvedi, she said it was a BJP seat and her party would extend support to any candidate fielded by the coalition partner.

Striking a conciliatory tone, Mr. Tandon offered to resign from the post of leader of the BJP legislature party provided the rebel legislators dropped their other demands and returned to the party fold. "I have no craze for any post, be it the leader of the legislature party or any ministerial berth in the Government. If my stepping down can save the party from the on-going stand-off, I would be too happy to quit."

High command will decide: Katiyar

The Uttar Pradesh BJP chief, Vinay Katiyar, said it was up to the party high command to decide about the demand of dissident party legislators for removal of Mr. Tandon and the State leadership would be guided by the same.

Reacting to Mr. Tandon's offer to resign, he said "we are not in a position to take any such decision unless directed by the central leadership in the prevailing situation".

Rebels to field candidate

The BJP dissidents would put up a candidate for the November 18 Rajya Sabha polls and the name would be announced tomorrow, the jailed rebel independent MLA, Dhananjay Singh, said in Farrukhabad. He made the announcement after a 30-minute meeting with the Samajwadi Party chief, Mulayam Singh Yadav, and the general secretary, Amar Singh. — PTI

Personal ambition BJP's greatest weakness: Advani

BHIWANI (HARYANA), NOV. 7. In an apparent reference to the political developments in Uttar Pradesh, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, today said "personal ambition" had become the BJP's greatest weakness and asked the party leaders and activists to ensure that their conduct and utterances were above board.

The BJP had dreamt of placing India at the forefront of the comity of nations and eliminating poverty and unemployment. But "personal ambition has become our greatest weakness. Unless we control it, we will not be able to do what we want to," he said.

Addressing party workers here prior to inaugurating the 51st All-India Police Games, Mr. Advani cautioned the activists that people "do not ignore our shortcomings" and "more than



work, it is our conduct and behaviour that matters most".

"The country has great expectations from us. Even a common activist's voice is identified with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee. Hence, there should be no shortcoming in our conduct or behaviour." — PTI

MURDER OF DEMOCRACY, SAYS SAMAJWADI PARTY

Two Independent MLAs arrested in U.P.

By J.P. Shukla

LUCKNOW, NOV. 3. In a dramatic turn to the political developments in Uttar Pradesh, two independent MLAs, Raghuraj Pratap Singh alias 'Raja Bhaiya' and Dhananjay Singh, were arrested today for allegedly intimidating a BJP legislator, Pura Singh Bundela, who had on Saturday announced his intention of leaving the dissidents and going back to the party fold.

In his FIR at the Cantonment police station here, Mr. Bundela alleged that two MLAs had threatened him yesterday of dire consequences for retracting his decision to remain with the BJP dissidents. Police raided the residential premises of the MLAs early today and took them into custody. (A PTI report said the duo were produced in court and had been remanded to judicial custody till November 8. The Gangster Act was also slapped on them.)

Mr. Raghuraj and Mr. Dhananjay were among the seven independent MLAs who had met the Governor, Vishu Kant Shastri, last month to inform him about withdrawing support to the Government headed by the Bahujan Samaj Party leader, Mayawati.

Talking to newsmen outside the court, the MLAs alleged that the charges levelled against them were false and claimed that they were being victimised by the Mayawati Government for political reasons. The Chief Minister was trying to remain in power by coercing MLAs to support her Government but they would not be cowed down, they added. As the news of the arrest



Raghuraj Pratap Singh

broke, groups of Samajwadi Party workers rushed to stage a demonstration at the residence of the Senior Superintendent of Police. The workers raised slogans and said "it was a murder of democracy".

A group of SP leaders, led by the principal general secretary, Shivpal Singh Yadav, called on the Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, to apprise him of the "undemocratic arrests".

They handed over a memorandum urging him "to stop the victimisation of the Opposition legislators". Four dissident BJP MLAs, including Ganga Bhakt Singh and Ramashish Rai, separately met Mr. Shastri to reiterate that the Government was "victimising its opponents", which should be immediately stopped.

The SP leader, Amar Singh, told presspersons later that the arrest of the MLAs "was a conspiracy hatched by the Government. Those who were in power were involved in this heinous

action with the only objective of saving the Mayawati Government." He alleged that the Governor "was not behaving as a constitutional authority but as an RSS activist". He reiterated that his party enjoyed the support of a majority of the MLAs and should be invited to form a government.

Meanwhile, reports said the BJP leadership had succeeded in winning back some MLAs from the dissident camp. Besides Pura Singh Bundela, three others — Awadh Pal Singh, Shiva Kant Ojha and Ravindra Pundir — today said they had "no plans" of joining any breakaway group. Their fight was from within the BJP as loyal members of the organisation. Party sources expressed the hope that the number of dissidents would come down further in the next few days.

Mayawati defends move

PTI reports:

Ms. Mayawati, in a statement, denied that the police action was "politically motivated" and said the MLAs had been prosecuted under the provisions of the law. "No one will be allowed take the law into his hands," she said.

She said the duo was trying to destabilise the Government "by threatening other legislators with muscle power" but so far none had come forward to lodge a police report against them.

"Both the legislators have been involved in criminal acts for a long time and have been avoiding punishment by threatening witnesses," she said, adding that action could not be taken against them due to their political and criminal influence.

The statement said that 16 cases of murder, attempt to murder, extortion, theft, threatening and kidnapping were pending against Mr. Raghuraj while 22 cases of a similar nature were pending against Mr. Dhananjay.

'False cases': Page 11

'No danger to my Govt.'

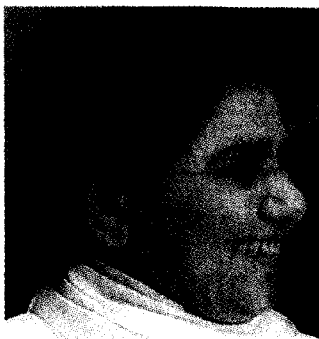
By J.P. Shukla

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LUCKNOW, NOV. 2. The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mayawati, today rejected the demand of the State BJP rebels and leaders of the Samajwadi Party to summon a special session of the Assembly to test the majority of the State Government on the floor of the House.

"There is no danger to my Government and it would serve the full five years in office. Also there is no need to call an Assembly session at this stage," she told newsmen on the completion of six months in office by her Government.

Ms. Mayawati said the Samajwadi Party leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav, had been opposed to her government ever since the last elections. First, his party doubted the majority of her Government immediately after she had taken the oath. When the majority was proved in the Assembly during the vote of confidence, they raised the issue again. The Government won the trust of the Assembly for a second time during the budget session. There was nothing new for the SP to raise questions about the majority once again and the efforts were meaningless.

She said the Congress presi-



dent, Sonia Gandhi, had rightly ignored the requests of Mr. Yadav as he had the habit of "deceiving any party that came to his help". Ms. Gandhi's decision was based on the principle of "tit for tat" as Mr. Yadav had done the same to her when she had wanted his support to her claim for Prime Ministership after the fall of the Vajpayee Government in 1999.

Describing the dissidence in the BJP, her coalition partner, as an internal matter of that party, she said minor differences erupted from time to time in every party. The BJP developments should be viewed in that light and would subside in due course. But that did not mean that there was any threat to her Government.

She denied she had differences with the BJP general secre-

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tary, Rajnath Singh, whose favourites are in the vanguard of the dissident activity in the party. Whatever misgivings were there had been resolved before the coalition Government was installed in the State.

To a question whether she had opposed the inclusion of an independent MLA, Raghuraj Pratap Singh, in her Ministry, Ms. Mayawati said that nominating Ministers from the BJP quota had been entirely left to the party leaders. It was for the BJP to decide whether to include Mr. Singh and she had never opposed the idea.

She also rejected the allegations that police action had been initiated against some independent MLAs for political reasons. There was no political motive behind these actions and police were only investigating cases registered in the past.

Ms. Mayawati alleged that Mr. Yadav was trying to "purchase MLAs to topple her Government". However, all the allurement had been rejected. The Samajwadi Party's claim of support of 204 MLAs was baseless. If 37 BJP MLAs supported the SP as claimed by the party leader, Amar Singh, how was it that they did not write to the Governor expressing their support to SP, she asked.

HINDU

'WE HAVE THE SUPPORT OF 204 MLAS'

Samajwadi Party stakes claim to form Govt. in U.P.

By J. P. Shukla

LUCKNOW, NOV. 1. The Samajwadi Party today demanded the dismissal of the Uttar Pradesh Government led by Mayawati on the ground that she had lost majority in the State Assembly. The party simultaneously staked its claim to form an alternative government, asserting that it had the support of 204 MLAs in the 403-member House.

The legislators of the Samajwadi Party, led by the party general secretary, Amar Singh, drove to the Raj Bhavan around noon and called on the Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri. They told the Governor that after the 12 BJP MLAs expressed their lack of confidence in the Mayawati Government on Thursday, she ceased to enjoy the support of a majority in the Assembly. The Samajwadi Party claimed that it had the support of 204 legislators, including that of 142 of its own MLAs, 11 independents and 37 Bharatiya Janata Party rebels. Besides, legislators belonging to the Apna Dal (3), the Rashtriya Kranti Party (4), the CPI-M (2), the National Loktantrik Party (1), the Samajwadi Janata Party (1), the Janata Party (1), the Rashtriya Parivartan Dal (1) and one unattached member had also extended their support.

Emerging from the Raj Bhavan, Mr. Singh told presspersons that the names of the Congress MLAs had not been included in the list of supporters. He, however, added that getting the Congress to support the Samajwadi Party would be no problem. Mr. Singh hoped that the Governor would act in an impartial manner and accept his claim to dismiss Ms. Mayawati. He recalled that in a similar situation in the past, his party government headed by Mulayam Singh Yadav was dismissed without having been allowed to prove its majority on



A Samajwadi Party delegation submitting a memorandum to the Uttar Pradesh Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, demanding the dismissal of the Mayawati Government, in Lucknow on Friday. — Photo: Subir Roy

the floor of the Assembly. Ms. Mayawati's dismissal, would, therefore, be equally logical.

He objected to threats that the Assembly could be dissolved, necessitating fresh elections in the event of the fall of the Mayawati Government. Ms. Mayawati had lost her majority and could not recommend dissolution of the Assembly.

BJP rebels warned of disqualification

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, NOV. 1. The Bharatiya Janata Party today threatened to use the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution (the anti-defection law) as a weapon of last resort against its rebellious MLAs in Uttar Pradesh and prevent the tottering Mayawati Government from falling.

Meanwhile, the Congress continued to hold its cards close to its chest despite fervent pleas by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) that it spell out its stand clearly. The party continued to maintain that it would take the "appropriate decision

at the appropriate time".

After a meeting of the BJP's central election committee at the residence of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, which considered the party nominations for the Rajya Sabha, the top party brass went into a huddle to discuss the Uttar Pradesh developments.

The party president, Venkaiah Naidu, today did not rule out disqualification as a weapon. He indicated that what had happened in Maharashtra (where some MLAs were disqualified by the Speaker for going to the Governor to withdraw support to their own Government) could happen in Uttar Pradesh. The BJP senior general secretary, Arun Jaitley, stated categorically: "The developments attract the Tenth Schedule." But no one in the party was willing to say how soon such an action might be taken against the rebels.

Mr. Advani has also acknowledged that the developments are a source of acute embarrassment to the party which has often claimed to be disciplined. Mr. Advani admitted in Hyderabad yesterday that the U.P. im-

broglia had dented the party's image.

The CPI(M) today said the BSP-BJP coalition Government had been reduced to a minority and had lost the right to continue in office. Addressing a press conference, the party general secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, charged the BSP-BJP with continuing to cling to power.

Mr. Surjeet favoured an early Assembly session to test the majority of the Government and disapproved of the ruling coalition's threat to dissolve the Assembly.

In the Congress camp, Mr. Motilal Vora, AICC general secretary in-charge of U.P., held a series of party meetings here and was also in continual touch with the State unit. For the moment though, the maximum that the party spokesperson, Anand Sharma, was prepared to say was that the party would "welcome" a special session of the Assembly to test the strength of the Mayawati Government "if the Governor so decides". And naturally, if there was a test of strength, the Congress would vote against the Government.

REVOLT IN U.P. BJP TAKES SURPRISE TURN

12 MLAs urge Governor to convene special session

By J.P. Shukla

LUCKNOW, OCT. 31. In a development that took the Bharatiya Janata Party by surprise, 12 of its MLAs today claimed they had withdrawn support to the coalition government headed by Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh, even as the BJP leadership was weighing the pros and cons of the steps that it could take to deal with the crisis.

The dissident BJP MLAs, along with a number of MLCs and independents, drove to the Raj Bhavan this evening, even as the State BJP coordination committee was discussing with the former party president, Kushabhau Thakre, the strategy to deal with dissidence.

The dissidents met the Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, to inform him of what they called "their decision to withdraw support to the BJP-BSP coalition Government" and seek the immediate summoning of an Assembly session to test the party's majority on the floor of the House. They claimed that the total number of dissident MLAs in the BJP was 20.

No talk of withdrawal of support: Governor

(However, according to PTI, the Governor tonight said in a communiqué that the MLAs who met him did not talk of withdrawal of support. When asked by the Governor, they also did not mention about "the Government losing its majority", according to the communiqué. They only demanded the restoration of democratic conventions and adherence to constitutional norms, it said.)

The State BJP leadership was taken aback by the quick developments in the dissidents' camp and appeared ill-prepared for the crisis. Even as the dissidents were ringing up reporters asking them to reach the Raj Bhavan to witness the drama of the withdrawal of support, the State BJP chief, Vinay



The rebel BJP MLAs with the Uttar Pradesh Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, in Lucknow on Thursday. — Photo: Subir Roy

Katiyar, appealed to them to come back to the party-fold.

After two-hour long deliberations, the BJP coordination committee decided to take action against only one MLA, Kovid Kumar Singh, by suspending him from the party, in the hope that good sense would prevail on the others. Within minutes, they realised that their hopes were misplaced.

Reacting to the withdrawal of support, Mr. Katiyar said there certainly was a crisis in the party, but the dissidents were not in a position to topple the Government. Taking a technical view of the situation, he said the BJP had 88 members in the Assembly and a total of 29 members were needed to cause a split in its legislature group.

Talking to newsmen after coming out of the Governor's chamber, Kovid Kumar Singh, said they had told Mr. Shastri that the coalition Government had now lost every right to rule. Ministers, he alleged, were looting public money and Opposi-

tion legislators were being victimised for political reasons. The Government should go immediately and a new one should be formed. The Governor had assured them of proper action on their demand.

The dissidence in the BJP in the wake of the last expansion of the Mayawati Ministry seems to have ushered in a new era of political instability in the country's most populous State.

The Samajwadi Party has been waiting in the wings to form its own government with the help of the Congress, BJP dissidents and independent MLAs.

The question is if the anti-defection law is applicable to the BJP dissidents. They say that it is not as they have not defied the party whip in the Assembly.

From the Government's point of view, technically it might still be enjoying a majority but in terms of sheer numbers it no longer has the support of a majority MLAs.

The development is also a direct attack on the prestige of the

Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, whose "nominee", Lalji Tandon, is the target of the dissidents' ire.

They blamed Mr. Tandon for the party's woes by creating imbalances in the selection of BJP Ministers in the Mayawati Government.

The developments have also come as a jolt to the BJP general secretary, Rajnath Singh, whose favourites are among the dissidents. Most of them are Thakur by caste. He had pleaded with the high command for a soft approach towards the rebels. All that has now become a thing of the past.

According to Kovid Kumar Singh, those who have withdrawn support to the Government are: Chandra Kant Mani Singh, Ram Pratap Singh, Daya Shanker Verma, Anil Verma, Sarvesh Singh, Ravindra Pundir, Narendra Sisodia, Puran Singh Bundela, Indradeo Singh, Mayankeshwar Singh and Anil Kumar Paswan besides Kovid Kumar Singh himself.

Body blow to BJP: Page 11

BJP Rebels Rule Out Apology For Their Conduct In Return For Revocation Of Suspension

UP standoff on, Thakre may mediate

Lucknow
30 OCTOBER

THE stand-off between BJP dissidents in Uttar Pradesh and the party leadership deepened on Wednesday night with rebels ruling out apology for their conduct in return for revocation of suspension and cases against their leaders even as the BJP high command rushed senior leader Khusabhai Thakre for fresh efforts to end the revolt.

At least four rebel BJP legislators, including their suspended leaders Ganga Bhakt Singh and Ramasish Rai, met state governor Vishnu Kant Shastri and later told reporters that withdrawal of support to the Mayawati government was being considered as an option.

Dissident BJP leader Ganga Bhakt Singh told reporters here that there was no question of tendering an apology for withdrawal of suspension against him and Ramasish Rai.

"I cannot even consider tendering an apology for getting my suspension revoked in order to start the process of dialogue for ending the stalemate in the party," he said.

Mr. Singh insisted that talks with the party central leadership would start only after revocation of suspension. His remarks were seen as a tough response to BJP general secretary Anun Jaitley who said in New Delhi that the party could consider revocation of suspension against the rebels if they explained their "hobnobbing" with political opponents (a

Katiyar. By contrast, Ganga Bhakt Singh fired fresh salvo against Tandon and Katiyar blaming them for causing "irreparable damage" to the party by their "irresponsible acts" and said he suspected Tandon to be behind Mayawati government's "strongarm" tactic against the dissidents. Interestingly, senior BJP leader Rajnath Singh, who had already held talks with the rebels, said on Wednesday in reply to a question from reporters that a meeting of BJP legislature party will be convened to consider the demand for change of its leader.

Meanwhile, Mr. Khusabhai Thakre arrived here on Wednesday afternoon to sort out the problem and held separate meetings with senior state party lead-



THAKRE: SAVING GRACE

reference to rebels meeting with SP leader Amar Singh) and made amends, if necessary.

Jaitley ruled out change of state party leadership, a key demand of the dissidents gunning for UP legislature party leader Lalji Tandon and BJP chief Vinay

ers. But he did not meet the rebels. Thakre met Rajnath Singh who apprised him of the talks he had already had with the dissidents.

When contacted, Thakre, the second pointman of BJP high command after Rajnath Singh, refused to talk to the media saying that he was not in a position to comment on the issue before talking to all senior party leaders.

Rajnath Singh said he would now follow Thakre's directives to proceed further in a bid to resolve the issue.

In Shimla, chairman of BJP's national disciplinary committee O.P. Kohli on Wednesday said "desired action" will be taken against the dissidents in Uttar Pradesh if negotiations to solve the crisis proved futile. — PTI

Mulayam seeks Sonia's support to oust Mayawati

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The volatile political situation in Uttar Pradesh took an unexpected sharp turn on Sunday when Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav met Congress president Sonia Gandhi and sought her help to topple the Mayawati government.

Accompanied by his party colleague Amar Singh and CPM general secretary Harkishen Singh Surjeet, Mr Mulayam Singh told Sonia that the backing of the 25 Congress MLAs in the state assembly would be crucial in replacing the BSP-BJP coalition government in Uttar Pradesh.

The numerically precarious coalition government had received the first intimation of change when a group of eight independent MLAs informed governor Vishnukant Shastri of their decision to withdraw support from the government a few days ago.

Since then, the Mulayam-Amar Singh duo had pulled out all stops to muster the numbers for an alternative arrangement.

During the 40-minute meeting with Sonia, they tried to impress upon her the need to oust the Mayawati

government in the "overall national interest".

While Mr Surjeet pleaded the case on behalf of the SP, Manmohan Singh assisted the Congress president during the talks.

"We explained the UP situation and its implications for the whole country," Surjeet told TNN later. He said they had tried to convince Ms Gandhi that removal of the BSP-BJP government would deal a big blow to the "communal forces". Mr Amar Singh said they had been assured by Ms Gandhi that the Congress decision about the alternate government would be communicated to them in the next few days.

Though the Congress president did not give any categorical assurance, her visitors got the impression that it would be difficult for her not to back a bid to get rid of the Mayawati government. Desperate to get back to power after its inability to form the government following the assembly polls early this year, the SP had wooed the Congress for the past few months.

It had shed much of its anti-Congress venom and in fact, held out the sop of cooperating with the main opposition party in the coming Gujarat elections.

2 9 2007

Governor comes to Mayavati rescue

OUR BUREAU

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Oct. 26: BJP trouble-shooters got more time to mollify rebels in Uttar Pradesh after Governor Vishnu Kant Shastri today ruled out asking chief minister Mayavati to prove her majority following last night's withdrawal of support by some Independent legislators.

Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav and general secretary Amar Singh, however, intensified efforts to get Congress president Sonia Gandhi's support for toppling the state government. But Congress sources conceded that this possibility has receded after Prime Minis-

ter Atal Bihari Vajpayee indicated his willingness to meet BJP dissidents.

"I have told them that the Prime Minister is ready to meet them to hear their grievances as and when they want," said BJP national general secretary Rajnath Singh, who is in Lucknow to broker peace. "I am sure their misgivings will be removed in a short time."

A late night PTI report, however, said that the dissidents had rejected the offer to meet the Prime Minister.

The immediate reprieve had come from the Governor. Despite the withdrawal of support by the Independents last night, the Ba-

hujan Samaj Party-BJP coalition still had the backing of 210 MLAs in the 403-member House, Shastri said. He also pointed out that of the eight Independents, one — Kaushal Kishore — did not vote for Mayavati during the May 18 confidence vote.

In another setback to the Independents, Mithilesh Kumar, whose name was associated with those who met the Governor last night, today denied reports that he had withdrawn support to the coalition government. "My support to the Mayavati-led government will continue," the Independent MLA from Shahjahanpur said in a fax message to Shastri.

The Independents are trying to rope in dissidents from Ajit Singh's 14-member Rashtriya Lok Dal. "Three of the Independents could not come yesterday but have promised to join us," Raghuraj Pratap Singh alias Rajja Bhaiyya claimed. He confirmed he was in touch with dissidents in the BJP and the RLD, although Ajit Singh denied reports of "dissidence" in his party saying all the MLAs were "intact".

BJP dissidents, too, geared up for a showdown and held a meeting in a hotel. Rebel speaker Ganga Bhakt Singh claimed their number was growing. "We have already acquainted the Prime Minister with our

grievances. It's now time for action, not words," he said.

Observers, however, do not expect the number of MLAs at Sunday's dissidents' meet to touch anywhere near the one-third mark to split the 88-member BJP. "Not till they are offered a secure haven elsewhere," as a state BJP functionary put it.

In Delhi, the Samajwadi stepped up efforts to persuade Sonia to play the role of kingmaker.

Mulayam and Amar Singh have sought an appointment with the Congress president to seek her party's crucial support. The Samajwadi leaders held talks with CPM general secretary Harkishen Singh Surjeet and re-

quested him to play mediator. Samajwadi sources said Mulayam, Amar Singh, Surjeet and CPM politburo member Sitaram Yechuri may call on Sonia either tonight or tomorrow.

Though initially reluctant, Surjeet is understood to have agreed to meet the Congress chief along with Samajwadi leaders. Amar Singh said Surjeet had spoken to Manmohan Singh and stressed the need for co-operation from the Congress.

Amar Singh also held talks with senior Congress leader Motilal Vora, the AICC general secretary in charge of Uttar Pradesh affairs. "The ball is in (the) Congress court," he said.

BJP SUSPENDS DISSIDENT MLC

Crisis as 8 independent MLAs withdraw support to U.P. Govt.

LUCKNOW, OCT. 25. The BSP-BJP coalition government in Uttar Pradesh tonight faced a crisis with eight independent MLAs withdrawing support, bringing its majority in the Legislative Assembly down to a wafer-thin margin.

As the BJP cracked the whip and suspended the key dissident legislator, Ramasish Rai, MLC, eight independent MLAs, who had been backing the Mayawati Government, tonight met the Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, under the leadership of Raghuraj Pratap Singh and handed over to him a letter withdrawing their support. After today's developments, the ruling coalition is left with a strength of 206, just three more than the halfway mark in a House of 403.

Mr. Singh said the Governor told them that if necessary he would summon a special session of the Assembly after as-

sessing the situation. As the dramatic developments unfolded in Lucknow, the Samajwadi Party general secretary, Amar Singh, said in New Delhi that the party chief, Mulayam Singh Yadav, and the CPI(M) general Secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, "may meet" the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, to elicit her party's support for a possible alternative Government in Uttar Pradesh.

"I am already in touch with Congress leaders Natwar Singh and Kamal Nath and will meet Motilal Vora tomorrow," he said adding that a request for an appointment with Ms. Gandhi had been left at her 10 Janpath residence.

Today's events capped week-long rumblings in the BJP legislature party following the Cabinet expansion undertaken by Ms. Mayawati.

The BJP legislators who could not make it to the Ministry and

those who did not get plum portfolios raised the banner of protest and were even refused audience by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, who was in Lucknow last Sunday.

Asked if the dissidents would take the support of the SP, Mr. Rai, a member of the Legislative Council and spokesman of the "Save BJP Committee" formed by the rebels, said that "if the SP lends us a helping hand, we will respond positively."

Contradicting Mr. Amar Singh, the U.P. BJP president, Vinay Katiyar, claimed that there was no threat to the Mayawati Government which enjoyed the support of 214 MLAs.

However, another senior BJP leader, Lalji Tandon, said that if something more happened on these lines (independent MLAs withdrawing support) "then the State will move towards a mid-term poll." — PTI

See also Page 12

Fringe groups turn heat on Mayavati

YOGESH VAJPEYI

Lucknow, Oct. 21: With 11 of the 12 Independent MLAs supporting the BJP-BSP coalition ready to switch sides and dissent in the BJP and its allies increasing, the stage seems set for Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav to start fishing in Uttar Pradesh's political waters.

"The only stumbling block for the formation of an alternative government now is the attitude the Congress adopts in the game," conceded one of the BJP dissidents. He endorsed Samajwadi general secretary Amar Singh's line that Mulayam could topple the Mayavati government the moment Congress agreed to support a coalition led by his party.

Apprehensive that Mulayam would try to poach Bahujan legislators, chief minister Mayavati summoned a meeting of her party today to boost its morale. "There is no threat to my government," asserted the chief minister.

Although there are no overt signs of trouble within the BSP, discord is growing in the 88-member BJP and the 14-member Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD).

The saffron rebels, who had formed a Save BJP Committee yesterday after they failed to meet Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee during his curtailed Lucknow visit, today faxed their protest to him.

They iterated that if the party was to be saved from "annihilation", the central leadership should ask BJP ministers in the Mayavati government to re-



Mayavati

sign and extend only issue-based support from outside.

The convener of the rebels' forum, Ganga Bhakt Singh, said after a meeting of party MLAs at his residence that though no deadline had been fixed for Vajpayee's response, the rebels would not wait indefinitely.

"We are meeting again on October 23 to decide our future course of action," he said, claiming that 27 party MLAs and 10 MLCs had already joined the rebel camp and their number was rising every day.

The BJP rebels seemed unconcerned about urban development minister Lalji Tandon's call for a meeting of the party MLAs. "We are not sure whether we will attend or not," their spokesman Ramashees Rai said.

Former Uttar Pradesh minister Raghuraj Pratap Singh, alias Raja Bhaiyya — who is leading the group of disenchanting Independent MLAs — confirmed that some MLAs from the "Rashtriya Lok Dal and other smaller groups" were also unhappy with

the distribution of ministries. "We are trying to bring all of them together," he said.

Raja Bhaiyya has called a meeting of the Independents and fringe party legislators on October 24. "When we supported the ruling coalition, we had been assured a place of honour. Now that they have broken their promise, we are ready to back any party which recognises our weight," he said.

Political observers say a split in the RLD legislature party — whose senior leader Samarpal Singh is sulking in the wings — could tilt the balance against the BJP-BSP coalition, which had secured 217 votes against the Opposition's 180 during the trial of strength in May.

Two MLAs — the Samajwadi's Vijay Misra and Independent Mukhtar Ansari — who could not participate in the last confidence vote have no love lost for Mayavati.

Even if half-a-dozen RLD legislators and some fringe party legislators join hands with the 11 Independent rebels, they could push the coalition to the brink of disaster in the next floor test in the House with an affective strength of 399.

In the midst of the rapidly changing political equations, the Congress, which holds the balance with 24 MLAs, is not willing to reveal its cards. "It is for the Congress president to respond to Amar Singh's plea, but we would like to think twice before playing ball with Mulayam in view of our bitter experiences of working with him in the past," the party chief in Uttar Pradesh, Arun Singh Munna, said.

Mayavati show ends in crush deaths

YOGESH VAJPEYI

Lucknow, Sept. 28: At least 12 people died on their way back from Mayavati's mega rally, at which deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani shared the dais with the BSP Big Two. Late tonight, PTI put the toll at 16.

DIG Arun Kumar said three persons were electrocuted while sitting atop the overcrowded Sadbhavana Express, while others died in the ensuing stampede at the Charbagh railway station. "The toll may rise as we clear the mess," Kumar said.

Police and railway officials said the stampede was caused by people tripping over each other while descending the stairs over platform seven after news of the electrocutions broke.

All the bodies have been recovered and four of them identified. Nearly 44 people were hurt.

Earlier, the police diverted all traffic to ease the pressure on the railway station, where two lakh BSP workers were waiting for trains to take them home.

At the rally, Advani praised Mayavati for her competent leadership of the coalition government in the state. Advani was one of the BJP leaders let off the hook when Mayavati decided not to issue a fresh notification in the Ayodhya demolition case.

Describing as "perverted" those who had criticised Mayavati for inviting an Ayodhya accused to her rally, Advani said the BJP would not ditch the coalition "even if our party acquires absolute majority in the next Lok Sabha elections".

Barring this brief reference, neither Advani nor BSP leaders Kanshi Ram and Mayavati referred to the Ayodhya dispute.

The Samajwadi Party had slammed Mayavati for bailing out Advani and then inviting him to the rally. The party held counter rallies in Lucknow and other parts of the state.

The Ambedkar maidan, where Mayavati's rally was held, was drenched in blue, the colour of the BSP flag. The slogan that filled the air was: "*Bachcha bachcha Bheem ka, BSP ki team ka*" (Everyone is committed to the cause of Bheem Rao Ambedkar.) Members of the minority community stayed away.

■ See Page 6

29 SEP 2003

THE TELEGRAPH

BSP-BJP deal will be exposed: Oppn

TIMES NEWS NETWORK AND AGENCIES

New Delhi: Opposition



parties said on Wednesday they would use all possible political and legal means to expose the BSP-BJP "deal" on the Babri masjid issue, even as the CBI said it would decide its next course of action only after studying the affidavit filed by the UP government in the supreme court on Tuesday.

In its affidavit, the UP government had said that there was no need to issue a fresh notification to constitute a special court to try, among others, Union ministers L.K. Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharati in the demolition conspiracy case.

"We are yet to see the affidavit. only after studying it in detail will we decide our future course of action," CBI director P.C. Sharma said on Wednesday. Stating that the Congress would take political and legal measures to expose the BJP-BSP "deal", party spokesman Anand Sharma said the UP government's decision was tantamount to showing disrespect to the supreme

court and was a deliberate subversion of the law.

"It is believed that there was a tacit understanding at the time of government formation in UP that Ms Mayawati would not issue a fresh notification though she had demanded it while she was in the opposition," he alleged. Mr Sharma alleged that the three Union ministers were "hiding behind technicalities" to escape punishment for "crimes", particularly after the CBI had a sound case for prosecuting them. After launching the prosecution almost a decade ago, the state government could not shirk its responsibility and "compromise the principle of natural justice with political expediency", he said.

The CPM politburo said in a statement: "It is obvious that Ms Mayawati has taken this decision under pressure and (in) connivance (with) the BJP leaders to save the BSP-BJP government in UP." The party expressed serious doubts about the fate of the case in the absence of a special court. Deploring the decision, the CPI said: "It has thoroughly exposed the political opportunism of Ms Mayawati."

The Nationalist Congress Party said the Mayawati government's decision was aimed at "benefiting" political heavyweights.

19 SEP 2001

19 SEP 2001

MAYAWATI WON'T ISSUE NOTIFICATION

SPI (10) 9 51 44

Special court on Babari ruled out

Statesman News Service

LUCKNOW, Sept. 17. — Ms Mayawati today refused to issue a fresh notification to constitute a special court to try BJP leaders, including Mr LK Advani, chargesheeted by the CBI in the Babari Masjid demolition case.

The Uttar Pradesh chief minister said there was "no need or requirement" for a special court and that the CBI could initiate the case in "any competent ordinary court".

Ms Mayawati's decision has given Mr Advani, Mr Murlī Manohar Joshi, Miss Uma Bharati and Mr Kalyan Singh another reprieve, and made the BJP leadership happy.

She said the Congress and the Samajwadi Party had tried to gain by raising the Ram Mandir issue. "At the root of the problem were the Congress and the Samajwadi Party. The BJP came into the

picture much later... Some anti-social elements demolished the Babari Masjid when the BJP was in power," she said.

She told a press conference that an affidavit was filed today in the Supreme Court which had asked the state government to communicate a decision in the Babari case by 23 September.

The Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court in February last year had ruled that the state government's notification for the constitution of a special court to try 21 persons in the case (no.198/92) was faulty since the court's concurrence had not been taken. The court had left it to the discretion of the state government to rectify the mistake.

The chief minister argued: "There is rule of law in my regime. Everybody is equal before law however tall or small he/she may

be. I am not in favour of constituting a separate special court for any important person. I would like the case to be filed in a competent court. Since the matter was that of Faizabad district it should be in an ordinary court of Faizabad. If the CBI wants, it could do so at the Rae Bareilly special court, which was constituted by the previous government. This decision has to be taken by the CBI. There was no need for a new notification".

Special courts are generally constituted to expedite a case but in the present case, even after 10 years, it has not got going, she said. The High Court's declaration of the

notification as faulty does not mean the end of the criminal case. "The CBI is free to act within law to take a proper decision," Ms Mayawati said. "The government was of the firm view that case against those involved in the criminal act must continue." She criticised the CBI for not filing a

petition or appealing against the High Court order in the Supreme Court.

Miss Mayawati was soft on the BJP and said the BSP did not figure at all in the Ayodhya affair.

Cong reaction: Lashing out at Miss Mayawati's decision, the Congress asked her to issue a fresh notification to comply with the Supreme Court direction. The party may also explore legal options to take her on, adds SNS from Delhi. Mr Pranab Mukherjee said the decision was an open challenge to the rule of law.

The BJP said the UP government had done the "appropriate thing." The party spokesman, Mr Mukhtar Abbas Naqvi, said the state government had thoroughly examined all legal aspects and hoped that the "issue is settled once and for all."

'At the root of the problem were the Congress and the Samajwadi Party. The BJP came into the picture later... Some anti-social elements demolished the Babari Masjid when the BJP was in power'

18 SEP 2002

THE STATESMAN

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No need for special court on Ayodhya, says Mayawati

By J.P. Shukla

LUCKNOW, SEPT. 17. The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mayawati, today castigated her political adversaries for creating "unnecessary noise" over issuing a fresh notification in the Babri Masjid demolition case on the ground that this was necessary to prosecute the Bharatiya Janata Party and Vishwa Hindu Parishad leaders who have since been discharged following an Allahabad High Court judgment.

The State Government has taken the stand that the trial of the BJP and VHP leaders, including the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, and the Union Minister for Human Resource Development, Murli Ma-

nohar Joshi, could continue even without a fresh notification being issued.

This trial could take place either in a competent court in Faizabad or the special court constituted at Rae Bareilly by the then State Government during the Governorship of Motilal Vora. The Government did not feel the necessity for issuing a fresh notification for the trial of the accused in the special court in Lucknow. Talking to newsmen here after the State Government made its stand known on the issue in the Supreme Court during the day, Ms. Mayawati said the Government had deliberated on the legal aspects in great detail and arrived at the conclusion that there was neither the necessity nor propriety

for constituting a special court for trial of the accused.

"I want to make it clear that there exists rule of law in my Government and I am not in favour of constituting a special court for the prosecution of anyone, no matter how big or small he is," she said.

She accused both the Congress and the Samajwadi Party of fomenting the Ayodhya issue for their "selfish political interests". While the Congress was responsible for opening the locks of the disputed shrine in 1986 and allowing the "Shilanyas" for the proposed Ram temple in 1989, the SP leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav, "incited communal feelings" to garner the votes of Muslims who had been annoyed with the Con-

gress action. The BJP had come to fish in the troubled waters only later.

She said her Government's stand was that the accused should stand trial in the Babri Masjid demolition case. The Allahabad High Court had only rejected the notification issued by the former Government during the Motilal Vora regime to enable trial of the accused in the special court in Lucknow on the ground that the statutory permission from the High Court had not been taken before issuing the notification. The effect of the High Court judgment had been that the Special Court in Lucknow had lost the power to try the accused. But this did not mean that no court was empowered to try the BJP and VHP leaders involved in Case No. 198/92 relating to the Babri Masjid demolition.

The State Government had stated before the Supreme Court that the CBI still had alternatives to prosecute the accused and therefore there was no need to issue any fresh notification for their trial by the Special Court in Lucknow.

Ms. Mayawati accused the then Governor, Motilal Vora, of issuing the faulty notification against the advice of his own adviser and without taking the high court's permission, which was necessary under the law. This notification was ultimately rejected by the high court.

The high court had, in its judgment, said the CBI was free to take further action in a competent court. The rejection of the notification did not bring an end to the case itself.

Ms. Mayawati pointed out that the CBI had neither filed an appeal nor a writ petition against the high court judgment. The decision to prosecute the accused was now to be taken only by the CBI.

OFF THE HOOK

Mayawati will not issue fresh notification

THE Deputy Prime Minister, Mr L K Advani and his two Cabinet colleagues Murli Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti are probably wishing that 23 September comes as quickly as possible without anything souring relations with the BJP's ally in UP, the BSP. The government led by Mayawati has until that date to decide on a fresh notification to include the three Union ministers as accused in the Babari Masjid demolition case. If they don't issue the notification, the ministers are off the hook. The three ministers were present at the site of the mosque on 6 December 1992, encouraging the two lakh kar sevaks to bring the 400-year-old mosque down. Uma Bharti was heard chanting through the public address system "Ek dhaka aur do, Babari Masjid tod do" as the mosque was attacked with picks and shovels. Photographs of Joshi and Bharti embracing as the last dome collapsed appeared in the press, but the BJP insists the ministers had nothing to do with the whole sorry spectacle. The ministers evaded the Special Court's dates to be present so that the charges could be officially framed for years with trivial excuses. At last they have a government in place which they hope will lay the ghost finally.

One of the prime reasons for the BJP aligning with Mayawati, a difficult partner at the best of times, was to engineer the quashing of the case. There was much opposition to the alliance, particularly from the BJP state unit which deals on a day to day basis with Mayawati's arrogance, but the party high command willed otherwise. The deal was struck; Mayawati would not issue a fresh notification. She is simply keeping her side of the bargain — justice and the rule of law are subordinate to political machinations.

15 SEP 2001

THE STATESMAN

Spectre of drought looms large over UP

large over UP

21/7

By Rajiv Ranjan Jha
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Lucknow: The government is bracing itself to meet the spectre of drought looming large over large areas of Uttar Pradesh, but it is yet to provide any succour to the suffering population.

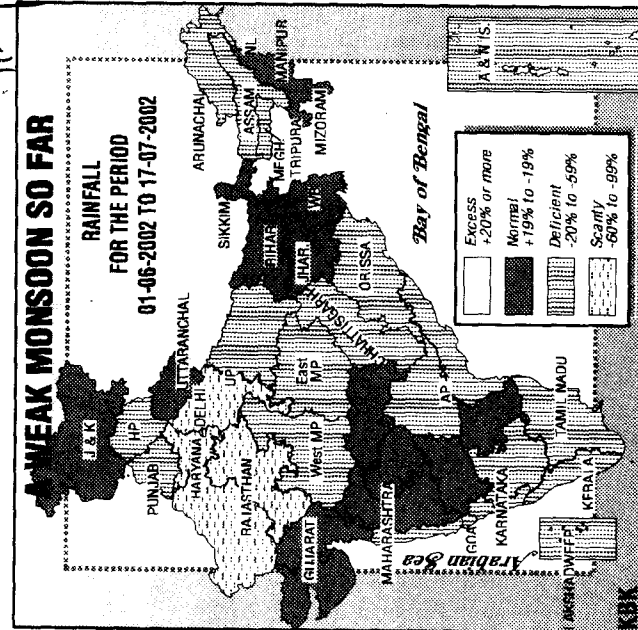
A conservative estimate suggests that at least 60 per cent of the rural population is in the grip of drought, unprecedented in the past 30 years. Some of the districts have never seen such scanty rainfall in the past several years. Official records say that Aligarh had 16 mm, Etah 21.20 mm, Hathras 14 mm and Kannauj had 7.02 mm rainfall as on July 15.

Some of the districts like Maharajganj had 182.60 mm of rainfall, Khushinagar 242 mm, Deoria 119 mm and Balrampur 128 mm. But the situation in these districts was no better, said an official. The

rainfall, inflicting a heavy blow to the kharif crop in the region. According to official estimates, kharif crop in 6.4 lakh hectares of land had completely been ruined for want of rains. Of these lands, 6.81 hectares belonged to the small and marginal farmers.

Among the districts worst hit by drought are Jalone, where hundred per cent of the crop has been destroyed. In Banda, the destruction of crop is to the tune of 80 per cent. Many districts of Bundelkhand have more than 60 per cent damaged crop for want of water.

In the drought-hit districts, there is acute shortage of fodder also. The government has sanctioned Rs 4.60 crore from the calamity relief funds for the purchase of fodder in the Bundelkhand region. The drought had devastated the rural population, said an official. Even if the rains come by the end of July,



bad condition of canals had played havoc with the farmers, admitted the official. Altogether, 80 per cent of blocks of Chitrakoot division had less than 50 per cent of

U.P. will abide by court verdict on Ayodhya: Mayawati

By Our Staff Reporter

NEW DELHI, JULY 7. The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mayawati, today asserted that her Government would abide by the court verdict on the Ayodhya issue if the groups concerned failed to resolve the matter through talks.

Addressing a rally in the capital organised by the Bahujan Samaj Party's Delhi unit to felicitate her on becoming the Chief Minister for the third time, she hoped that the two parties involved in the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid dispute would hold negotiations to find an amicable solution. "If that does not happen, my Government will abide by the court verdict."

Justifying her party's decision to join hands with the BJP to form the Government in U.P., the BSP general secretary who is also in-charge of the party's Delhi unit said under the present circumstances, it was the best possible option. "During his recent Lucknow visit, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, assured me of financial assistance, but till now nothing has happened. If we fail to receive help, it might take another two or three years to come out of the financial crisis," she said.

Dalits neglected: Page 11

THE HINDU

Alliance limited to U.P., says Mayawati

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI MAY 25. The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mayawati, today clarified that the BSP-BJP alliance was limited to the State and that her party would contest elections on its own in other parts of the country.

Her remarks came during an interaction with the media on her first visit to the capital after taking over as Chief Minister.

Ms. Mayawati, however, promised to stick by the agreement reached with the BJP in Uttar Pradesh. She would support whatever action the NDA Government took in dealing with the situation on the border, and on the question of the next Presidential candidate.

She did not see much contradiction in her championing of the Dalit cause and her opposition to Narayanan's candidature for a second term as President. "Our agreement with the BJP is that we will support them on the question of the election of President, the rest is for my party to deal with," was her cryptic reply.

Ms. Mayawati defended her transfer policy and other measures. She also launched



The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mayawati, addressing a press conference in New Delhi on Saturday. — Photo: S. Arneja

a diatribe against her *bete noire*, the Samajwadi Party leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav. The "large-scale transfers" were effected to tone up administration. "Let anybody prove that it was done for monetary considerations and I will quit politics," she said.

The Chief Minister said that she was not favouring officers of her caste, as alleged by her opponents and gave figures to substantiate her claim that most of the new officers given plum postings were from the upper castes.

She also accused Mr. Yadav of trying to destabilise her Government by pressuring the 14 Muslim MLAs in her party to defect on the question of her aligning with the BJP. "The manner in which he is appealing to their religious sentiments may compel the Hindu MLAs in his party to defect to my side," she said and came down hard on the SP chief for accusing her of misusing the Harijan Act.

She said Mr. Yadav had taken the BJP's help in the past to come to power. "The BJP is communal when it supports me, but when Mr. Yadav takes its help to become a Minister as he did in 1977 or the Chief Minister in 1989, then it is not communal," she said.

Meanwhile, Ms. Mayawati's refusal to back Mr. Narayanan was criticised by the Dalit leader, Udit Raj, who is about to launch a new Dalit-Muslim party. He accused her of betraying the interests of Dalits and siding with communal forces. "The BSP was formed as a party for the Dalits, of the Dalits and by the Dalits, today she is supporting the communal forces against an eminent Dalit," he said.

26 MAY 2002

26 MAY 2002

BJP-BSP deal for by-polls

Statesman News Service

Manuwadi slur on media

LUCKNOW, May 12. — The BSP and the BJP have reached an understanding for the forthcoming by-elections to one Lok Sabha and three Assembly seats later this month, Ms Mayawati said.

The BJP would support BSP candidates in the Jahagirganj and Bahrahi Assembly seats and in the Akbarpur Lok Sabha seat. The BSP would back the BJP candidate in Dibai Assembly seat. "The move would help the two parties build up a long-term understanding," she said.

The chief minister criticised Samajwadi Party chief Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav for joining hands with Mr Kalyan Singh of the Rashtriya Kranti Party for the Dibai seat. She said Mr Yadav had forgotten his own principles of maintaining a distance from communal forces and was supporting the candidature of Mr Kalyan Singh's son. "Has Mr Yadav forgotten that the Babri Masjid was demolished during Mr Singh's tenure as chief minister," Ms Mayawati said.

The Dibai seat had been vacated

Statesman News Service

LUCKNOW, May 12. — Transfers and postings of officials in Uttar Pradesh have always been big news. With the media obsessed with the subject, the chief minister proves no different.

There have recently been critical reports about the transfers. And this upset Miss Mayawati. She even went to the extent of painting some newsmen black, describing their reports as "Manuwadi reaction".

In the initial days, as the chief minister set up her secretariat, more than two dozen senior officers swapped places. Old favourites got good postings. The officers who functioned in the Governor's secretariat during the President's Rule were given

new postings. Estimates have it that more than 200 officers have been reshuffled in a week.

The media zeroed in on the shakeup. The Opposition attacked Miss Mayawati, pointing out that she did not have the mandate for the changes, as the government was yet to secure the vote of confidence on the floor of the Assembly.



Miss Mayawati

Lok Sabha seat, Mr Singh had deliberately fielded a weak BJP candidate to ensure the victory of Mr Yadav's son, she alleged.

Blow to privatisation: Miss Mayawati announced that no new steps would be taken for privatisation of the power sector and asked the power corporation to improve its management.

Reports alleged that she wanted to keep the list of transfers under wraps, which she defended today at her first formal press briefing at the Secretariat: "The manner in which reports of transfers and postings have been played up by the media was a clear reflection of the Manuwadi attitude of some... the criticism was not justified".

She said the transfers were within the Supreme Court's guidelines and along the basis of merit, seniority and calibre of the officials. "It has been totally transparent. Caste, religion and political leanings has not come into play." She said no directive had been given to officials to black out news about the transfers. "I have changed the manner in which the information was to be communicated to the media."

Mayawati announced that no new steps would be taken for privatisation of the power sector and asked the power corporation to improve its management.

THE STATESMAN

MAY 2002

49-10

CABINET FORMATION IN U.P. 9/5

AT A TIME when ministerial berths have been reduced to instruments of self-preservation for members of the political class, constitution of a Cabinet is indeed a breeding ground for dissent. If this is becoming the rule rather than the exception even where the Government consists of a single party, the problem is only bound to be intense where a combination of parties gathers together (and that too after the elections) as it has happened with the BSP's Mayawati in Uttar Pradesh. The important leaders of the BJP in Delhi may claim that the decision to align with the BSP in the State was stoked by their desire to ensure a popular Government in Uttar Pradesh. But then, the truth is that there were compulsions from their MLAs (at least those who saw themselves as prospective Ministers) apart from the urgent need to shore up numbers in the Lok Sabha in the context of the Gujarat debate (under Rule 184) that finally led to the arrangement with the BSP. This is true of the 14-member contingent of Ajit Singh's Rashtriya Lok Dal too.

The BJP leaders may also seek to couch their decision in social terms and claim to have displayed their commitment to empowering the Dalits but then the truth is that the party was in no position to convince its MLAs to resist the possibility of becoming Ministers. The reality being such, it was only natural that those who lost out in the game would now resort to making a virtue out of "principles". The threat, as has been reported, by Chandramani Kant Singh to vote against the Government (when Ms. Mayawati moves the confidence motion in the State Assembly) and the dissent brewing within the BJP Legislature Party spearheaded by the former Ministers, Harishchandra Srivastava and Ganga Bhakt Singh, are only natural given the context in which the alliance came into place. Their protestations, in this sense, may only be seen as public posturing. After all, those making such noises as well as the Chief Minister cannot but be aware of the consequence — they could end up losing their membership in

the State Assembly — in the event of executing the threat. This, however, does not mean that the Mayawati dispensation will sail smooth in the State and remain in office for the full five years. The source of trouble, in this sense, may not be contentions over Cabinet berths but some of the ideological conflicts that remain between the two major parties — the BSP and the BJP — in the combine as well as the possible erosion of the BJP's social base (consisting primarily of the upper castes) when Ms. Mayawati begins to implement her own party's agenda of Dalit assertion.

The experience with Ms. Mayawati's first term as Chief Minister (when the BJP experimented with the social engineering agenda) in 1995 is a case in point. The resentment among the upper castes against the instances when the provisions of the Scheduled Castes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act were enforced across Uttar Pradesh and the official sanction for the various cultural programmes in Uttar Pradesh where such symbols of Dalit consolidation as Ambedkar, Jyotibha Phule and Periyar were made icons turned out to be an irritant and all these led to the BJP withdrawing support to the BSP Government. It is true that a lot of water has flowed down the Gomti since then and the BJP, after having been reduced to the third position (in terms of its tally in the Assembly), finds a lasting alliance with the BSP as the only means to keep the Samajwadi Party at bay in Uttar Pradesh. The same is true of the BSP too and Ms. Mayawati knows only too well that her own future at the helm of affairs in Uttar Pradesh will depend on the BJP's support. All these do not mean that the sailing is going to be smooth. What with the criminal-politician nexus so firmly becoming a part of the discourse in the State and the civil society institutions beginning to lose their significance, and dissent and the games that ultimately contribute to a further retreat of the democratic institutions in the State. This is what should concern Ms. Mayawati and her colleagues in the Cabinet for the stakes involved are too high to be glossed over.

24-MEMBER U.P. MINISTRY SWORN IN

Seven BJP members in Mayawati Cabinet

By J.P. Shukla

LUCKNOW, MAY 3. A 24-member coalition Government of the Bahujan Samaj Party, the Bharatiya Janata Party and the Rashtriya Lok Dal headed by Mayawati of the BSP was installed in Uttar Pradesh today. The Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, administered the oath of office to the nominees at the sprawling La Martinier grounds here.

Besides the Chief Minister, Ms. Mayawati, 19 Ministers of Cabinet rank and four Ministers of State were sworn in. Eleven Cabinet Ministers and two Ministers of State belong to the BSP, while the BJP has seven Cabinet Ministers and two Ministers of State. The Rashtriya Lok Dal, the largest partner of the BJP during the last elections, has two Ministers — both of Cabinet rank.

No one from the junior partners of the BJP — Janata Dal (United), the Loktantrik Congress Party and independents — could be inducted into the Ministry, which is expected to be expanded later.

The assumption of office by Ms. Mayawati for the third time sent the BSP workers, who had filled the grounds, into raptures. The BJP participation, on the other hand, appeared to be formal. The Union Ministers, Murli



The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Mayawati, with the Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, after she was sworn in in Lucknow on Friday. — Photo: Subir Roy

Manohar Joshi and Ajit Singh, the BSP chief, Kanshi Ram and the State leaders of the BSP and BJP were present.

The Opposition parties, including the Samajwadi Party and the Congress, boycotted the ceremony protesting against the BJP's decision "to form an opportunistic alliance to come to power through the back door".

Senior BJP leaders — Lalji Tandon, Om Prakash Singh, Ram Prakash Tripathi and Humkum Singh — were among the

important Cabinet Ministers sworn in today. The party had also tried to give a balanced look to its team from the caste angle. The list of the BSP, however, included mainly loyalists of Ms. Mayawati. Two important BJP Ministers in the Rajnath Singh Government who did not find a place in the Ministry were Narendra Singh Gaur and Harish Chandra Srivastava.

Ms. Mayawati, who has indicated that she was prepared to accommodate the BJP more this time to make her coalition last

at least till the next Lok Sabha elections, declared after taking the oath of office that she would work in the interest of all sections of society without any consideration of caste or creed. However, she would take special interest in the welfare of the weaker sections, she added.

Addressing her first press conference after assuming office, Ms. Mayawati chided the Samajwadi Party and the Congress for criticising her for entering into a coalition with the BJP. She questioned the SP's intentions, saying if that party was really interested in strengthening secular forces, it should have extended unconditional support to her party to form the Government after the elections.

She said the SP and Congress were making a lot of noise over the riots in Gujarat, but it was only during the Congress rule in U.P. that Muslims had been killed in large numbers in riots at Meerut and Maliyana. During her previous tenure, the minorities had remained perfectly secure and she was determined to protect their interests this time too, she added.

In 1989, when the SP chief, Mulayam Singh Yadav, came to power with the help of the BJP, it was secular but when the BSP joined hands with the BJP, it suddenly became communal. This was a strange definition of communalism given by Mr. Singh, she said.

UNI reports:

Ms. Mayawati said she would seek legal advice on the issuance of fresh notification to initiate legal proceedings against the Union Ministers, L.K. Advani, M.M. Joshi and Uma Bharti, and 18 others in the Babri Masjid demolition case. The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court had dismissed the proceedings against the 21 accused as the earlier notification had some flaws.

THE HINDU

4 MAY 2003

Mayawati to be sworn in on May 3

By J.P. Shukla

LUCKNOW, APRIL 29. The next Government in Uttar Pradesh with the Bahujan Samaj Party leader, Mayawati, as Chief Minister and supported by the BJP and its allies is all set to assume office here on May 3.

The Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, today found that Ms. Mayawati's claim to form the next Government was prima facie substantiated by support from 211 MLAs in the Assembly which, at present has an effective strength of 399 members. Mr. Shastri is reported to have sent his report to the Centre recommending the revocation of President's rule to pave the way for the installation of a popular government in the State.

Ms. Mayawati staked her claim today on the basis of the support in writing extended by the BJP, the Rashtriya Lok Dal, the Lok Janshakti Party, the Janata Dal (United) and the Loktantrik Congress Party, besides a few MLAs.

The Governor said that he would now complete the formalities for her swearing-in and give three weeks to prove her majority on the floor of the Assembly.

Earlier, addressing a press conference along with the BJP Legislature Party leader, Rajnath Singh, Ms. Mayawati

promised to look after the interests of all sections of society.

The affairs of the government would be decided jointly by all partners of the coalition, she said. Both leaders took care to stress that the past bitterness between the parties had come to an end and their new friendship would last at least till the next Lok Sabha election. The voice of junior partners of the alliance was, however, not heard.

Ms. Mayawati said that the controversy over the post of Deputy Chief Minister was the creation of the media. The issue

was never raised during their negotiations to forge the alliance. On the much-touted co-ordination committee, she said leaders representing all partners of the coalition would make the panel. The Chief Minister would be its chairperson.

The BSP leader said the alliance had come into being after discussions with the leaders of the BJP.

She and the BSP supremo, Kanshi Ram, had extensive talks with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Union Home Minister, L. K. Advani, and the BJP president, Jana

Krishnamurthy, yesterday. It was agreed that her Ministry would be smaller and the number of Ministers would be in proportion to the strength of various parties in the Assembly.

The post of Speaker would go to the BJP. The BSP would stand with the BJP in the coming elections for the President and the Vice-President and her party would support the National Democratic Alliance-led Government at the Centre both in the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

Her party would, however, not become a part of the Vajpayee Government, she said.

The most favourable announcement for the BJP made by Ms. Mayawati, however, was that her party would jointly contest the next Lok Sabha elections in Uttar Pradesh. But she said she was talking of this arrangement only for Uttar Pradesh.

Mr. Rajnath Singh, who had already met the Governor with his letter of support to Ms. Mayawati before the press conference began, said the two parties had come together to give a popular government only to avoid fresh elections to the Assembly. The Samajwadi Party had failed to form a Government and that had created a situation for fresh elections, he said.



The BSP leader, Mayawati, with the Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, staking claim to form the government in Uttar Pradesh. Lalji Tandon is to her right. — Photo: Subir Roy

It's a quid pro quo in UP

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 28

ACCOMPANIED BY her mentor, Kanshi Ram, BSP leader Mayawati today met Prime Minister A B Vajpayee. Indications are that she will stake claim before Uttar Pradesh Governor Vishnu Kant Shastri on Monday to form the next Government.

Mayawati thanked Vajpayee for the decision of the BJP's parliamentary board to support her for the Chief Minister's post and discussed formation of her ministry with him. Her meeting with the Prime Minister came a day after the BJP's board formally reversed its decision to sit in the Opposition and supported Mayawati. BJP chief K Jana Krishnamurthi was also present at the meeting.

The BJP is keen that Mayawati takes office before the Lok Sabha votes on Tuesday on an Opposition-sponsored centre motion against the Government for the violence in Gujarat.

As the BJP and the BSP get ready for sharing power in Uttar



MAYAWATI

Pradesh once again, Central BJP leaders say the arrangement will be longer than anyone is willing to grant.

Also, Mayawati is willing to trust the BJP more this time because it is in no shape, after the drubbing in the Assembly polls, to risk another election or attempt to form its own Ministry through defections.

BJP leaders say the principal

reason for them to feel confident about the BSP chief is that she will have an uninterrupted term as Chief Minister this time. In 1997, she was supposed to share the post with Kalyan Singh for every six months by turns, which was the real sore point.

The BJP wants the relationship with the BSP to be extended beyond Uttar Pradesh because of the latter's ability to transfer Dalit votes. The BJP's plan is that the BSP should play an important role in the Assembly polls due in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan next year. If everything works out fine, the arrangement may suit the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls due in 2004.

Mayawati believes that her main rival is the Samajwadi Party, whose core constituency cannot remain with it if there is no chance of it coming to power. Moreover, the BSP has a formidable tally this time. It is not easy to split the party.

The BJP had to swallow its pride to truck with the BSP leader, who seems to have had her way on all issues, excepting

perhaps on who should be the next Speaker of the Uttar Pradesh Assembly.

Led by former Chief Minister Rajnath Singh, who led the party to the polls two months ago, the rank and file of the BJP in Uttar Pradesh, however, is not too happy at the turn of events, which has forced the party to bow before the BSP leader.

Mayawati got what she wanted. She shot down the BJP's demand for Deputy Chief Minister's post. She also told BJP leaders that she would be a full-fledged Chief Minister but she would consult them before major decisions. But, she would not give up her prerogative as Chief Minister to have the final say on posting and transfer of IAS and IPS as district magistrates, superintendents of police and top bureaucrats for various departments.

Mayawati also told State BJP leaders that she would retain key portfolios like general administration, Home and Power as she did during the previous power-sharing arrangement between the two parties.

Ajit Singh extends support to coalition Government



AJIT SINGH

New Delhi, April 28

THE STAGE was set tonight for Mayawati to stake her claim to form a coalition Government with the BJP in Uttar Pradesh on Monday with the crucial 14-member ally Rashtriya Lok Dal support to the alliance.

Sources close to Singh said the letter of support had been sent to Atal Bihari Vajpayee, who had an hour-long meeting with Kanshi Ram and Mayawati at his residence on Government formation in UP. Singh sent the letter through an emissary, the sources said.

The letter of support by RLD, which will help BSP-BJP alliance with a combined strength of 186 to reach the majority mark in the 403-member House, set at rest speculation about a last-minute hiccup in Government formation in the State, where Assembly polls in March produced a badly fragmented verdict.

tain constitutional formalities. Senior BJP leaders in met in Lucknow to discuss modalities of Government-formation and the issue of representation to BJP's pre-poll allies in the ministry, Mishra said.

He said the State BJP leaders discussed the issues raised by Ajit Singh and the issues "would not be ignored." To a question about the size of the ministry, Mishra said a decision in this regard would be taken after the arrival of Mayawati tomorrow.

Meanwhile, the NCP again dubbed the BJP-BSP alliance as "unholy". The party would protest against the formation of a BJP-BSP Government in UP by observing a "black day".

Criticising the BSP for backtracking on its pre-poll declaration of not having any alliance with the BJP, NCP leader Tariq Anwar said: "People have been cheated as their mandate was to throw out BJP Government".

PTI

Decks cleared for UP govt formation

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: Buckling under pressure from the BSP, the BJP has finally given up the demand for the deputy chief minister's post in the proposed coalition government in Uttar Pradesh which will be headed by Mayawati.

Threatened by political isolation—the result of some of its NDA partners resenting its handling of the Gujarat situation—the BJP has apparently decided not to allow its new alliance with the pro-Dalit party to sour so early.

"The coalition in UP is likely to be in place by Monday. We want to end the uncertainty in the state," former BJP president Kushabhau Thakre said.

After a meeting with home minister L.K. Advani, two senior UP BJP leaders—state BJP chief Kalraj Mishra and his senior party colleague Lalji Tandon—met Ms Mayawati here on Thursday and cleared the last hurdles for the formation of the government by making it clear that they would not demand the deputy chief minister's post.

Ms Mayawati and Mr Tandon later told reporters that the deputy chief ministership had never been an issue in the negotiations between the two parties. They termed it a "media creation".

Earlier, BJP sources had indicated that the party would insist on the post, following

which BSP chief Kanshi Ram had openly opposed the idea, saying it would create a parallel centre of power.

BJP leaders said discussions were on to set up a coordination committee to help guide the government in UP. Efforts are on to formulate a common minimum programme to provide guidelines to the coalition government.

Interestingly, former chief minister Rajnath Singh, who was present at the meeting with Mr Advani, did not turn up for the discussion with Ms Mayawati.


With the BJP-BSP coalition all set to form the next government in UP, the Samajwadi Party has threatened to start an agitation in the state to oppose the "opportunistic alliance".

The SP, however, is more baffled by the Congress' silence following its appeal for support in forming a government than by the coming together of the BJP and the BSP.

"We are going to expose the BSP and the Congress as well—both of them fought the assembly elections with an anti-BJP plank and both are instrumental in bringing the BJP back to power," SP spokesman Amar Singh said.

He said the Congress' refusal to help the SP form a government in UP might affect the regrouping of the major opposition parties at the national level.

FRIENDS IN NEED



Mayawati L.K. Advani

- ▶ **BJP gives up demand for deputy CM's post**
- ▶ **Govt formation likely to take place on Monday**
- ▶ **SP threatens stir against BJP-BSP alliance**

26 APR 2000

THE TIMES OF INDIA

RAJNATH SINGH KEEPS AWAY

U.P. BJP leaders, Mayawati hold talks on Govt. formation

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, APRIL 21. Yet another round of talks on government formation in Uttar Pradesh took place here today between the Bharatiya Janata Party's State leaders, Kalraj Mishra and Lalji Tandon, and the Bahujan Samaj Party leader, Mayawati. And later, for the first time, the two BJP leaders held separate discussions with the Rashtriya Lok Dal leader, Ajit Singh.

Significantly, the former U.P. Chief Minister, Rajnath Singh, who has all along opposed an arrangement with the BSP, stayed away from the discussions although he was in Delhi.

The BJP leaders, while confirming that discussions had been held, refused to divulge any details. Kushabhau Thakre, the former BJP president who is now in-charge of political affairs in U.P., said the political arrangement in the State was expected to be finalised over the next few days. The final green signal would be given at a meeting

of the BJP parliamentary board to be held after the return of the party president, Jana Krishnamurthi, from Tamil Nadu.

The BJP is particularly keen to tie the knot with the BSP as early as possible to ensure that the BSP voted in favour of the Government in the Lok Sabha in the event of voting to resolve the current deadlock in Parliament over the Gujarat debate under a substantive motion.

Mr. Thakre said he had met Rajnath Singh, Mr. Mishra and Mr. Tandon over dinner yesterday and it was then decided that Mr. Mishra and Mr. Tandon would meet Ms. Mayawati today.

When asked why Mr. Singh did not join the discussions today, he said: "you cannot hold discussions like these between 10 persons... A decision was taken last night that Mr. Mishra and Mr. Tandon would go for the meeting."

Although it was not stated by Mr. Thakre, he had apparently laid down the ground rules for the

discussion with Ms. Mayawati at last night's meeting.

Notwithstanding some reservations, the BJP expects "no problem" from the RLD on the proposed coalition government in U.P.

The RLD spokesperson, however, said his party would insist on the creation of 'Harit Pradesh', a separate western U.P. State, as a major issue in any agreed programme for governance.

He also said Ministerial positions in the proposed coalition government should be distributed among political partners as a percentage of their respective strengths in the State Legislature.

Reports from Lucknow indicated today that neither the Lok Janshakti of Ramvilas Paswan nor the Janata Dal (United) of Sharad Yadav would have any objection to the BSP-BJP tie-up.

The Lok Janshakti and the JD(U), both had a seat-sharing arrangement with the BJP in the U.P. Assembly polls earlier this year.

SAURDAY, APRIL 20, 2002

GOVERNMENT FORMATION IN U.P.

80-10
A BSP-BJP COALITION in Uttar Pradesh, however incongruous it may sound, is perhaps the only means to ensure an elected Government in the State. Having been relegated to the third position after a five-year term in power in the State — only 88 MLAs against 176 in the previous Assembly — the BJP read it as a vote to sit in the Opposition. Hence, the party should have kept out of anything to do with Government formation in Uttar Pradesh. The only option would have been a Government consisting of Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party and Mayawati's BSP. This, however, was an option that defied the social chemistry that guides the political discourse in Uttar Pradesh and its neighbouring region. A coming together of the Samajwadi Party and the BSP would not happen given the nature of the support base of these two parties. Add to this the irrepressible ego that guides the preferences of these two leaders.

The continuous state of conflict between the intermediate castes (represented by Mr. Yadav's party) and the Dalits (among whom Ms. Mayawati's party is so firmly entrenched) had rendered a SP-BSP combine simply impossible. Mr. Yadav did nothing to work for the consolidation of an OBC-Dalit unity even after he stunned everyone in 1993 when he struck a political alliance with the BSP; the alliance helped him (and the BSP as well) register a stunning victory in the Assembly election that year. The parting of ways between the two parties in less than a couple of years from then (when Ms. Mayawati managed to wrest the Chief Minister's position with support from the BJP in 1995) had to do with the synthetic nature of a social chemistry — a unity between the OBCs and the Dalits — that was attempted at that stage against the platform of Hindutva represented by the BJP. Add to this the person-

ality clashes between Mr. Yadav and Ms. Mayawati that began manifesting in the two leaders calling each other names and the infamous incidents at the State guest house in Lucknow — where Ms. Mayawati along with her MLAs came under physical attack — in June 1995. And while the Samajwadi Party had committed itself to opposing the BJP "at all costs" in the course of its poll campaign, the BSP did nothing to suggest its opposition to the BJP throughout the campaign.

Be that as it may, it needs to be stressed that the experience of the past couple of occasions when the BSP and the BJP had come together cannot be glossed over. While the conflicting ideological positions have hardly been the cause of friction between these two parties — there was the instance in 1995 when Ms. Mayawati as Chief Minister went ahead with honouring Periyar defying objections from the BJP's State unit leaders whose support in the Assembly kept her Government going — there are bound to be problems on the ground. The two parties, after all, will be seeking to expand their own organisational machinery. Then there was the experience in 1997 when the BSP was split by the BJP. All these had taken a heavy toll. Cabinet berths were reduced to a means to retain loyalty (with over 90 Ministers) and governance was hardly a priority. The outcome was clear. Apart from development activity being given short shrift, law and order in Uttar Pradesh left a lot to be desired. It is on this count that the post-election coming together of the BSP and the BJP raises concern. While the details of the agreement are yet to be disclosed, the basis of the arrangement is unlikely to be anything other than the desire for self-preservation among the newly-elected MLAs of the two parties. This certainly does not seem to have the makings of an enlightened or lasting bond.

20 APR 2002

THE HINDU

Governor invites Mayawati to form govt in UP

Times News Network

LUCKNOW: Uttar Pradesh governor V.K. Shastri on Monday invited Bahujan Samaj Party leader Mayawati to form the next government in the state.

Mr Shastri said he was convinced that Ms Mayawati would be able to prove her majority on the floor of the house within three weeks of being sworn in. The new ministry would be administered the oath of office at Raj Bhavan at 5 p.m. on May 3, he said. Mr Shastri added that he would soon recommend the revocation of President's rule in the state.

Earlier, Ms Mayawati, accompanied by senior BJP leaders, including state party chief Kalraj Mishra, met the governor and submitted a letter staking her claim to form the government. She claimed the support of 211 MLAs, which is more than the required number to form the government, including the BJP's 88 legislators, the Rashtriya Lok Dal's 14, six MLAs from the Lok Janshakti Party, the Loktantrik Congress Party and the Janata Dal (U). Five independent MLAs have also pledged their support to Ms Mayawati.

The BSP has a strength of 98 MLAs. The 14-member RLD leader Kokab Hamid and Raja Ram Pandey of the LJP also submitted their letters of support to the governor. Four seats are vacant in the 403-member Vidhan Sabha and this makes its effective strength 399.

Spelling out programmes for her government, Ms Mayawati said that law and order as well as development would be given top priority. On the contentious issues of the Vidhan Sabha speaker's post and the chairmanship of the coordination committee, she said that the BSP-BJP leadership had already decided that the speaker would be from the BJP.

Ms Mayawati said she would herself head the coordination committee and added that it would have four or five members from the BJP and other parties along with those from the BSP.

The BSP and the BJP would also contest the coming Lok Sabha election in Uttar Pradesh together, she said, adding that the 13 MPs of the BSP would vote in favour of the government on Tuesday in the Lok Sabha.



BSP leader Mayawati with Uttar Pradesh governor Vishan Kant Shastri in Lucknow on Monday.

NO ROTATIONAL ARRANGEMENT THIS TIME?

Mayawati all set to become U.P. CM

9-58
JP

HO-1
19/4

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, APRIL 18. The Bharatiya Janata Party today took a major step towards forming a government in Uttar Pradesh under the leadership of Mayawati of the Bahujan Samaj Party by formally announcing that "some time next week," the BJP Parliamentary Board would meet "to review its earlier decision to sit in the Opposition." In the meantime, talks between the BJP and the BSP would continue.

At a meeting called by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, at his residence this evening, the central party leadership placed its cards before the State leaders who till recently had strongly opposed the move for a coalition with the BSP, saying it was a recipe for disaster for the BJP. Today's meeting put the State leadership's formal stamp of approval on the plan to share power with Ms. Mayawati.

The Union Home Minister, L. K. Advani, the Human Resource Development Minister, Murli Manohar Joshi, the BJP presi-

dent, Jana Krishnamurthi, and the Uttar Pradesh in-charge of political affairs, Kushabhau Thakre, were present. The State leaders were led by the former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Rajnath Singh, and the State unit president, Kalraj Mishra. Others present included Lalji Tandon, Ram Prakash Gupta and Harish Chandra Srivastava.

Coming out of the 90-minute meeting, Mr. Krishnamurthi said that no "formulas" for power-sharing were discussed, but a decision was taken "to review the previous decision to sit in the Opposition which was taken by the party's Parliamentary Board soon after the Uttar Pradesh Assembly election results were known." He confirmed that over the last few days, the BSP leaders, Ms. Mayawati and Kanshi Ram, had met Mr. Vajpayee, Mr. Advani and Dr. Joshi in a series of meetings, and more meetings would follow. He indicated that the BJP's Parliamentary Board would meet "probably next week."

Although various power-sharing formulas are being discussed, it seems that the details

of the "arrangement" in Uttar Pradesh are still to be finalised. What seems certain though is that Ms. Mayawati would be Chief Minister for a full five-year term (if the coalition lasts that long).

Unlike the last time, the Chief Ministership will not be held by the BSP and the BJP in rotation on a six-monthly basis. The arrangement collapsed immediately after the BSP's six-month tenure came to an end.

Mr. Krishnamurthi said categorically that details like whether there would be a Deputy Chief Minister's post, or who would take the Speaker's position, and the formula for the division of Cabinet portfolios "were not discussed at all."

Some senior BJP leaders are admitting that it will not be easy for the State leaders to make the cadres swallow the cohabitation-with-BSP pill.

"We will see how we deal with this," was all Mr. Mishra would say. And Mr. Rajnath Singh's grim long face could not hide what he felt about the political wedding plans in Uttar Pradesh.

13 APR 2007

THE HINDU

Opportunistic partners

13/11/2007
5/11/07
A BJP-BSP mixture being cooked in UP

“**K**hichri taiyar hai, parosne ki der hai” (the khichri is cooked, all that is needed now is to dish it out). This is the very apt and telling quote used by BSP leader Mayawati to describe the current political situation in the country's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh. A BSP-BJP coalition is a very unlikely mixture, but one which is all set to take over. After much haggling the two allies have come to a working agreement which will ensure that their common *bete noire*, the Samajwadi Party which actually is the single largest party in the UP assembly, is kept out of power. The deal brokered is for Mayawati to become chief minister and the BJP to select a deputy chief minister. Mayawati will have a free hand in choosing her council of ministers and deciding on portfolios and in return the BJP will be allowed to nominate the Speaker. There are no high principles which bring the two foes together, just plain and simple opportunism. The BJP is definitely playing second fiddle to the BSP, and they have agreed to do so in preference to another election. A similar experiment with the BSP a few years ago had left the BJP with a sour taste in the mouth. It had been agreed then that the two parties would rule in rotation every six months. After the initial six months of BJP rule, Chief Minister Kalyan Singh had stepped down in favour of Mayawati, but when it was the BSP supremo's turn to return the compliment she flatly refused. This eventually led to the BJP engineering a split in the BSP, forcing Mayawati to resign and BJP taking control of the state. The BJP is unlikely to have forgotten the experience so quickly, but the greed for power has got the better of them.

The BSP on the other hand has never hidden its opportunism. Kanshi Ram, the founder supremo of the party has said from its very inception that his party's support was available to the highest bidder. As the second largest party the BSP is keen to tie up with anyone as long as it can keep the SP out of power. Mayawati has an almost pathological hatred for Mulayam Singh Yadav which dates back to when she was attacked at the UP state-guest house allegedly by SP workers. That apart, BJP is an upper caste party while BSP espouses the cause of Dalits — the allies have a lot more in common than we think.

BJP strives for alliance with BSP

Sudesh K Verma
in New Delhi

SRB
6/4

April 5. — Senior BJP leaders are trying to redraw the political map of Uttar Pradesh by securing a firm BJP-BSP alliance that should sail through even during the Lok Sabha elections in 2004. Until a commitment to this effect and a guarantee that this would not be violated are secured, the BJP may keep the BSP waiting at the door.

There's no hurry, a senior BJP leader said while pointing out that a coalition arrangement must be finalised before 8 May by which President's rule in the state should be ratified by both Houses. The failure to do so might force the Governor, Mr Vishnukant Shashtri, to invite the Samajwadi Party to form government.

Some BJP leaders seem confident that a BJP-BSP coalition would be in place before that happens as none of the parties is ready to risk inviting Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav because of the fear that he would split other parties and prove majority. The final shape of things would emerge during the second half of the budget session that begins on 15 April.

In principle, the BJP leadership appears to have reconciled itself to a BJP-BSP alliance with Miss Mayawati as the chief min-

ister. But other arrangements, like the nature of the coalition, running the government on the basis of an agreed minimum programme and power-sharing formula, are yet to be finalised.

9-08 UP

The human resource development minister, Mr Murli Manohar Joshi, is reportedly in constant touch with the BSP chief, Mr Kanshi Ram, to hammer out a formula. Other state BJP leaders are also in touch with central BJP leaders.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee reportedly sought a guarantee from BJP leaders from Uttar Pradesh recently that the party would win more Assembly seats if fresh elections are held. The BJP MLAs, who earlier opposed the alliance, have also toned down their stand and are now looking forward to a viable coalition arrangement, a BJP office-bearer said.

A BJP-BSP alliance has the potential to provide maximum advantage to the BJP as this would mean transfer of the BSP votes to the party to give it a decisive edge in the majority of the 81 Lok Sabha seats. In the present Lok Sabha, the BSP's 13 MPs would come in handy to balance the TDP and other coalition partners, a senior BJP leader said.

Now it was for the BSP to decide whether or not it wanted to play a bigger role in Uttar Pradesh, the BJP leader said.

Ayodhya can wait now, Uttar Pradesh can't

9-82
UP

March 17. — Two issues are likely to weigh heavily on the Prime Minister now that he has bought some time on Ayodhya. One of the issues is the eagerly awaited Cabinet expansion and the other is exploring the possibilities of government formation in Uttar Pradesh.

Both are linked unless Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee decides to repeat what he did with former Delhi chief minister Mr Sahib Singh Verma. However, Mr Rajnath Singh is the BJP's young face the party wouldn't like to lose. His chances of coming back to the Centre would increase the prospects of government formation in the state.

BJP hardliners are not ready to leave posturing even as they agree privately that the only viable government in the state would be a BSP-BJP coalition. Sceptics within the BJP suspect Miss Mayawati's capability to deliver goods. But, if the BJP can tolerate Miss Jayalalitha or Miss Mamata Banerjee or other temperamental

alliance leaders, then why not Miss Mayawati who will have 13 Lok Sabha members to support the NDA? Moreover, it will help counterbalance the TDP which has 28 members in the Lok Sabha.

While Mr Vajpayee can still give some more time, at least till the Budget session is over, for Cabinet expansion, Uttar Pradesh needs urgent attention as a popular government must be in place within 60 days of imposition of President's rule beginning from 8 March.

The logical outcome would be dissolution of the state Assembly and fresh elections if the Congress does not support the Bill imposing Central rule on the state. And there are few takers for fresh elections because these may not throw up a new equation in the state.

The electoral equation makes it difficult for any government formation unless two of the three groups join hands — the Samajwadi Party-led alliance with 146 seats, the BJP-led alliance with 108 and the BSP with 98. The BJP is in no mood to allow the Samajwadi Party to form the government.

BJP hardliners agree in private that the only viable government in UP would be a BSP-BJP coalition. A popular govt must be in place within 60 days of imposition of President's rule, beginning from 8 March

Turn to page 6

VAJPAYEE:

59-6 18/3
9-82 UP
(Continued from page 1)

The Governor, Mr Vishnukant Shastri, former RSS pracharak, could have easily invited the single largest party and Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav to prove majority on the floor of the Assembly.

That he insisted that the Samajwadi Party must give details regarding from where he would get the numbers would make him apply the same principle to other parties too.

It might have been calculated that this would prop up the BJP's chances and the BSP might split to shore up the former's number even if there would be huge gap between emerging as the single largest party and reaching the majority figure of 203.

Miss Mayawati sensed the dangers and resigned her Lok Sabha membership a day before the imposition of President's rule to keep her flocks together.

She also sent clear signal that she would not get trapped because of the rumours spread by the BJP that she could take up a ministerial responsibility at the Centre and support the BJP in the state.

THE STATESMAN

18 MAR 2002

AFTER SHILA DAAN / FRIDAY PRAYERS PEACEFUL

Curbs to remain in Ayodhya

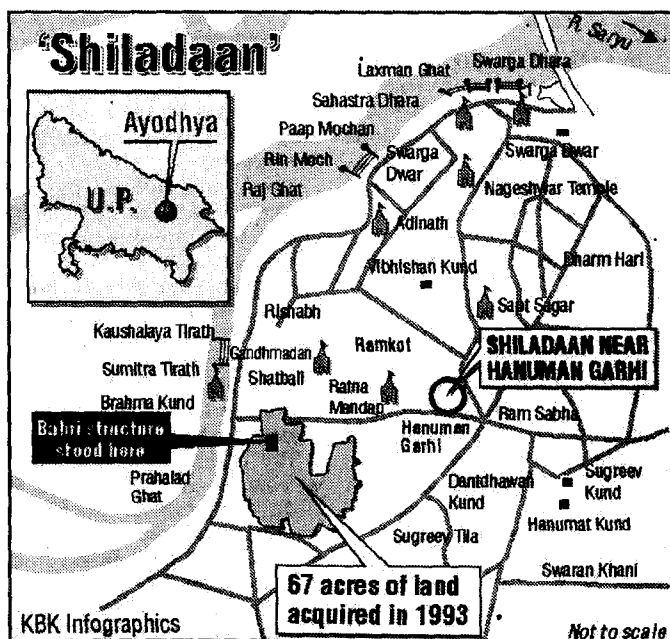
By J.P. Shukla

LUCKNOW, MARCH 15. The Uttar Pradesh Government has decided not to relax the security arrangements at Ayodhya and maintain strict vigil on the situation elsewhere in the State despite the peaceful conclusion of the VHP programme today.

The State's Principal Secretary (Home), Naresh Dayal, told newsmen today said that diversion of trains running through Faizabad and Ayodhya would continue. The entry of people in the twin cities would be restricted. The curbs on convergence of VHP activists would also be there to avert any violation of law and order.

Mr. Dayal said it was expected that the VHP would not bring in uncontrollable crowds to the town now that its programme was over. However, the administration could not take chances. So long as apprehensions of breach of peace in the temple town remained, the present strength of the police forces would be maintained.

The apprehension emanates from reports of tension in a number of communally-sensitive towns following the Supreme Court judgment banning the VHP's "symbolic bhoomi puja" anywhere on the acquired land around the disputed site. There is possibility of the the VHP and associate organisa-



tions directing their ire elsewhere, the administration feels.

Mr. Dayal said that reports of tension had been received from Meerut and Aligarh though no untoward incident was from anywhere in the State. There were reports of markets remaining closed in some towns. In Lucknow, rumours of trouble continued to grip various localities though all these were later found baseless.

Friday prayers in mosques, meanwhile, passed off peaceful-

ly all over the State.

During the day, batches of VHP activists made symbolic attempts to proceed to Ayodhya but they were foiled by police. In Lucknow, the VHP vice-president, Acharya Giriraj Kishore, the BJP MPs, Swami Chinmayanand and Brij Bhusah Sharan Singh, along with a batch of 33 persons were arrested on the borders of the district on Faizabad road.

In Kanpur, more than 600 VHP activists courted arrest in

protest against the Administration's decision to stop them from going to Ayodhya. VHP volunteers were also arrested in Deoria, Hata and Taraya Sujan.

VHP leaders publicly held the bureaucracy responsible for the curbs imposed at Ayodhya. Apparently, this was the reason why they had insisted that the carved stone donated by the Ramjanmabhoomi Trust Chairman, Ramchandra Das Paramhans, be received by the Director of the Ayodhya cell in the Prime Minister's Office instead of the Divisional Commissioner of Faizabad, who is also the receiver of the acquired land at the disputed site.

300 arrested in Chhattisgarh

PTI reports fro Raipur:

Over 300 people were arrested today throughout Chhattisgarh and security beefed in view of the "shila daan". In Raipur alone, 136 people had been arrested, while 100 were rounded up in Bilaspur division, 65 in Durg and two in Dhamtari district, an official spokesman said.

Police sources said security had been tightened in all sensitive places. "The situation is peaceful and no untoward incident has been reported from any part," the IGP, Ram Niwas, said.

5 MAR 2002

THE HINDU

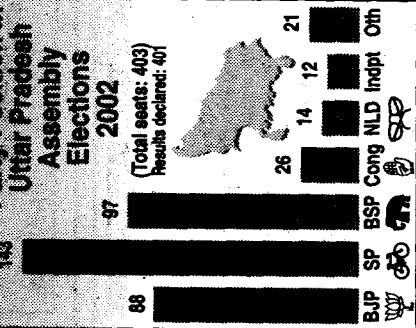
UP governor: failing the stability test

RAJINDER SACHAR

IS THERE no legality or conventions of governance the BJP is willing to honour? One is compelled to ask this question in the wake of the murderous confusion of the Gujarat government in one of the worst communal killings, and now, the openly partisan and unconstitutional action of Uttar Pradesh Governor Vishnu Kant Shastri in recommending President's rule (since accepted by the President) on the alleged ground that there was no possibility of a stable government from the newly elected but hung Assembly.

Going by precedents, the governor could not have denied Mulayam Singh Yadav (His Samajwadi Party was the largest opposition party) the opportunity to form the government. But Shastri's refusal by taking cover under the facile excuse that Mulayam did not furnish the list of members to prove his party's majority, that permitting a minority government to encourage horse trading, is in defiance of what the Supreme Court said in Bommai's case: "even assuming that horse trading is going on, the proper course for the Governor to adopt is to await the test on the floor of the House". And, "the assessment of the strength of the ministry is not a matter of private opinion of any individual, be the Governor or the President (emphasis supplied)."

The vague concept that a minority government is not likely to be stable is alien to Article 356. Such a construction would have the effect of conferring powers on the union government to completely supersede and frustrate the state authority and federalism provided for in the Constitution. If such an interpretation is accepted, by the exercise of the powers under Article 356 of the Constitution, any political party in power at the



Centre can assume to itself unfettered dictatorial powers by preventing formation of a government by any other political party in any State.

The Governor occupies the position of the head of the executive in the State, but it's the Council of Ministers in each State that carries on the executive government. Professor Keith in his book *Constitutional*

shown by him outside the legislature. This is because we have the examples of Deve Gowda and I. K. Gujral, who led minority governments in the Lok Sabha, but continued for years because of the reluctance of other parties to face fresh elections.

A close parallel and instructive precedent arose in 1974 in the general elections to the British Parliament. Edward Heath's Conservative Party failed to secure a majority. If the Liberals and Conservatives would have combined they would have been a majority, but they couldn't agree to form the government. The queen called Harold Wilson, the leader of Labour Party which was then the single largest party in Parliament. Wilson, though in a minority of 34, agreed to form the government and the queen swore him in. Wilson made it clear that if defeated he will not hold on the office but would call general elections. This was a warning that while the British public wouldn't lightly forgive politicians who play the role of wreckers, and that the Conservatives would not be immune from the consequences of their irresponsibility. The conservative got the message and failed to divide the House on an amendment which which they had themselves tabled. The Indian electorate's reaction wouldn't be too different.

The governor even blatantly ignored the direct precedent of the Supreme Court which in 1998 (Kalyan Singh's case) had

THE concept that a minority government is not likely to be stable is alien to Article 356. It confers powers on the Centre to supersede the state authority

call the BSP to form the government. Such a precedent can be found in a similar situation in Canada. The governor-general there had insisted such undertaking before allowing the government to be formed.

In the absence of such an open alliance, the governor would not be able to deny Mulayam such an opportunity on the ground of majority not being

the only course left would be to give Mulayam an opportunity to face the assembly. The BJP and BSP separately have lesser numbers than the SP and would not be able to put forth their claims even if the other two parties form a coalition and each one of them gives an undertaking to the governor that at least for two years the coalition will continue will the governor be entitled to

Introduction to *British Constitutional Law*. There is thus no honest reason why the governor should not consider himself bound by the same conventions. The stability of the contemplated ministry is not to be tested by delving into the antecedents and contemporaneous conduct of the legislators or the ideologies of the constituents of any party but by

physical counting of heads in the house itself.

The BJP, through the governor's action, is sending a message to the Bahujan Samaj Party either to work out an arrangement or the Centre (i.e. BJP) would rule UP by proxy. This is a cheap device to gain more time for its manoeuvring. If, as expected, the Rajya Sabha doesn't approve presidential rule,

(The writer is a former chief justice of the Delhi High Court)

All eyes on Supreme Court, U.P. Governor briefs PM

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, MARCH 12. The stage is set for the keenly-awaited order of the Supreme Court on permitting or disallowing 'shila puja' by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and the Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas on the Government-acquired land around the disputed site in Ayodhya on March 15.

Ahead of the court order, which is expected tomorrow, the Uttar Pradesh Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, met the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, for about 30 minutes today and briefed him on the security situation in and around Ayodhya. The Governor had separate meetings with the President, K.R. Narayanan, and the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, later.

While Mr. Vajpayee himself stated categorically in Parliament on Monday that the court's order would be fully implemented — this was conveyed to Mr. Shastri today — the Babri Masjid Movement Coordination Committee of Syed Shahbuddin today charged the Government with "not discharging his constitutional obligation" by not taking a clear stand on the unlawful demands of the VHP and the Nyas.

The point, also made by several Opposition parties, is that as the receiver of the acquired land, the Government itself could have said a firm "no" to the VHP's proposed 'puja'.

The Government as receiver has a duty to maintain the status quo on the land till the final judicial verdict is implemented in the main Ayodhya case relating to the title deed of the site on which the Babri Masjid was demolished in 1992.

'Adequate security'

Mr. Shastri today asserted that the Supreme Court's orders on allowing 'puja' on March 15

would be implemented and there were adequate forces available to ensure security in Ayodhya. The Army had also been alerted and was on "stand-by". But he also appeared to question the right of anyone (including the court) to disallow 'puja'.

Responding to questions from reporters after the meeting, Mr. Shastri said the Prime Minister wanted the court's decision to be fully implemented. "How can you stop people from offering prayers? Can the Supreme Court prevent people from worshipping in their homes and temples?"



The Prime Minister, A. B. Vajpayee, with the Uttar Pradesh Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, in New Delhi on Tuesday. —Photo: V. Sudershan

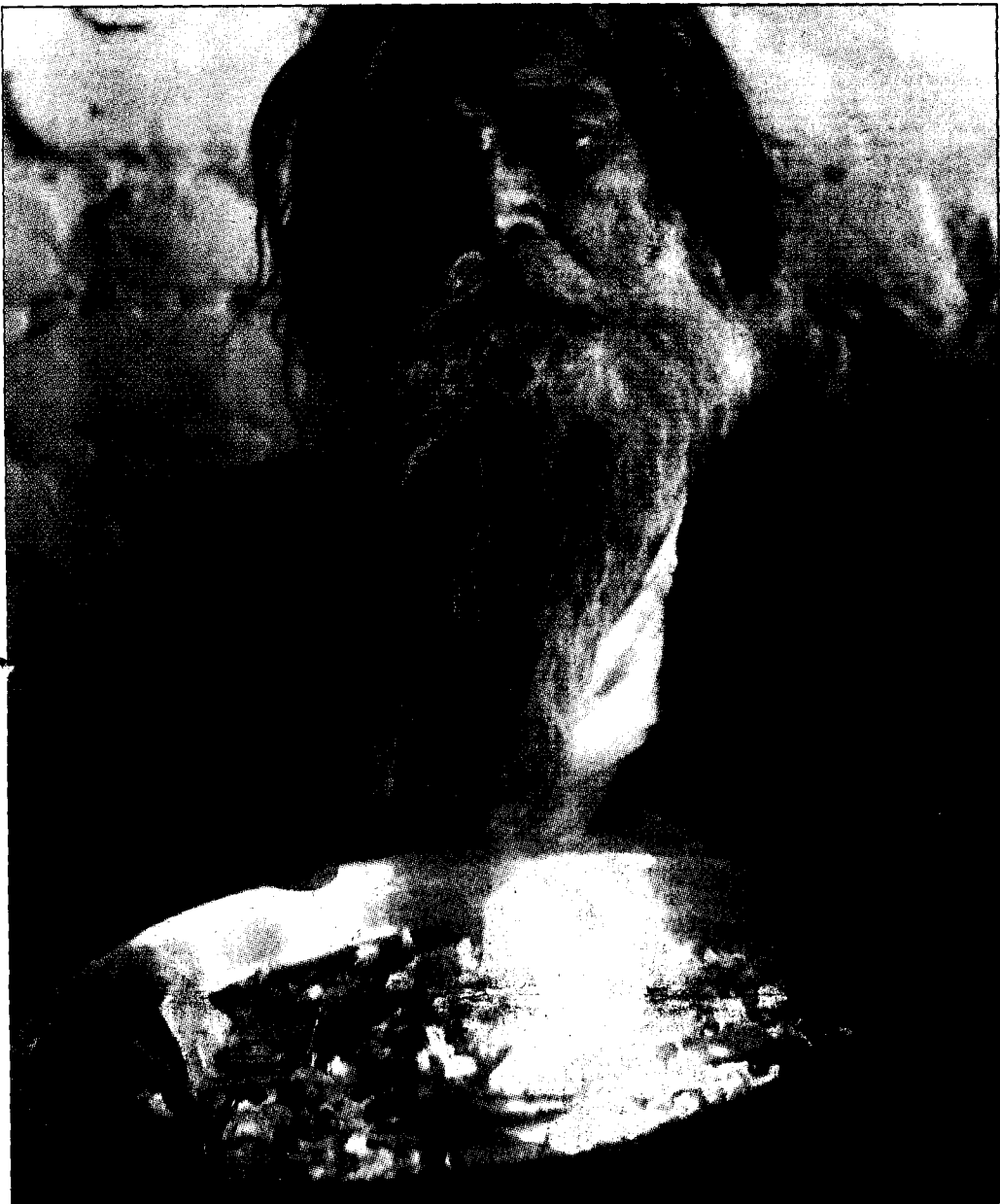
he asked in response to a question as to what would be done in the event of the Supreme Court disallowing the 'symbolic puja'.

On his first visit here after the imposition of President's rule in Uttar Pradesh, the Governor briefed Mr. Vajpayee on the security situation in Ayodhya.

THE HINDU

13 MAR 2002

Puja & pillar divide temple twins



Ramchandra Das Paramhans performs a puja at the VHP workshop in Ayodhya. (AFP)

Atal counts on trident

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, March 11: The BJP's allies have refused to be swayed by the Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas' "tactical" shift from puja to pillar donation, smelling in it a ploy to legitimise the temple spearhead's claim on the acquired land.

Sources said the Vajpayee government is banking on three factors — the differences between the Nyas and the VHP, the RSS' "persuasive" powers and the softening of the BJP's hardliners — to tide over the worst crisis it has faced so far.

The government is again pinning hopes on the RSS to prevail on the VHP and the Nyas to defer the programme by three to four months to prevent a confrontation.

It is learnt that defence minister and NDA convener, George Fernandes, and BJP president K. Jana Krishnamurthi were in touch with RSS functionaries Madan Das Devi and Mohanrao Bhagwat, asking them to "persuade" the VHP.

The RSS' general council is meeting in Bangalore from

March 15, the day the VHP has threatened to hold the puja. The Sangh's national executive will meet a day before to finalise the agenda. The RSS had earlier tried in vain to broker a truce.

Another ray of hope for the government is the subtle backtracking of hardliners within the BJP, which robs the VHP of a valuable source of strength and support. These hardliners — mainly Uttar Pradesh MPs — had sent a signed letter to Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, protesting against the restrictions in Ayodhya.

The railway minister's assertion in the House today that train services to Ayodhya would be resumed only after a written advice by the home ministry has troubled the MPs. But Swami Chinmayanand, the prime mover behind the protest, told *The Telegraph*: "The government has no choice but (to) fulfil its constitutional and legal responsibilities."

The changed stand, said party sources, was prompted by the realisation that if they carried things too far and made it seem as though Vajpayee was "isolated", he would have no

choice but to put in his papers. "That would be disastrous because it would lead to either chaos or another election," said a senior BJP leader.

It was also said that home minister L.K. Advani had distanced himself from the hardliners.

Official sources said that in its submission to the court, the government was expected to refer to today's pillar puja to buttress its contention that nothing untoward would happen if a symbolic ceremony was allowed on a small portion of the "undisputed" land. The government feels that the one-day programme would not alter the status quo ante in any way.

However, NDA sources described the Nyas' new proposal as a "clever ploy" to hoodwink them and the Opposition.

"Accepting the pillars would amount to official endorsement of encroachment on the acquired land. It is not the receiver's business to accept bricks but to see that the property is not encroached upon. We would advise the Centre not to fall into the Nyas' latest trap," said an NDA leader.

FROM ANAND SOONDAS

Ayodhya, March 11: Divisions cropped up within the temple movement today with the Ramjanmabhoomi Nyas saying it would "donate" the pillars to the Ayodhya land receiver on March 15 and falling silent on the proposed bhoomi puja.

But the VHP, which has announced that the pillars would be taken in a procession to the acquired land, stuck to its strident public stand. The outfit said it would go ahead with the Friday puja and reiterated its demand for lifting of restrictions on the movement of kar sevaks.

VHP working president Ashok Singhal arrived here this afternoon, setting at rest speculation on whether he would be allowed into the temple town. Ringed by securitymen, he headed straight for Karsevakpuram, the camp set up for kar sevaks.

Singhal, who met Uttar Pradesh Governor Vishnukant Shastri in Lucknow before leaving for Ayodhya, said the puja would be held near the disputed site on March 15. "Nothing can stop that from happening now," he asserted.

The VHP leader said the minority community had no role to play on the issue as it was "between the Ramjanmabhoomi Trust and the government". He also warned that his arrest before the Friday programme will "not be in anyone's interest".

Singhal bristled at the Prime Minister's assurance that the

government would abide by the Supreme Court's verdict on the puja. The Prime Minister said in the Lok Sabha today that the situation in Ayodhya was "totally under control".

An angry Singhal retorted: "There was no mention of the apex court's judgment when Vajpayee had asked the Sankaracharya of Kanchi to mediate on the issue."

But conflicting signals emerged from the sadhus, with Ramjanmabhoomi Trust chairman Ramchandra Das Paramhans lobbing the ball in the government's court. "I have pledged to donate stones at the garbha griha of Lord Ram. I will do it formally, without any fuss, and take a receipt from the receiver (Faizabad divisional commissioner A.K. Gupta). Henceforth, it will be their responsibility to ensure protection of the stones," he said.

Gupta, however, said he could accept the "donation" only after receiving a nod from the Centre. "But first we must receive something in writing from the mahant."

Paramhans, who conducted a puja at Karsevakpuram today, claimed that Ram appeared in his dream last night and told him to make the donation. But he said he would not "force" the receiver to accept the donation.

"We had thought the Ramjanmabhoomi would be handed over to us by March 12 and we would go there on March 15 with shilas to begin construction. But Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee failed to hand over the

land," he said. "(But) we will not go to others' land for sangarsh (struggle) or take the law into our hands." The sadhu said he was against any "symbolic" puja. "I will go to the Ramjanmabhoomi with fanfare but only when it is handed over to us."

Bajrang Dal founder president Vinay Katiyar echoed Paramhans. No bhoomi puja will be performed and there will be only a donation of pillars, the BJP MP from Faizabad said in Delhi.

NDA partners had reservations about the Nyas' change of stand. But BJP sources contended that if the Paramhans-Katiyar duo "came around", the VHP's movement would lose "considerable steam" because, as they put it, "if one had the lung power to galvanise the kar sevaks, the other had the men and muscle".

But even as Ayodhya heads for D-day, the administration is bracing for what it termed the "real" threat — from terrorist groups.

Gupta said the government had received "top grade" intelligence information yesterday that "terrorist groups operational in Jammu and Kashmir" might try to create communal disturbances in Ayodhya on March 15. "Kar sevaks we can handle. Terrorists are the real problem. The real and most potent threat is from them. There won't be many kar sevaks on March 15," he said, adding that there have been six instances of terrorist attacks in Ayodhya and Faizabad in the past two years.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

12 MAR 2002

Godhra incident was provoked: report

WASHINGTON: The train tragedy in Godhra in which 58 people were killed was not a planned ambush by Muslim fanatics, but the result of an argument provoked by Hindu activists that went out of control, the *Washington Post* said.

The newspaper report said, "For two days, as the Sabarmati Express snaked across northern India, some Hindu activists in train compartments S-5 and S-6 carried on like hooligans. They exposed themselves to other passengers. They pulled head scarves off Muslim women. They evicted a family of four in the middle of the night for refusing to join in chants glorifying Ram. They didn't pay for the tea and snacks they consumed at each stop."

On February 27, when the train came to a halt in Godhra in Gujarat, the reputation of its rowdiest passengers preceded it, the newspaper said in its March 6 edition. "After the activists refused to pay for their food, Muslim boys among the vendors at Godhra station stormed the train. When the confrontation was over, 58 Hindu passengers—mostly women and children—were dead, incinerated by a fire that consumed compartments S-5 and S-6."

Retaliatory attacks by mobs of Hindus on Muslims across Gujarat killed nearly 550 people, the *Post* said, adding that interviews with

train passengers, witnesses, police and railway officials suggested the train fire was not a premeditated ambush by Muslims.

"Both sides were at fault. The provocation was there and the reaction was strong. But no one had imagined it would turn into such a big tragedy," a Godhra police official was quoted as saying on condition of anonymity.

Godhra deputy police superintendent B.K. Nanavati reportedly said that investigation did not support chief minister Narendra Modi's contention that the assault on the train was an act of terrorism. "It was not pre-planned. It was a sudden, provocative incident," he said.

Government officials deemed Godhra to be one of India's most communally sensitive places. In 1947, when India became independent and was partitioned to create Pakistan, thousands of Hindus fleeing Pakistan settled in Godhra. Enraged that Pakistani Muslims had evicted them, the Hindus vented their anger at Godhra's Muslims, burning their homes and businesses with truckloads of gasoline.

In the 1980s and in 1992, Godhra was wracked by riots, some started by Muslims and others by Hindus and its 150,000 population is almost evenly split between Hindus and Muslims, who live in segregated communities.

The report quoted witnesses as saying

activists of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) frequently travelled on the Sabarmati Express and would scream out 'Victory to Lord Ram' and 'Victory to Hindus' as the train passed through Muslim neighbourhoods.

Syed Umarji, a Godhra-based wood trader who lives in a Muslim neighbourhood near the tracks, reportedly said, "There was a history of provocation. They would say these things all the time."

When the train left Ayodhya on February 25, VHP activists were reportedly angry because of the government order asking them to vacate Ayodhya. But Savita Darbar, a VHP member on the train, insisted that her group was not confrontational. "We were just singing prayer songs to Lord Ram," she reportedly said. "We did not bother the Muslims."

"The Sabarmati ground to a halt a half-mile away from the station, in the middle of a Muslim neighbourhood. An argument ensued, drawing hundreds of residents to the scene," the report said.

The *Post* quoted police and railway officials as saying they did not know who began throwing stones first. But officials said that Muslims poured a flammable substance on a mattress and ignited it between the S-5 and S-6 compartments. (IANS)

THE TIMES OF INDIA

11 MAR 2002

Central

rule in UP

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 8. — Uttar Pradesh has been brought under President's rule and the state assembly placed under suspended animation as the President, Mr KR Narayanan, gave his assent to the Cabinet's endorsement of the Governor's recommendation.

But the Opposition, within and outside Parliament today criticised the UP governor and the Centre for recommending President's rule and alleged that it was a ploy to instal a BJP-BSP government in Lucknow. The Lok Sabha was adjourned for an hour in the morning over the protests.

However, in a departure from convention, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee told the Lok Sabha that the government was prepared to discuss the role of the governor in a situation where the people's verdict is fractured. If all political parties agree, the government would welcome a discussion if the rules and conventions should be changed to make it obligatory for a governor to invite the leader of the single largest group or party in the Assembly in the absence of a decisive mandate in the elections.

Mr Vajpayee defended the decision saying no party in UP had given in writing to the governor that it would support the SP. Even the Congress was found dithering on the issue. In the given situation, imposition of President's rule was the only option, he said.

More reports on page 6

THE STATESMAN

Cabinet okays Central rule, Mayawati quits Lok Sabha

9/8/02 UP 591

NEW DELHI, March 7. — The Union Cabinet tonight approved the imposition of President's rule in Uttar Pradesh as recommended by the Governor even as Miss Mayawati decided to quit her Lok Sabha seat in favour of an Assembly seat. The Cabinet's decision has been forwarded to the President for his assent. The Cabinet also recommended that the Assembly be placed under suspended animation.

The Left parties today appealed to the President not to give his assent to President's rule in UP saying the Governor, by not inviting Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav, had acted against constitutional and legal norms.

The Congress, on the other hand, maintained a stoic silence by not re-

acting to the Governor's recommendation and saying it will respond to the situation in due course of time.

In a well calculated move the Bahujan Samaj Party today virtually closed the option before the BJP in the exercise of forming a new government in Lucknow. "It is Miss

Mayawati or nobody else as the chief minister in UP" was the refrain in Mr Kanshi Ram's announcement that his deputy had resigned her Lok Sabha seat and would remain a member of the UP Assembly although there is no feeler from the BJP leadership that it would support the candidature of Miss Mayawati as the new chief minister under a new coalition arrangement.

By resigning from the Lok Sabha, Miss Mayawati also shut out the option for the BJP to offer her a plum post in the Union Cabinet in lieu of her party's support to a government

House dissolved

LUCKNOW, March 7. — The 13th state Assembly was dissolved today by the Governor, Mr Vishnu Kant Shastri. The dissolution of the last Assembly, however, does not have any impact on the council of ministers. The Chief Minister, Mr Ramnath Singh, who has resigned following the party's debacle, has been asked to continue till alternative arrangements are made. The Speaker, Mr Kesari Nath Tripathi, also continues till the new House elects one. — SRS

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THE STATESMAN

8 MAR 2002

FRIDAY, MARCH 8, 2002

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CENTRAL RULE IN U.P.

THE UTTAR PRADESH Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, was left with no option other than to recommend that the State be placed under Central rule. The fractured mandate and the inability of the major players — the Samajwadi Party chief, Mulayam Singh Yadav, and the BSP supreme, Mayawati — to put an end to the mutual animosity had foreclosed the possibilities of Government formation in the State. The Governor could not really have waited any longer before exercising his discretion under Article 356 of the Constitution. Mr. Shastri did engage in exploring the possibility of installing a stable dispensation in the State. Mr. Yadav's claim that he be invited (on the basis that the Samajwadi Party had emerged as the single largest party) was indeed not sustainable. After all, the Governor had to reasonably satisfy himself that a stable Government could be put in place. With Ms. Mayawati being in no mood to oblige the Samajwadi Party and the fact that Mr. Yadav was not in a position to manage the necessary numbers — 202 MLAs in the State Legislative Assembly — even if the Congress(I) had assured him the support of its 26 MLAs, the possibility of a stable Government did not exist. If Mr. Yadav persisted that he be invited, his claims were based on the possibility of managing a majority by way of engineering splits in the BSP as well as some other smaller parties. This certainly could not have served the cause of democracy in Uttar Pradesh.

Be that as it may, the developments in Uttar Pradesh, as they have unfolded in the couple of weeks after the elections, are disturbing. The killing of Samajwadi Party MLA-elect, Manzoor Ahmed, right in front of the Raj Bhavan, is only a reflection of the parlous state of law and order in

Uttar Pradesh. The incident, as it appears now, may have been the fallout of some localised dispute. But then, there is no way that one could dismiss the killing as an isolated case. Instead, it is indeed a pointer to the level of criminalisation of the political discourse in the State. A long period of Central rule, as it looks imminent now, is cause for serious concern in this context. An elected Government, accountable for its actions to the Legislature, is the only means to restore confidence in the political system. The blame should go to the prominent players in the Uttar Pradesh political arena, Mr. Yadav and Ms. Mayawati, for having let the situation come to such a pass by allowing their political decisions to be coloured by their own personal interests and ego clashes.

One cannot gloss over the implications of Uttar Pradesh not having an elected Government in the prevailing situation especially when the Ayodhya issue is inflaming the political environment. With the VHP persisting with its revanchist agenda and refusing to call off its plans to gather its activists in Ayodhya on March 15, there is indeed a pressing need for an elected Government in the State that can ensure that the civil administration is dealing with the situation. A responsible Government is an immediate necessity in Uttar Pradesh given the fragmentation of its society. This brings to the fore the need for the political establishment — cutting across the spectrum — in Uttar Pradesh as well as those at the helm in the Union Government to acknowledge the gravity of the situation and agree to put on hold their partisan considerations. The civil administration needs a firm signal from the political establishment that the rule of law will be meticulously upheld in the State in the days ahead.

8 MAR 2002

UP Governor recommends Central rule

9-87
9/3 ST-1

Special News Service

LUCKNOW, March 6. — The Uttar Pradesh Governor, Mr Vishnu Kant Shastri, has recommended President's rule in the state on the ground of political instability following Assembly elections. In his letter to the President, Mr Shastri said the new Assembly should be kept in suspended animation for the moment.

Mr Shastri reportedly took the decision after consulting leaders of three major parties — the Samajwadi Party (146 seats), the BJP and its allies (108) and the Bahujan Samaj Party (98). None has got a majority in the 403-member Assembly.

The Union Cabinet will discuss the Governor's views before making a final recommendation to the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

While the Samajwadi Party staked claim to form the government and prove majority on the floor of the House, the other two parties said they were not going to support the SP. The BJP said it would sit in the Opposition. The Samajwadi Party had refrained from presenting a list of MLAs and backed its claims by citing court orders.

Mr Shastri was apparently following what Mr

Romesh Bhandari did in October 1996. The then Governor had insisted on the "stability factor". At that time, the BJP emerged as the largest party (176) but was short of a majority in the 425-member House. Uttaranchal was not formed at that time. The BJP had said it should be invited to form the government, but Mr Bhandari felt that it would lead to "unscrupulous horse trading and use of money power".

It was not known if Mr Shastri has raised this point (horse trading) in his recommendation to Mr KR Narayanan. Earlier, Mr Shastri told the media that President's rule would negate the "democratic process".

The SP would be upset if the recommendation is accepted. The party has already begun an agitation against the delay in inviting the party to form the government.

The Congress hinted at extending support to Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav. "Leaders of the Congress and

SP are in touch... We favour the setting up of a democratic government", Mr Jaipal Reddy said, SNS adds from Delhi.

Mr Anil Biswas criticised the Centre for recommending President's rule in Uttar Pradesh, a report from Kolkata adds. "It's a sabotage to the process of democracy", the CPI-M leader said.

Editorial: Numbers game in UP, page 4

Samajwadi MLA shot

LUCKNOW, March 6. — The Samajwadi Party MLA from Baheri in Bareilly district, Manzoor Ahmed, was shot outside the Raj Bhavan today while he was participating in a dharna to protest against the Governor's delay in inviting the party to form the government. The Prime Minister was informed of the killing while he was on board a flight to Amalapuram to attend Dalayogi's funeral.

The assailant, identified as Abhishek Bhardwaj (23), was beaten up by SP workers, who were present at the spot when the killing took place, before he was handed over to police. — SNS

Another report on page 6

THE STATESMAN

7 MAR 2002

Numbers game in UP

5/4 Mulayam Singh is on the prowl 9/3

It is doubtful whether Uttar Pradesh will have a government any time soon. Mulayam Singh Yadav thinks he should have the first shot by virtue of leading the single largest party in the state, but everyone knows it is not enough. As Sonia Gandhi said to Harkishen Singh Surjeet — Where are the numbers? They aren't there for Mulayam. The SP and its allies have 146, the Congress 26, there are 14 independents, many of them supported by the BJP, and another 12 from the smaller parties. Even if Mulayam were to get all of them, which is not at all obvious, he would still need four more and the Congress has made it plain that it won't pitch in until Mulayam makes up the deficit. What are the other possibilities? Ajit Singh has said he won't support the SP, while Mayawati has practically sequestered her MLAs in Delhi. Besides which, Mulayam will need to take 33 MLAs away from the BSP if he is to get around the anti-defection law. Mulayam is relying on the expertise of Amar Singh and Naresh Agarwal, formerly of the LCP, to do the sums and help him out of his quandary. The rumour is that a budget of Rs 150 crores has been set aside to help dithering minds settle with their conscience. Mulayam was probably banking on the Governor's invitation and on an opportunity to prove his majority "on the floor of the house", which is all about horse-trading as everyone, including Governor Vishnukant Shastri, knows. Shastri, therefore, said he needed a list in order to ascertain whether Mulayam had substantiated his claim. Hectic transactions are surely afoot even as we write.

Mayawati, on the other hand, is said to be contemplating a move towards government formation on her own. This she can do only with the BJP, which is not willing, at least not for the moment. This has a lot to do with past experience, when Mayawati bullied the party and then walked out when its turn to form the government came. There is also the Ayodhya question. Being a part of the government will mean being on the wrong side of a polarisation and, possibly, letting Mayawati handle the situation in her own way. But then, everybody is also keeping in mind the fact that a BJP-BSP alliance is the only one whose numbers add up and, after a certain point, circumstances might begin to exert pressure on both sides, unless Mulayam's predations damage that possibility in the interim. Therefore, president's rule is a distinct possibility. Rajnath Singh, for one, thinks it might take six months for the situation to sort itself out, that is, for all the players to settle into some kind of an equilibrium. This means that Ayodhya will be the home minister's direct responsibility. He is said to be unhappy with the idea. No prizes for guessing why?

THE STATESMAN

MAR 2002

Mayavati nudges UP closer to President's rule

FROM ANAND SOONDAS

Lucknow, March 5: Uttar Pradesh could be heading for President's rule. Yet again.

Tired of the pressure politics being played by the BJP even after it expressed its "wish to stay in the Opposition", Mayavati today called Governor Vishnu Kant Shastri to tell him that the Bahujan Samaj Party, with its 98 MLAs, has "decided" to sit in the Opposition.

This leaves Shastri with little choice but to recommend President's rule.

Though Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav

has staked claim to form the new government, Shastri seems to be in no mood to invite him.

Indications from Raj Bhavan are clear: the Samajwadi does not qualify though it has emerged as the single-largest party, winning 145 seats along with its allies in the third front. Shastri has emphasised that his priority is "stability".

The BJP and the BSP are also in no position to form a government unless they come together.

Samajwadi leaders are crying foul. Let down by a Governor who they feel "refuses to see reason", the party is now

mulling legal options.

A group of high court lawyers supporting the Samajwadi has announced that it would file a public interest litigation tomorrow.

The lawyers are seeking a court directive to Shastri to dissolve the Assembly and invite Mulayam to form the government.

Led by A.K. Agarwal of Allahabad High Court, the lawyers will also demand that Mulayam be given a month to prove his majority on the floor of the House rather than in the Raj Bhavan as Shastri has been insisting on.

Samajwadi insiders feel this

period will be enough for Mulayam to either break a party or cobble up a rag-tag majority.

"The smell of power is very strong. Our party has received assurances from other MLAs that they would come out in support of Mulayam Singh. Their only condition is that he should be called to prove his majority in the Assembly," said a Samajwadi legislator.

The party is also resorting to other pressure tactics to "rein in the Governor", whose role is already being questioned.

Tomorrow, the Samajwadi has called a state-wide dharna to protest what they allege to be

the Governor's "delaying tactics and his partisan policy".

Shastri, however, is unfazed. "My role will be decided by the people," he said. Posterity would best comment on the fairness of his "final decision", he added.

With the 14-member Lok Dal assuring Shastri that there is "no question" of supporting Mulayam, the spotlight is again on the 25-member Congress.

But two questions are doing the rounds. Will the Congress punish Mulayam for what it perceives to be an injustice to Sonia Gandhi in 1999? Or will it forgive him for the "greater cause" of a "secular, non-BJP"

government in Uttar Pradesh. The Congress is meeting Shastri tomorrow.

If the Congress does support the Samajwadi, Mulayam will have to garner the support of 31 more MLAs. Samajwadi leaders said the process of enticing legislators will be easier if the Congress comes along.

If that does not happen, Shastri has only one option — the "last option" as he had said earlier.

The other thing that the Governor can hope for is that the BSP and the BJP stop their game of political brinkmanship. Shastri is hoping one of them blinks first.

THE TELEGRAPH

10 MAR 1999

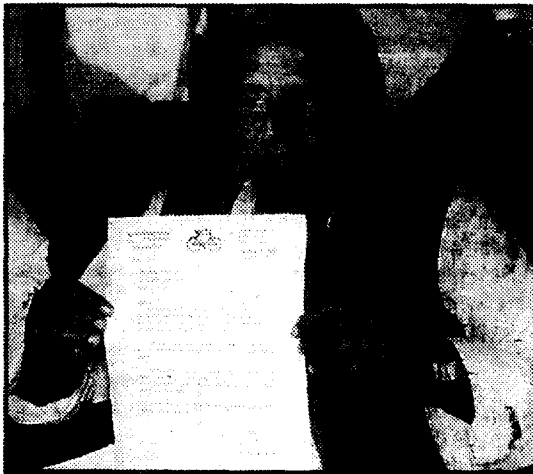
Mulayam stakes claim to set up government in UP

Lucknow
27 FEBRUARY

SAMAJWADI PARTY supremo Mulayam Singh Yadav on Wednesday formally staked claim to form the new government in Uttar Pradesh. Mr Yadav met governor Vishnu Kant Shastri at Raj Bhawan and handed over a letter staking his claim and seeking a month's time to prove his majority.

He later told newsmen that the governor had assured him of considering his party's claim. The SP leader said he told the governor that according to established traditions the largest party should be invited to form the government. Mr Yadav in his letter said the SP was the single largest party and cited the ruling of the apex court in Bommai case that as the largest party it should be invited to form the government and given an opportunity to prove the majority in the Assembly.

When asked why he had sought one month's time to prove his majority, Mr Yadav said the legislators were still in their areas and besides, the Speaker of the Assembly was also to be elected, which will take some time. Citing instances, Mr Yadav said the Narasimha Rao and Vajpayee governments in 1991 and 1996 respectively were invited to form the government at the Centre as their parties had emerged as the single largest after the polls. On whether he



KING-IN-WAITING: Mulayam Singh Yadav with the letter staking his claim to form the next government in Uttar Pradesh. — PTI

also handed over any list of the MLAs supporting him, Mr Yadav said he told the governor that there was no point in giving any list as even after furnishing the list "we will have to prove our majority in the House."

On being asked whether the governor had asked for a list, Mr Yadav replied in affirmative. — PTI

The Economic Times

28 FEB 2002

Mulayam runs into Governor list hurdle

FROM ANAND SOONDAS

Lucknow, Feb. 27: A smiling Mulayam Singh Yadav went to Raj Bhavan this morning but when he came out, a shadow had crossed his face.

"The Governor is insisting on a list of those supporting me," Mulayam said on his way out after staking claim to form the next government in Uttar Pradesh.

Mulayam's Samajwadi Party is still short of 66 legislators to reach the simple majority mark of 202 but he was banking on Governor Vishnukant Shastri to invite him as the leader of the single largest party and prove his majority later on the floor of the House.

"The mandate has gone against the BJP, and as leader of the single largest party, the people have obviously put their trust in the Samajwadi Party," Mulayam said.

Had the Governor, whose association with the Sangh parivar is well known, given Mulayam time, it would have been easier for the Samajwadi chief to put together a rag-tag coalition.

Prospective defectors the Samajwadi has contacted are waiting in the wings, keeping a close watch on how things develop between him, the Governor and the Congress.

With the Congress — which has 25 members — taking an ambivalent stand on extending support to Mulayam, defectors from other parties are finding it difficult to commit themselves to the Samajwadi right away.



Mulayam (AFP)

"What happens if we say yes to Mulayam now and the Congress backs out?" an independent candidate asked.

"We will be left nowhere. We, too, have to keep our options open."

Asked what the Governor had to say to his proposal, Mulayam said: "We asked him to give us a chance and he said he will look into it. But his insistence on the list of supporters doesn't make sense. Majority has to be proved in the House."

Mulayam said there were numerous precedents — of the leader of the single largest party being called to form the government — to back his claim.

The Samajwadi chief had sought a month's time from the Governor to prove his majority in the House.

But the Governor maintained that he must first go through the list of MLAs in the Samajwadi camp. "If there is a precedent of calling the leader of the single largest party, there is also a precedent of handing over the MLAs' list," Shastri said.

"I have insisted on the list because it is my priority to have a stable government in this state," he added.

Maintaining that there was no time frame within which a government had to be formed, the Governor reiterated that the last word would be his and added that he was surprised by Mulayam's refusal to even mention the names of those who would be supporting him.

President's rule would, however, be the last option, Shastri said. "I personally don't favour President's rule and I will consider it only when I have exhausted all the alternatives," Shastri said.

But in an obvious signal of his unwillingness to call Mulayam right now, the Governor also raised the issue of horse-trading with the Samajwadi chief.

"I asked him about reports appearing in newspapers which hint at the buying and selling of MLAs and Mulayam told me not to believe in those," Shastri said. "I told him that if the reports were true, it would be a dark blotch on the democratic process."

Political observers said Congress support has again become crucial for Mulayam to form the next government in Uttar Pradesh.

THE TELEGRAPH

28 FEB 2002

Mulayam's only hope is to ^{98 up} split the BSP



Mulayam Singh Yadav

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, February 25

THE BATTLE for Uttar Pradesh is essentially a poker game. No party has a hand that is good enough for victory, but all of them hope to bluff their way to power.

A BJP-BSP alliance is still the most obvious possibility. The two parties have a majority in the Assembly with a combined strength of 205 which rises to 211 if you add the six Independents who were backed by the BJP.

The BJP's problem is with the BSP's terms. Mayawati wants to be Chief Minister, she wants a Speaker of her choice and she would like Kanshi Ram to be Vice-President. The BJP cannot accept these conditions.

Hence its declaration today that it will sit in the Opposition and not support any party from outside. This is intended to frighten Mayawati into recognising that she needs to soften her position before any alliance can be negotiated.

Mulayam Singh Yadav's problem is more fundamental: he does not have the numbers. Because the BSP and BJP, between them, command a majority in the new Assembly, he cannot hope to get by on the support of smaller parties, Independents and the Congress.

To reach a majority, he must break the BSP. This is difficult but by no means impossible. The BJP's declaration that it will not enter into any alliance may have the effect of pushing power-hungry BSP legislators towards Mulayam. Moreover, many of those elected on BSP tickets have no long-standing loyalty to the party or to Mayawati.

Mulayam needs to win away a third of the 98 BSP MLAs for the defectors to say that they've split the party and not violated the Anti-Defection Act. Given that he needs around 35 MLAs for a majority anyway (assuming that the Congress backs him), he has nothing to gain by buying up Independents. He will target the BSP's 15 Muslims legislators, the four Yadavs and the 24 most-backward-caste legislators. Some Samajwadi leaders say that even the 32 upper-caste MLAs elected on BSP tickets could be up for grabs.

Mayawati and the BJP both think that Mulayam will not succeed. They reckon that he will fail to win over a third of the BSP and that a BSP-BJP alliance will have to be renegotiated.

If that doesn't work, then the BJP wins anyway. It will impose President's rule and run the State from Delhi.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

26 FEB 2002

BJP bows out, enter Mulayam

Hands full yesterday, empty today

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Feb. 25: Queen Bee Mayavati, who had looked set to be Uttar Pradesh's next chief minister till this afternoon, has had her hive taken away by the BJP.

Having given the impression that she was willing to do business with the BJP in the "interest of the Bahujan Samaj" before TV cameras till last evening, she went incommunicado after her prospective ally ditched her.

BSP sources claimed the BJP's feelers prompted Mayavati last evening to fly out of Lucknow where she was guarding her "vulnerable" legislators. They said she met Atal Bihari Vajpayee for 15 minutes, though sources close to the Prime Minister denied any such meeting.

But all the "goodwill" disappeared the moment her "friends" in the BJP — Vajpayee, Murlidhar Joshi and Kalraj Mishra — were reminded by outgoing chief minister Rajnath Singh that the BJP alliance would crumble if they had anything to do with her. That would leave the BJP, with 88 MLAs, and BSP, with 98, short of the majority mark of 202.

A desperate Mayavati turned to her mentor, Kanshi Ram, once she got the bad news from the BJP. Kanshi Ram rushed back to the capital from Punjab.

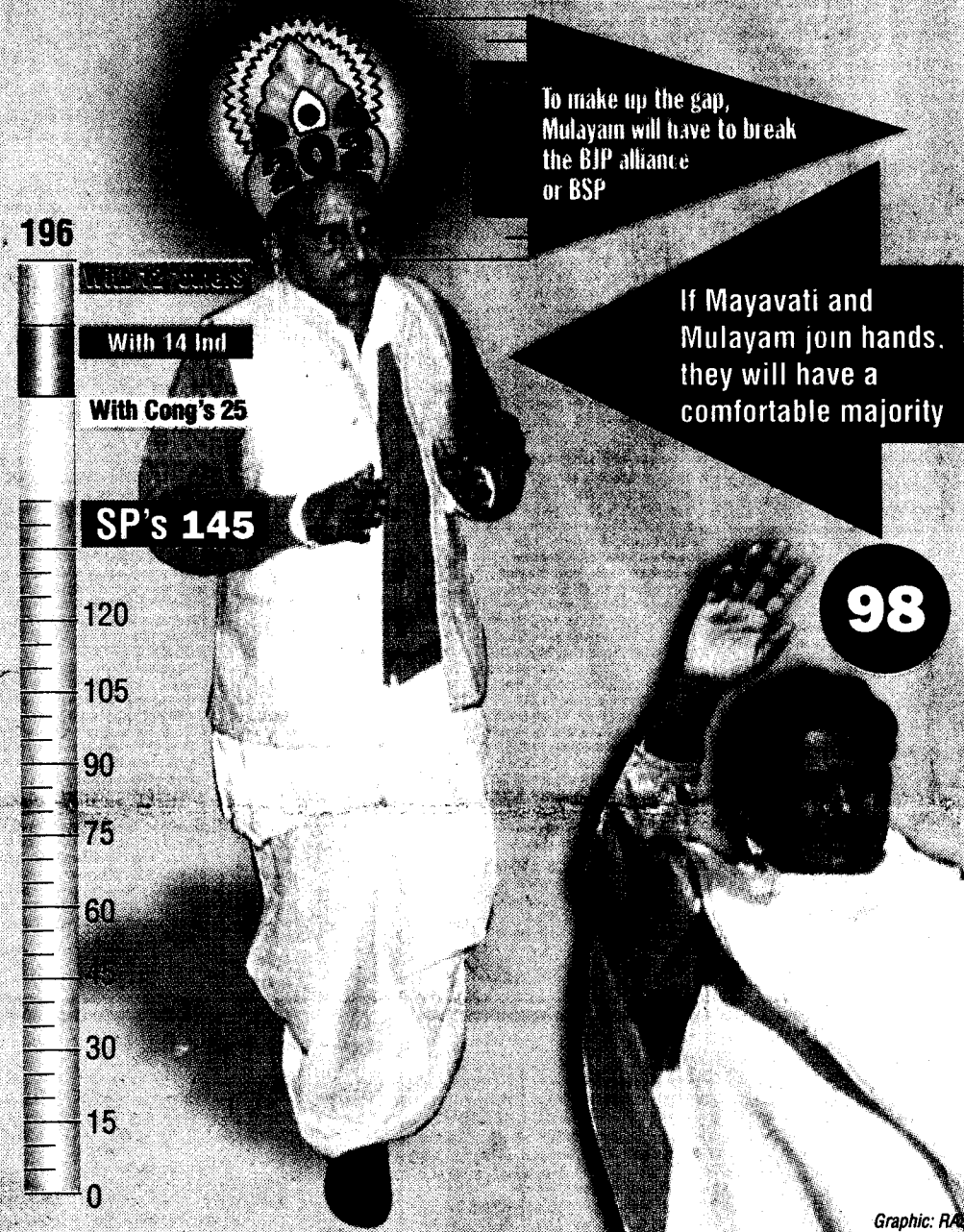
BSP sources are now afraid that the Samajwadi Party might start preying on her Muslim and upper-caste MLAs, using the Ayodhya "card" to "emotionally blackmail" the former and ministerships to lure away the latter, as the BJP had done in 1998.

They even began to read in Samajwadi general secretary Amar Singh's reported willingness to "build bridges" a message meant for the BSP. Singh said: "We are making all-out efforts for a secular alternative as the electorate has clearly voted against the BJP and we are prepared to build bridges with any party."

Samajwadi sources, however, ruled out a Mulayam-Mayavati rapprochement, insisting that they would rather look for numbers in the group of "others" (26) and the BJP's allies (19). "We cannot forget how Mayavati had humiliated our leader after she pulled out support to his government in 1995," they said.

Mayavati, BSP sources said, needs to be in power to expand her base just as the BJP is prepared for a spell in the Opposition to recover its own.

CROWN OF CALCULATIONS



Graphic: RA

THE TELEGRAPH

A&A team in full play

FROM ANAND SOONDAS

Lucknow, Feb. 25: Remember Naresh Aggarwal? This is the gentleman who broke away from the Congress and helped Rajnath Singh save the Kalyan Singh government in Uttar Pradesh.

Aggarwal is repeating history in a manner of speaking. He is now helping Rajnath Singh's opponent, Mulayam Singh Yadav, to form a government in Lucknow. The man who was in the BJP-led government even last year — and was thrown out unceremoniously by Rajnath Singh — is using his experience to collect the numbers Mulayam needs, working alongside the other member of the A team, Samajwadi leader Amar Singh.

Aggarwal has won from Hardoi on a Samajwadi ticket. He has "friends" in every party — the Congress, which he broke to form the Loktantrik Congress,

the Rashtriya Lok Dal of Ajit Singh and even the BJP with whose members he rubbed shoulders when he was power minister in its government.

Says a BJP minister close to Aggarwal: "Naresh always worked more as a political operator rather than a politician. That is his strength."

Aggarwal has already initiated talks with his "friends", who will have a greater incentive to negotiate with him since Mulayam appears to be the only horse in the race with the BJP now opting out. The Samajwadi leader is expected to arrive here tomorrow and stake claim.

Senior Congress leader Pramod Tiwari, who is said to be eyeing the deputy chief minister's post, sees no harm in reaching a "respectable understanding" with the Samajwadi Party.

Still simmering from his broken relationship with the BJP,

former chief minister Kalyan Singh has said he will support any anti-BJP dispensation.

Of the 98 MLAs Mayavati's BSP has this time, only 29 have been legislators with the party since 1996. Most are new and their commitment to the party untested.

Moreover, it has MLAs like Amarmani Tripathi who joined the party a short time ago after being thrown out of the Cabinet.

There are 14 Independents who would like to sail with the wind instead of wasting time in the Opposition or sitting idle in the event of President's rule.

"Naresh and Amar can manage the rest," a Samajwadi Party legislator said, adding, "anyway, who in their right senses would not like the perks of power?"

Amar and Aggarwal have Uttar Pradesh's time-tested principle going for them: "Mantri banao, support pao."

Focus on 'others' in number hunt

FROM RADHIKA RAMASESHAN

New Delhi, Feb. 25: Washing its hands of Mayavati, the BJP decided to "accept and respect the people's verdict" and sit out in the Opposition in Uttar Pradesh.

The decision, taken by the BJP's apex decision-making body, its parliamentary board, has effectively cleared the decks for the Samajwadi Party to be invited to prove its majority in the legislature as the single largest party.

BJP sources said the clincher was the threat by its 19 allies to quit the Uttar Pradesh alliance if the party helped instal Mayavati as chief minister. It is learnt that the 14-member Rashtriya Lok Dal and the breakaway BSP legislators vociferously stated that the BJP should have nothing to do with her.

Once it dawned on the leaders that the BJP alliance's own numbers would shrink and it might not hit the halfway mark with the BSP, the party decided to back out. "Together with our 88 and the BSP's 98, we would have made only 186. It would be ridiculous to stake claim to form a government," a BJP leader said.

Even Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee reportedly went along with the view that rather than get into the murky business of breaking parties to make Mayavati chief minister, the party should sit in the Opposition.

But the sources said that till last evening, Vajpayee was tilting towards the BSP and had a 15-minute meeting with Mayavati who rushed to his house immediately after reaching Delhi.

Vajpayee, it is learnt, was also informed of how the Brahmin votes in Uttar Pradesh had shifted en bloc to the BSP, the Samajwadi Party or the Congress wherever one of them had put up a strong candidate from the community.

The sub-text was the frenetic campaigning by the BJP's two Brahmin stalwarts — Vajpayee and Murlidhar Joshi — left one of the party's most committed constituencies cold. Vajpayee, the sources stressed, had little choice but endorse the dominant view in the BJP.

The other imperative was the VHP's threat to lay siege to Ayodhya. The party reckoned that if it was part of a Maya-

vati government, from outside or inside, it would have to face the Ram bhaktis' backlash in the event of a crackdown. Mayavati had cracked the whip in Mathura in 1995 when the BJP was backing her government.

The Samajwadi alliance, which has 145 legislators, is short of the halfway mark by 57. Even if the Congress with 25 were to support it, it would still require 32 MLAs.

Mulayam Singh has a long way to go before he can think of securing the Congress' help. Samajwadi sources said party strategists were working on the group of 26 "others" who include 14 Independents, Kalyan Singh's Rashtriya Kranti Party (RKP) and the Apna Dal.

But of these, one legislator from the Hindu Mahasabha — who won Gorakhpur with a BJP MP's backing — would find it as difficult to join a Mulayam-led coalition as he would find it politically untenable to induct him.

However, even if by a long shot Mulayam got this lot's support lock, stock and barrel, he would still be short of six. Sources close to him said

he was looking at the BJP's allies, which include Ajit Singh's Rashtriya Lok Dal and the Janata Dal (United).

But this could also be an uphill task in light of the past antagonism between Mulayam and Ajit. Given the fact that Ajit extracted a Cabinet berth in the Centre after much difficulty, it is unlikely he would give it up to join hands with an old adversary.

The Samajwadi is counting on the BJP's smaller allies, who have no ideological problems with Mulayam, to provide five more legislators. If he succeeds, he will still need one more to break the tape. With counting to be done in two more constituencies, the Samajwadi is hoping that the outcome would see it through this arduous exercise.

With Delhi holding the key to who would be the next chief minister in Lucknow, the day began with a breakfast meeting between Vajpayee, the outgoing chief minister Rajnath Singh and state BJP chief Kalraj Mishra.

The CPM general secretary, Harkishen Singh Surjeet, who is working hard to bring the Samajwadi and the Congress together, met Mulayam and his general secretary, Amar Singh, earlier in the day before the BJP made up its mind on Mayavati.

QUOTE

BJP will function as an Opposition party in UP

JANA KRISHNAMURTHI

H10-1
28

SP all set to stake claim in Uttar Pradesh

By K. V. Prasad

NEW DELHI, FEB. 25. The Samajwadi Party-led People's Front today stepped up efforts to form the next government in Uttar Pradesh and decided to build pressure by taking its plea to the President.

The constituents of the Front, including the Left, have sought

appointment with the President, K. R. Narayanan, tomorrow to suggest that the Samajwadi Party which has emerged as the single largest party in Uttar Pradesh be invited by the Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, to form the government.

The CPI(M) general secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, whose services have been sought by the

SP chief, Mulayam Singh Yadav, to open talks with the Congress, said today the front demanded Mr. Yadav be allowed to form the government. "Allow him to prove the majority on the floor of the House".

The strategy to build pressure on the Governor to invite the Samajwadi Party, which has the maximum 143 seats in the 403-

member Assembly, comes after indications from the Congress that it was for keeping the BJP out. The BJP's decision to sit in the Opposition added punch to the argument that in the absence of any combination reaching the majority mark, the single largest party should be allowed to form the next government. The BSP, with 98 MLAs, is the second largest party.

We don't want to be a prisoner of the past: Cong.

By Javed M. Ansari

NEW DELHI, FEB. 25. The Congress today indicated that it would try and ensure that "that a government is not formed by or with the support of communal forces" in Uttar Pradesh. It also made it clear that it was willing to put the past behind it in the context of its support to the Samajwadi Party. "We don't want to be a prisoner of the past," said the party spokesperson, Jaipal Reddy.

The consensus at last night's informal CWC meeting appeared to be that given the arithmetic, it was unlikely that the Samajwadi Party would be able to muster the required number to cross the majority mark of 202.

The Congress also preferred to wait and watch how the situation developed on the BSP-BJP front as well as Mulayam Singh Yadav's attempts to muster the required numbers. It sought to cover its flanks by making it clear that it would not come in the way of a secular group forming the government, provided the numbers added up.

By making it clear that it was willing to "forget the past, — Mr. Yadav's role in indirectly helping the BJP by preventing the Congress from forming a government in 1999 and his personalised attack

on the Congress president, Ms. Gandhi, the party was trying to occupy the moral high ground".

"We are not guided by personal angularities. Unlike others, the Congress knows how to put national interest above that of the party," says a CWC member.

The party was also responding to proddings from the Left parties which have been working overtime to bridge the gap between the Samajwadi Party and the Congress and to bring about a rapprochement between Ms. Gandhi and Mr. Yadav.

The Congress today admitted that the CPI(M) general secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, had tried to establish contact last night with Ms. Gandhi in this connection.

Despite its assertion that it would work to prevent the installation of a BJP-led or supported government in Lucknow, the Congress left the onus of mustering the required numbers on the Samajwadi Party.

Senior party leaders admit that there is little point in the party unilaterally declaring support without the Samajwadi Party even formally asking for it.

The People's Front has 145 MLAs in a House of 403 and even after taking the support of 26 Congress MLAs, it falls 31 short of a simple majority at 202.

The front leaders have decided to rally behind its convenor, Mulayam Singh Yadav, with all the constituents, including the Communist Party of India, the Revolutionary Socialist Party and the Forward Bloc, demanding the Samajwadi Party be invited to form the government.

It was decided at the Left Front coordination meeting today that Left MPs would join the delegation that calls on the President.

Meanwhile, the SP general secretary, Amar Singh, maintained that the party was willing to "build bridges" with all secular parties in its effort to form the government.

The party also mentioned that the BSP would be betraying the mandate if it aligned with the BJP in forming the next government.

"The vote in Uttar Pradesh was against the BJP and the BSP. The latter had campaigned against the ruling alliance both in the State and the Centre and it should not reverse its policy." The statement is seen as an attempt to play on the perceived differences in the BSP MLAs, especially the 20 or Muslim representatives who may not be comfortable with the party looking towards the BJP for support.

BJP to sit in Opposition

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, FEB. 25. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) today stated that it would prefer to sit in the Opposition benches in Uttar Pradesh. It also threw cold water on any ambition that the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader, Mayawati, may have been nurturing by announcing that it would not extend outside support to any party. Finally, there was the hope that any other government would not be stable and would expose itself in a very short time.

After an hour-long meeting of the party's parliamentary board at the Prime Minister's residence today, the party president, Jana Krishnamurthi, made a terse announcement: "The parliamentary board has concluded that the people's verdict has not only to be accepted but also respected. The people have given us the task of sitting in the Opposition and we will do just that." To a question, he made it clear that the BJP "was not supporting anyone from outside".

It seems that the party leaders carried the day at the board meeting. They have been pointing out that the politics of defections, tolerating criminals as Ministers and indulging in horse-trading to stay in power had led to a shrinking support base. A repetition of that kind of politics would lead to a worse debacle in the Lok Sabha polls two years from now. It was time to sit in the Opposition and let the rival parties make a mess of governance, they said.

BJP leaders denied reports

that Ms. Mayawati had met or contacted the party or the Prime Minister to seek support. "There have been no talks with Mayawati, no meetings with her, and no support is being offered to her. We will sit in the Opposition," the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Rajnath Singh, said. Mr. Singh had come here from Lucknow on Sunday, along with the State party president, Mr. Kalraj Mishra, to attend the meeting. Later today, they returned to Lucknow.

The day began with a morning meeting of senior party leaders at the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's residence at Race Course Road, where frank discussions took place about the poor performance. Those who were inclined to go along with Ms. Mayawati to stay in power did not find the required support from Mr. Vajpayee, and certainly not from either Mr. Krishnamurthi or Kushabhau Thakre, former party president and in-charge of Uttar Pradesh affairs.

While the party was unwilling to comment on how a government would be formed in the State — "that is the task of the Governor" — there was a definite view and hope that any government formed by the Samajwadi Party leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav, would not last a full term. To begin with, Mr. Yadav would have to engineer some defections. Then he would have to deal with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad "plan" to flood the State with "kar sevaks" for building a Ram temple

in Ayodhya. The party's strategy also depends on the Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, delaying an invitation to Mr. Yadav to form the government.

Another worry the BJP is faced with is the possibility of a Mulayam Singh Yadav-led government re-issuing the Babri demolition-related notification to correct the technical flaw that has prevented the courts from framing charges against the Union Ministers, I.K. Advani, M.M. Joshi and Uma Bharti. But even if the worst happens, the BJP could try to make a virtue of this and reclaim the Ram temple issue.

ALL IN THE GAME



THE HINDU

20 FEB 1997

BJP is divided on backing ^{9.8.02} ^{25/2} Mayawati

By Smita Gupta
Times News Network

NEW DELHI: A shell-shocked BJP, coming to terms with defeat not just in Punjab but also in Uttaranchal, is working overtime to retrieve the disastrous situation in Uttar Pradesh where, singly, it has not even touched the three-digit figure, trailing behind the Samajwadi Party and the Bahujan Samaj Party.

On Sunday evening, at a high-level emergency meeting at the Prime Minister's house, BJP leaders remained closeted for more than two hours, united in their desire to prevent a Samajwadi Party-Congress-Rashtriya Kranti Party government at any cost but divided on the party's only option—on how to form a government with the Bahujan Samaj Party.

While the leaders remained chary of repeating their earlier experiment of backing a government led by the BSP's Mayawati and were hoping against hope she could be scared into accepting an alternative—that she come to the Centre and Rajnath Singh be replaced by a ~~BJP~~ leader of her choice in Lucknow—it was evident on Sunday evening that the BJP was not banking on this. Party sources emphasised that the most likely scenario would be a Mayawati-led government supported by the BJP from the outside. And if that does not work out,

they said, it would be President's Rule, as thus far the SP and the Congress numbers did not add up.

After the meeting, attended by home minister L.K. Advani, IT minister Pramod Mahajan, party president Jana Krishnamurthy, UP-in-charge Kushabhau Thakre, and allies Ajit Singh and Sharad Yadav, everyone, except Mr Krishnamurthy, whizzed past the TV cameras. And all he said was, "We accept the verdict of the people. Our parliamentary board will meet tomorrow evening to take a final decision."

But before the board meets, Rajnath Singh, UP state chief Kalraj Mishra and senior state leader Lalji Tandon, who have been summoned to the capital, will meet the PM on Monday morning to give him a sense of what the state unit feels. Party sources say that while Mr Singh—like most of the party rank and file, including its MPs—would prefer to sit in the opposition, the other two are for a government. A meeting of the NDA has also been called for Monday.

The BJP leadership is also concerned that if it does not act swiftly, the Muslim MLAs in the BSP flock may go astray if they are in sufficiently large numbers. Indeed, BJP sources said, this consideration had strengthened the possibility of a Mayawati-led government supported by the BJP from the outside.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

25 FEB 2002

PROSPECTS OF HUNG ASSEMBLY HAUNT PARTIES

PM confers with colleagues on U.P.

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, FEB. 23. With barely a day left for the results of the elections to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly made known, the BJP leaders put their heads together on how best to cope with the task of government formation, given the strong possibility of a fractured verdict and a hung assembly. For now, the party's central leaders are inclined not to have anything to do with the Bahujan Samaj Party, though the State-level leaders are against closing the door very firmly on an "arrangement" with Ms. Mayawati.

The Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister, Rajnath Singh, and the State BJP president, Kalraj Mishra, came here to brief the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Home Minister, L.K. Advani, the party president, Jana Krishnamurthi, and the former party president, Kushabhau Thakre. The considered opinion among them is that a government could be formed only if any of the four antagonists — the BJP, the Samajwadi Party, the BSP and the Congress — is persuaded to join hands with one or the other, as happened in March 1997, nearly six months after the fractured

verdict in October 1996. Also, the view is that the BJP would find it difficult to defend the Governor if he were to depart from the accepted convention that the largest party be invited to have the first crack at forming the government.

As the pre-poll surveys and exit polls gave the BJP the second spot behind the Samajwadi Party and predicted yet another fractured mandate, the non-BJP forces and parties too began preparing for breaking out of the impending stalemate. The non-BJP camp, though, is yet to start the process of rallying the "secular" forces.

After the meeting at the Prime Minister's Race Course residence, Rajnath Singh maintained that no one could be considered "untouchable". Party sources indicated that the idea of aligning with the Bahujan Samaj Party had not found favour yet. For the record, the BJP spokesperson, Maya Singh, said the party was exploring the possibility of government formation and ruled out joining hands with the BSP.

Party sources said the bitter experience the BJP had in the past with the BSP has led to reservations against a similar tie-up this time around. They said

that in the event of the BJP being unable to make ground in government formation, a view was to have a stint in the Opposition and wait for the other formations to make an attempt. The possibility of imposing Central rule, as was done in 1996, was also said to be a possibility. Yet, any move would depend on the results and actual strength in the new Assembly the party would acquire after results are declared tomorrow.

The BJP Parliamentary Board is expected to meet here on Monday to finalise the party strategy. The National Democratic Alliance meeting scheduled for tomorrow has now been postponed to Tuesday.

On the other hand, the Samajwadi Party, a prime contender to regain power in the State, prefers to keep the spotlight away from the moves it is making to form the next government. At a press conference, the party general secretary, Amar Singh, reiterated that the SP was confident of forming the next government.

He refused to comment on the possibility of the SP looking for support from the Congress, in case it fell short of numbers in the final count.

THE HINDU

24 FEB 2002

Hung House predicted in Uttar Pradesh

Sunita Aron
Lucknow, February 21

WITH ALMOST all exit polls predicting a hung House in Uttar Pradesh, all attention will be focussed on the Governor. His role will be crucial in determining who forms the next government.

Governor Vishnu Kant Shastri has three options.

- Invite the single largest party.
- Invite some other party, which, according to him, can prove its strength on the floor of the House.
- Recommend the imposition of President's rule on the ground that no party can provide a stable government.

Will the Governor invite the single largest party? Shastri is ambivalent on this. He told the *Hindustan Times*, "We will (go by) the circumstances and the Constitution... Let us see whether the single largest party can be invited or not," he said, adding that he would be guided by the Supreme Court judgment in the S.R. Bommai case.

Shastri may invite the single largest party if he is "satisfied" that it can provide a stable regime and enjoys the confidence of the House.

By referring to the S.R. Bommai case, he has made it clear that Raj Bhowan would not be the venue for parties to demonstrate their support. The party that is invited to form the government will have to prove its majority in the Assembly.

If he feels that the single largest party does not enjoy the confidence of the legislature, he may not invite it. He will exercise his discretion, relying on the precedent set by his predecessor Romesh Bhandari. In 1996, Bhandari did not invite the BJP, the single largest party.

Uttar Pradesh

Total seats 403	2002 (projected)		
	Aaj Tak	DD-City	Zee-CTS
BJP	142	118	131
SP	138	156	145
BSP	83	80	84
Congress	22	36	24
Others	20	13	19

The Bommai case

THE SUPREME Court had not given any guideline on government formation, observing, "The Constitution does not create an obligation that the political party forming the ministry shall necessarily have a majority in the legislature. What is necessary is that the government should enjoy the confidence of the House." A government should prove its strength in the assembly.
HTC, New Delhi

The third option is to recommend President's rule on the ground that no party can form a stable government. Bhandari had done precisely that in 1996. The UP Assembly was kept under 'suspended animation' for nearly six months. Later, the BJP formed the government with the BSP's support.

Shastri's decision to follow the satisfaction clause will undoubtedly cause controversy: the party which is invited to form the government will be better placed to indulge in horse-trading.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

22 FEB 2002

STRAY CLASHES MARK POLLING PROCESS

50-55 p.c. turnout in U.P. elections

By J.P. Shukla

LUCKNOW, FEB. 18. Between 50 and 55 per cent votes were cast today in the second phase of polling to Uttar Pradesh Assembly elections, which, by and large passed off peacefully. Stray clashes and obstruction of the polling process at some places were, however, reported.

Two persons sustained gunshot injuries in a clash between workers of the Bahujan Samaj Party and the Samajwadi Party at Nadaura village under Mehmoodabad police station in Farrukhabad district, according to reports received here. Minor clashes between the supporters of rival parties were also reported in the districts of Mainpuri, Etawah and Kanpur.

A police head-constable was killed in a firing incident in Jalaun district but this, reports claimed, was not poll-related.

Briefing newsmen, the State's Principal Home Secretary, Naresh Dayal, said that workers of BSP and SP exchanged fire at Nadaura village. One person was injured from each side.

In Kanpur, members of a minority community allegedly prevented members of the majority community from casting their votes at a polling booth in Sisamau locality. This was followed by protests by BJP workers. The BJP candidate, Anant Mishra, was allegedly assaulted by BSF personnel after he caught one of their officials by his collar. A crowd of several hundred BJP workers later sat on a dharna at Sisamau crossing, Mr. Dayal said.

There were minor clashes between supporters of rival parties at Kuberpur village under and Nagla Mangli village. Police intervened to prevent the escalation of violence in both cases.

At Maraiya Karilgarh village under Pachaygaon, members of a polling party were attacked by a group of villagers. Voting was comparatively dull (slightly over 45 per cent) in Lucknow and Kanpur. Comparatively higher polling was recorded in Lakhimpur Kheri district (55 per cent), Kanpur rural (58), Mainpuri (58) and Etawah (55). Sitapur (48), Unnao (44) and Chitrakoot (51) were some of the other districts which recorded poor polling.

THE HINDU

19 FEB 2002

9.8.02
UP

POLLS IN UTTAR PRADESH NO 8572

WITH THE FORMALISATION of alliances and the various parties announcing their candidates and releasing their manifestoes, the poll scene in Uttar Pradesh has now reached a decisive phase. The battle of ballots in this sense is most likely to be between the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance and Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party. But then, there is no way that the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) can be written off given the substantial following it has built up among the Scheduled Castes. Alongside these, the Congress (I), whose base began to dwindle ever since the 1989 general elections, too is showing signs of some revival with social groups that had shifted allegiance to the BJP beginning to return to the fold after Sonia Gandhi took over as party president. It is a combination of all these factors that lends to the election scene in the State a lot of uncertainty. And it is a fact that the outcome of the Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh will impact on the overall national political scene in the months to come.

If retaining power in Uttar Pradesh will mean a lot for the BJP as such in particular and the NDA in general, a substantive increase in the votes polled (from that in the past couple of elections) will mean a lot for the Congress (I) too. That the Congress (I) is hardly in a position to emerge as a prominent player in the State is a truth that even its own leaders will acknowledge readily. Sonia Gandhi and her aides cannot be oblivious to the ground realities in the State. After all, they must be aware that to register such gains, the Congress (I) will need to win back a cross-section of the social groups that had switched to different parties in the past decade. While the upper castes as a whole had shifted allegiance to the BJP, the BSP had managed to entrench itself firmly among the Dalits. And as for the Muslims, despite the fact that they are no longer steadfast in their opposition to the

Congress (I) — a development after December 1992 — the community as such has adopted what has come to be known as "strategic voting" against the BJP. This has been shown in its preference for either the Samajwadi Party or the BSP and the choice has depended on the ability of these two parties to put together a winning social chemistry in each constituency. In other words, the minorities have refused to follow a pattern across the State. Given this background and the fact that the Congress (I) has hardly been able to revive its organisational presence in Uttar Pradesh, it remains to be seen if the party can register any significant gains.

This being the ground reality, there are good enough reasons to attribute a major role for the Samajwadi Party (and the BSP) in this election. These two parties, with their strong organisational machinery across the State, could emerge into major players in the post-poll scene apart from the BJP. Meanwhile, the BJP, burdened as it is with the baggage of five years of non-governance, is seeking to revive its prospects by whipping up passions over the Ayodhya issue once again. While it remains to be seen how far the Hindutva campaign will help the party in another election, one cannot gloss over the adverse effects of such passions being whipped up alongside the election campaign. It is this factor that the civil administration in Uttar Pradesh needs to concern itself with. Experience has shown the extent to which the storm troopers of the Sangh Parivar have managed to terrorise men and women, particularly those belonging to the Muslim community, on the day of polling. The revival of the temple campaign by the VHP is indeed a means to achieve this end. This certainly is a cause for concern and it is imperative for the Election Commission to ensure that the poll process is not vitiated by communal tensions.

THE HINDU

- 5 FEB 2002

BJP opts for UP opposition benches

Mulayam expects Raj Bhavan invitation to form government

By Bhaskar Roy
Times News Network

Sanjay Sekhri

NEW DELHI: The BJP's decision to sit in the opposition has raised the possibility of the Samajwadi Party being asked by Uttar Pradesh governor Vishnukant Shastri to try and form the government in Lucknow.

Although numbers still elude the single-largest party with a tally of 147, the SP leadership feels that the invitation from the governor could "radically change" the situation.

SP leaders Mulayam Singh Yadav and Amar Singh spent the whole of Monday confabulating with their allies in the People's Front to work out a viable strategy for the game of managing numbers.

In fact, they sought an appointment with the President for Tuesday to persuade him to direct the UP governor to follow the presidential convention of inviting the leader of the single largest party. They are citing President Shankar Dayal Sharma's decision to call Atal Behari Vajpayee as the leader of the single-largest party to form the government in 1996.

In between consulting their allies and keeping in touch with party managers in Lucknow, Mr Mulayam Yadav sought to explore ways of bridging the gap between the numbers at his command and the magic figure of 202 required to prove a majority in a House of 403.

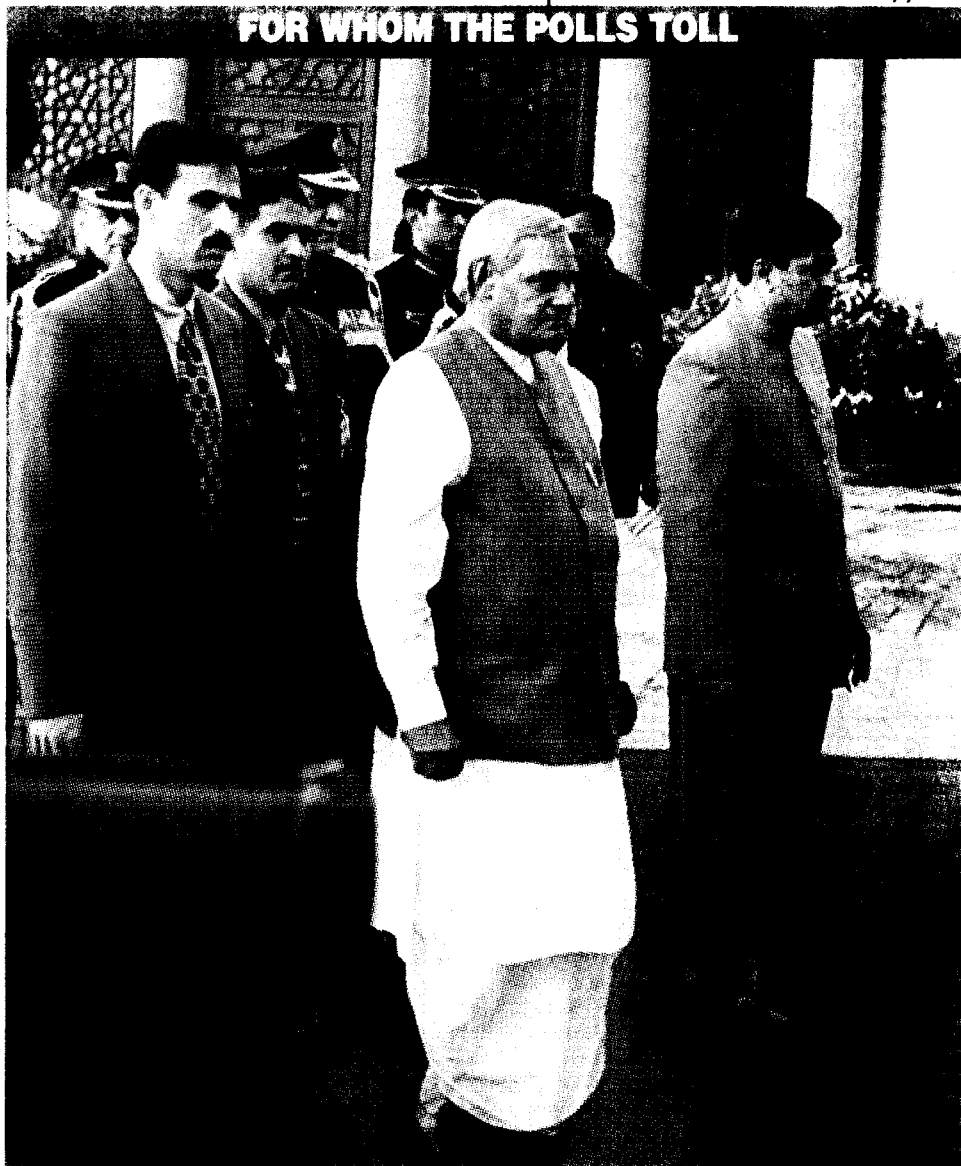
Even if the Congress, with its 26 MLAs, decides to support the SP and the latter can mop up the support of a majority of the 23 Independents and fringe-group MLAs, the party will still fall short of the required number.

The SP's search for the elusive number might result in attempts at poaching on rival turf. If the mood in the SP camp is any indication, it seems keen to go all out to cobble together a majority.

The BJP decision to sit in the opposition has apparently come as a disappointment for BSP leader Mayawati. Hoping to secure the BJP's support, she met Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee on Sunday night and apparently sought his help to form the next government in Lucknow.

Now that the SP has decided to stake its claim on Tuesday, the BSP leader's main worry seems to be to keep her flock together, scarred as the party has been in the past by poachers from rival camps.

Observers feel that some of the BJP's allies could also be the target of the SP's attempt to put together a majority. "Now that it has become clear that the SP alone is in a position to form the government in UP, certain equa-



Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee makes his way to parliament on the first day of the budget session in New Delhi on Monday. On his left is minister for parliamentary affairs Pramod Mahajan.

tions are sure to change," party general secretary Amar Singh said.

CPM general secretary H.K.S. Surjeet, who emerged as the principal negotiator for the SP, got in touch with Congress president Sonia Gandhi and some other leaders. "There has

been a tradition of inviting the single-largest party to form the government. Mulayam Singh will stake his claim on Tuesday," Mr Surjeet told reporters. He was hopeful that the SP would be able to manage the numbers. "The numbers will come," he said cryptically.

VP Singh cautions

THE TIMES OF INDIA

26 FEB 2002