

Govt, PWG differ over talks ambit

Statesman News Service

HYDERABAD, June 9. — The PWG today said their armed struggle was beyond the scope of talks while the government held it was duty-bound to prevent armed squads from moving.

"How can government object to an armed struggle? A revolutionary party would carry on its revolutionary activity of which armed struggle is a part," Mr Varavara Rao, PWG emissary, told a press conference.

He said the present dialogue is intended to fix modalities for the final round of talks between the state and PWG leadership and dubbed today's round of talks as a "protest meeting" against encounter killings.

The government today said the status of talks were positive. The talks would resume on 20 June.

Mr Rao said revolutionaries were holding the weapon for self-defence. "Let's not make armed struggle a point of debate." "Mixing ban and arms shows a lack of understanding on the government's part."

The government made itself ambiguous on the PWG's de-

mand to lift the ban. Commercial taxes minister Mr K Vijayarama Rao said: "As long as there are armed squads and there is no declaration of giving up arms to achieve their objectives, the question of lifting the ban does not arise." "Till the talks reach a stage where the armed struggle issue begins to figure, the thought of removing the ban is premature."

On the PWG terming the armed struggle as non-negotiable, he said: "It will figure in the talks. It's our objective (to see they give up arms)"

Mr N Chandrababu Naidu has been holding detailed meetings with top officials and his representatives over the past 24 hours. This morning he met Mr Vijayarama Rao and excise minister Mr T Sitaram. The aim was to drill into the two ministers the issue of armed struggle and how it conflicted the government's mandate to uphold the rule of law.

PWG emissary Mr Varavara Rao appealed to the media to refer to it as 'People's War' and not as a group.

He reiterated their demand to create a conducive atmosphere and protested against the en-

counter killing of two ROC cadres in Anantapur yesterday.

The PWG began talks today by handing over a seven-point note castigating the police and criticising Mr Naidu for using "intemperate language" while saying the ban would not be lifted.

Despite orders to stop encounter killings "either some police officers are not willing to listen to you or you yourself are sending different signals. The IPS Officers Association has also tried to protect one of the officers. We think this is a serious reflection on your government's legitimate power over the police machinery and your capacity of double speak," it said.

"We think the killings of Janashakti and ROC comrades in fake encounters are part of a criminal conspiracy to create an unhealthy conflict between PWG and other revolutionary parties." It urged the government to publicly spell out its policy on encounters.

The government's cryptic note said bringing PWG into the mainstream by giving up armed struggle was among its objectives.

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THE DELHI TRANSPORT CRISIS

10/4

AT A GENERAL level, the Supreme Court should be commended for the zeal it has displayed in persuading — even compelling — the Government to reduce air pollution. Over the years, the intervention of the Court has played an important role in hastening the steps to diminish vehicular pollution — for example, the supply of lead-free petrol and the lowering of sulphur content in diesel. However, the recent order of the Court, which has resulted in almost 6,500 diesel buses being taken off the roads in Delhi and which has plunged the city into chaos, evokes mixed feelings and deserves to be examined on a somewhat different footing. It is easy to see what the Court was upset about. The stiff daily fines it imposed on diesel buses that continue to operate in the Capital were a direct result of what was perceived as the Delhi administration's reluctance to compel owners of the city's 6,000-plus unconverted diesel buses to switch to CNG. But it is difficult to see why the conversion to CNG — which is dogged by genuine infrastructural problems (laying pipelines and creating CNG dispensing outlets) — has to proceed at the speed laid down by the Court (or not at all).

CNG is, without a doubt, a much cleaner fuel than low sulphur diesel, but one of the great myths about Delhi's air quality is that its improvement hinges critically on converting all diesel buses to CNG. Since there are only some 10,000 intra-city buses in the Capital against a total vehicular population of 30 lakhs, it is totally erroneous to assume that Delhi's ambient air quality can be radically enhanced by converting the remaining diesel buses to CNG. If the air the Capital breathes has improved in recent years (and it has), the reason lies largely elsewhere — in the introduction of new vehicles, the phasing out of old ones, the use of four-stroke technology in two-

wheelers, the lowering of the sulphur content in diesel and so on. As the Centre mulls over issuing an ordinance to negate the Court order, the question arises whether it was really necessary to cripple the Capital by grounding the diesel buses — a decision which throws the lives of many thousands (from school children to office-goers) into confusion and disorder.

Significantly, there are aspects of the Court's order that go well beyond Delhi. So enthusiastic has the Court been in canvassing for CNG that it has directed the Central Government to "give priority to transport sector... all over India with regard to the allocation of CNG". Moreover, CNG will be allocated first to the transport sector, only the remainder will go to industry. There are at least two problems with such directions. To begin with, even if one grants that the Executive has failed dismally in controlling air pollution, policy decisions of this nature are best left to it. Second, given both the availability of CNG and the difficulty in transportation, it is simply infeasible to canvass for it as a major transport fuel all over the country. As pointed out by the Mashelkar Committee, which was set up to recommend an auto fuel policy for the whole country, CNG can at best serve as a niche fuel. The logistics for supplying CNG as a transport fuel to other metros are so intimidating that the costs of doing this have never been worked out. It was possible to introduce CNG in a limited manner in Delhi because of its proximity to the HBJ pipeline. Of course, the Court is correct when it disparages the Executive for failing to address the air pollution question seriously. Or when it stresses that much more needs to be done to clean up the horribly polluted air this country breathes. But this is a problem which has to be tackled on a variety of fronts. It cannot be dealt with by a simple one-stop cure-all fix called CNG.

10 APR 2007

THE HINDU

CNG crisis continues in Delhi

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 9. With the Central Government today ruling out the issuance of an ordinance to provide for the use of ultra low sulphur diesel, the transport crisis in Delhi looks set to continue for some more days. The only solution being proposed by the Centre is to file a response in the Supreme Court seeking some considerations in view of problems faced in dispensing Compress Natural Gas (CNG).

This was the outcome of a meeting convened by the Union Home Minister L.K. Advani with the Ministers for Petroleum, Law and Environment. The hour-long conclave, which was expected to yield some concrete results and relief for the Delhi citizens, ended

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ed instead with recriminations being heaped on the Delhi Government by the former Chief Ministers M.L. Khurana and Saheb Singh Varma, while the Petroleum Ministry raised implementation issues.

The Petroleum Minister Ram Naik, told newsmen after the meeting that the CNG supply was not a problem but dispensation remained a problem. It would take a year and a half to build the infrastructure required for sufficient supply and the Indraprastha Gas Limited has been asked to create it. The Government would file its response in the Supreme Court "and plead for some considerations", he said.

He would also be meet the Delhi Chief Minister, Sheila Dikshit, tomorrow to provide any assistance to her. Regarding an or-

dinance, he said it would not be legally possible to issue it while Parliament was still in session. Indicating that the centre was considering legislative measures, he said it would only be possible to introduce legislation for use of dual fuels in the capital after the sitting resumes on April 15.

The former Delhi Chief Ministers, M.L. Khurana and Saheb Singh Varma who also attended the meeting, however, insisted that any legislation to counter the Supreme Court order banning diesel buses would have to be introduced by the Delhi Government. This is a reversal of their stance on Monday when they said their discussions were being held with all political parties on an ordinance to allow dual fuels.

10 APR 2002

THE HINDU

MCC kills four, derails train during bandh

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Statesman News Service

RANCHI/PATNA, Feb. 20. — Four persons were gunned down and railway property destroyed indiscriminately as the MCC-sponsored Bihar and Jharkhand bandh turned violent today.

The dawn-to-dusk bandh, called in protest against Poto — which was used to ban the ultra outfit — was supported by the CPI-ML and the PWG. It, however, evoked little response in the urban areas of the two states.

Jharkhand police said four persons, including two truck drivers, were killed on the spot and six others injured when MCC cadre lobbed bombs and hand-grenades on a truck convoy, trying to force its way through a road blockade put up by MCC ultras between Hazaribagh and Barhi near Hazaribagh National Park.

Twelve coaches of the Patna-Hatia Express were derailed due to an explosion on the tracks between Nimiaghat and Parasnath. However, there was no casualty owing to the derailment.

The additional director-general (Railways), Mr J Mahapatra, said that patrolling on the tracks in Ranchi-Muri, Barkakana-Ramgarh-Gomo, Dhanbad-Kodarma, Barkakana-Garhwa and Tata-nagar-Chandil sections had been intensified.

An assistant station master and another railway

employee were kidnapped and later released in Singhbhum district. They were abducted for allowing trains to pass through during the bandh. An engine and a bogey of the Barkakana-Mughalsarai passenger train were burnt by suspected MCC ultras at Hendegir station in the Dhanbad division.

There was skeletal movement of vehicles in the Naxalite-dominated areas of Bihar and Jharkhand. Most highways in Gaya, Hazaribagh, Palamau and Latehar wore deserted looks. Offices and other establishments falling in the Naxalite's strongholds too remained closed. In colliery areas, though vehicular movement was affected, the bandh didn't have much impact on the movement of coal, the Jharkhand DGP said.

MCC activists opened fire on a police party on the Jamshedpur-Ranchi highway in the wee hours of the morning, critically injuring the O-C, Namkum police station. None of the attackers could be arrested. The Jharkhand chief minister, Mr Babulal Marandi, said the bandh had no effect on the state and whatever incidents had happened were "routine".

In Bihar, the activists set five vehicles including trucks, tractors and jeep on fire in Barachati, Tekari and Gaya, injuring six persons. The IG (Operations), Bihar, Mr Neelmani, claimed that barring stray incidents in Gaya, the bandh passed off peacefully.

THE STATESMAN

21 FEB 2002

PWG accepts talks offer

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FROM GS. RADHAKRISHNA

Hyderabad, Jan. 20: The People's War Group, one of the most violent organisations in the country and outlawed under the new anti-terrorism Ordinance, has accepted the Andhra Pradesh government's offer to hold talks.

The Naxalite group, which had consistently brushed aside earlier peace overtures, said combing operations and raids on its strongholds should be halted for three months to prepare the ground for talks.

The group's willingness to hold talks and the terms were conveyed through a letter signed by 'RK' (Ramakrishna), the north Telengana PWG secretary, on behalf of the group's central and provincial committees.

The PWG said it was ready to meet government officials or mediators either at north Telengana or on the Andhra-Orissa border. "We will send further proposals based on the state government's response," it said.

The government, which had piled pressure on the Centre to ban the PWG under the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance after a string of attacks on industrial units, welcomed the group's gesture as "a healthy and good sign".

State home minister T. Devender Goud said he would "discuss the details and respond publicly". Since civic elections are scheduled in some parts of the

state early this week, the government, bound by the code of conduct, is expected to make a formal announcement only after voting ends.

The letter was sent to a former social welfare secretary, S.R.

Anti-terror law arrest

Srinagar, Jan. 20: Police today arrested a woman using the provisions of the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance for the first time in Jammu.

Gulabi, wife of a slain Hizbul Mujahideen rebel, was arrested two days ago on charges of working with militants at Sumar village in Doda district, said police sources.

"She was providing information to the militants about the movement of security forces," said a police officer. "We recovered Rs 40,000 from her house during searches."

The police vacated the house after arresting the woman and sealed it.

Security forces in Kashmir have already begun to apply the law. Ten persons, including Ghulam Mohammad Dar, were arrested under the Ordinance. Last year, Dar's house was sealed after forcibly evicting his wife and daughter. The house was later handed over to the owners after the chief minister intervened.

Shankaran, who is now the convener of the Committee of Concerned Citizens, a civil rights organisation.

Shankaran, a retired IAS officer, had sent an open letter to both the government and the PWG after the murder of tribal Congress leader R. Naik last month.

The government had then renewed its offer for talks and announced that an all-party meeting would be convened to work out the modalities of talks.

The first hint of a rethink had come soon after with the PWG expressing regret over the killing of the Congress leader.

Despite the high-profile strikes on several establishments associated with politicians, the PWG, too, had suffered setbacks of late. The state government managed to persuade 83 PWG activists to surrender within a span of two months.

The surrenders capped a bloody chain of attacks and retribution in which around 118 PWG activists and 41 policemen were killed last year. Between 1997 and 2001, as many as 983 extremists lost their lives in encounters and ambushes in the state.

The PWG have struck terror in the state since 1970 and is being held responsible by police for as many as 2,427 murders since then. The police claim to have killed 2,245 extremists in the same period.

THE TELEGRAPH

21 JAN 2002

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JD(U) opens talks with BJP for U.P. polls

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 11. The Janata Dal (United) today formally opened discussions with the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on seat-sharing for next month's Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh.

The JD(U) chief and Union Labour Minister, Sharad Yadav, held two meetings with the U.P. Chief Minister, Rajnath Singh, including one this afternoon along with senior leaders of both parties.

The JD(U), which has identified some 30 constituencies, is keen that rebels from the Samajwadi Party who were throwing their lot with it, be part of an arrangement being worked out to take on the challenge of Mulayam Singh Yadav's Samajwadi Party.

Having activated the former Lok Dal and enticed dissident SP workers, the JD(U) and the BJP held elaborate talks after which it was felt that the claim of the JD(U) would be considered with care. Carrying forward the show of unity, Mr. Yadav and Mr. Rajnath Singh are expected to address a rally in Khalilabad area, the Lok Sabha constituency of the expelled SP MP, Bhalchandra Yadav, on Sunday.

Party sources suggested that

apart from the four SP MPs, including the three expelled — Ramakant Yadav, Kunwar Sarvaraj Singh and Bhalchandra Yadav — another two MPs would switch camps. An indication to this effect was also available when two SP MPs were present during the meeting JD(U) chief had with U.P. Chief Minister.

Officially, the JD(U) spokesman, Mohan Prakash, who attended a meeting along with Sharad Yadav with the Chief Minister last evening, said the seat-sharing talks were "positive and progressing in the right direction".

On the other hand, the Samata Party also hopes to be accommodated by the BJP in U.P. "The Samata Party had contested nine Assembly seats in 1996 when the party was new and won two. We have been since with the BJP-led alliance in U.P.," the party spokesman, Shambu Shrivastwa, told *The Hindu*.

After prolonged in-house discussions, the Samata Party has identified 20 constituencies in U.P. and is hopeful that it would have anywhere between 12 and 15 seats for itself.

Although there have been informal contacts between the Sa-

mata and BJP leaders, a clear picture would emerge after the Samata leader and Defence Minister, George Fernandes, meets the former BJP chief, Kushabhau Thakre. The Samata party hopes to finalise its arrangement with the BJP before Mr. Fernandes leaves here on his official visit to the United States on January 15.

U.P. Minister's resignation accepted

LUCKNOW, JAN. 11. The Uttar Pradesh Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, today accepted the resignation of the Land Development and Water Resources Minister, Mandaleshwar Singh.

Sources said that the resignation of Mr. Singh, who put in his papers last night, was accepted this morning on the recommendation of the Chief Minister, Rajnath Singh, who is now in New Delhi.

Mr. Mandaleshwar Singh had faxed his resignation late last night to the Governor and the Chief Minister. He said yesterday that Chief Minister had created the circumstances which forced him to resign. — UNI

THE HINDU

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