

## Jayalalithaa withdraws remarks against PM

NEW DELHI, NOV. 16. The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, today withdrew the critical remarks she made against the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, in the context of the Cauvery issue.

In a letter to Mr. Vajpayee, she said that personally she had the greatest respect for the Prime Minister and had full confidence in him and in the Cauvery River Authority that he headed. She said she had no intention to make insinuations against him or the CRA and her remarks were only intended to improve the conditions of the farmers of Tamil Nadu when she had written the

letter to him earlier this month.

She urged Mr. Vajpayee to ignore the comments and treat them as withdrawn. During the hearing on the Cauvery issue on Friday, the apex court had expressed strong resentment over the "insinuations" levelled by Ms. Jayalalithaa in her letter to the Prime Minister on the functioning of the CRA and asked her to withdraw them in four days. Counsel for Tamil Nadu, K.K. Venugopal, immediately assured the court that the Chief Minister would write to the Prime Minister "soon" withdrawing the remarks against him and expressing confidence in him. — PTI

THE HINDU

17 NOV 2002

## 'Need for non-Cong., non-BJP alternative'

By Our Special Correspondent

**CHENNAI, SEPT. 2.** Making clear her intention of playing a bigger role in national politics, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and AIADMK general secretary, Jayalalithaa, today called for a non-BJP, non-Congress alternative at the Centre.

Addressing a press conference here, Ms. Jayalalithaa said the leaders of Opposition parties such as the Rashtriya Janata Dal, the CPI and the CPI (M), and the true followers of Nehru, Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, should not support the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, for Prime Ministership. Asking the Opposition leaders to think of an alternative to Ms. Gandhi, she said she was prepared to take the initiative.

Denying that the AIADMK was moving closer to the Bharatiya Janata Party, Ms. Jayalalithaa said she had criticised the BJP on several issues, including its decision of not accepting the resignation of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, and allowing Foreign Direct Investment in print media.

On the Cauvery issue, the



AIADMK leader faulted the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, for calling for the working out of details of the pro-rata sharing of distress by September 15. Insisting that the pro-rata sharing of distress had already been worked out, she said that at the meeting of the Cauvery River Authority, the issue was whether it was acceptable to Karnataka.

The fact that Mr. Vajpayee had released his statement on the issue within ten minutes of her walking out of the meeting showed that he had already made up his mind that nothing

would come out of the meeting and that he had prepared the statement in advance, she said.

On the efforts to secure the release of the former Karnataka Minister, H. Nagappa, she said she was against any emissaries being sent to the forest brigand, Veerappan. However, the Tamil Nadu Special Task Force would fully cooperate with Karnataka to nab Veerappan. As the fugitive was operating in an area of 17,000 sq km, which was 17 times more than the area of operation of the LTTE chief, V. Prabakaran, it was difficult to nab him.

Ms. Jayalalithaa alleged that Rs. 30 crores had been paid as ransom on the Karnataka side to obtain the release of the film actor, Rajkumar, from Veerappan two years ago. The Tamil Nadu Government had no information on a second cassette being sent by Veerappan.

Asked about the suggestion of the PMK founder, S. Ramadoss, that Veerappan be given general amnesty, she said it amounted to "treason." Veerappan had links with banned organisations such as the LTTE, the TNLA, the TNRT and the Tamilar Desiya

Iyakkam. The Government would look into the legal aspects of the issue before taking action against the PMK leader.

Ms. Jayalalithaa also launched another attack on Sonia Gandhi over her "foreign origin" issue saying that people should not allow the country to fall into her clutches. Ms. Gandhi, who had not obtained Indian citizenship until 1983, did not have the basic qualifications of "love and loyalty" for the country, she said adding that she was prepared to travel the length and breadth of the country to prevent Ms. Gandhi from becoming the Prime Minister.

The AIADMK leader said she had boycotted the joint campaign meeting with Ms. Gandhi in August 1999 at Villupuram due to her reservations on the "foreign origin" issue. (At that time, Ms. Jayalalithaa had attributed her absence to the delay caused by the presence of crowds along her campaign route). Throughout the press conference, Ms. Jayalalithaa referred to Ms. Gandhi as Antonia Maino Gandhi, and pointed out that Sonia was the name given to her by Indira Gandhi.

# Jaya slams Cong on 'letter of support'

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

CHENNAI, Aug. 31. — Miss Jayalalitha today reiterated that in her letter of support to the Congress in 1999, she had said the AIADMK would "extend support to a government to be formed by the Congress, led by Mrs Sonia Gandhi", and not a government "to be formed by Mrs Sonia Gandhi".

The Tamil Nadu chief minister criticised the Congress for releasing a copy of her letter. In her two-page statement, she said: "This is totally misleading and malicious." Her stand that the AIADMK would not support the candidature of a "foreigner" for the Prime Minister's post has been "vindicated", she said. "People will surely understand what is

meant here in unambiguous terms is that the AIADMK would extend support to a government to be formed by the Congress at the Centre."

She expressed confidence that the people would not be "carried away by such spiteful and naive attempts to denigrate her image and use it as a ploy to capture power". The chief minister said she would stand by her statement that "it is a crying shame" and an indicator of "moral bankruptcy" on the part of the Congress that it was projecting Mrs Sonia Gandhi as the prime ministerial candidate.

Miss Jayalalitha said that in her 1999 letter she had never said that her party wanted Mrs Gandhi to be the Prime Minister or that the AIADMK would support

her candidature.

It is a known fact that a particular party, which has split up into distinct identifiable units, is referred to by the name of the person who heads it. "Support to any of the groups by a political party cannot be read as being synonymous with accepting its leader as the Prime Minister." She said: "I have alluded to the Congress-I as the Congress-I led by Mrs Sonia Gandhi to identify the party as the one led by Mrs Sonia Gandhi. It does not mean I supported her candidature for prime ministership."

"I have not misled the nation... I have been very careful in my choice of words and extremely precise in what my party wanted to convey at that point of time."

Miss Jayalalitha said the Congress was "misleading" the nation by "deliberately misinterpreting" her letter. The letter was sent to the President after she had withdrawn support to the BJP-led coalition. "My anxiety at that time was to prevent another election which would mean unnecessary expenditure and political instability for the nation."

Referring to Mr Jaipal Reddy's statement that her comments about the Congress chief were intended to free herself from cases pending against her, Miss Jayalalitha said the remarks were "obnoxious" since it implied that the Supreme Court was amenable to pressure from the ruling party. "This amounts to contempt of court."

# Jaya accuses Ramadoss of being a separatist

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Chennai:** Tamil Nadu chief minister J. Jayalalithaa on Sunday condemned the call given by Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) founder S. Ramadoss for the bifurcation of Tamil Nadu.

She termed it a dangerous proposal to be rejected by all right-thinking people.

In a strongly worded statement, Ms Jayalalithaa said Mr Ramadoss has revealed his true colours as a separatist by demanding the bifurcation of Tamil Nadu and the carving out of the northern districts where the Vanniyar community is in the majority into a separate state.

Ms Jayalalithaa accused M. Karunanidhi (DMK leader), Vaiko (MDMK leader), Nedumaran (Tamil National Movement) and Mr Ramadoss of having links with the LTTE.

She said they wanted the state to secede from India

and integrate with northern Sri Lanka by allying themselves with the LTTE. However, this had been foiled by the firm steps taken by her government which had banned the LTTE and its proxy outfits and cracked down on supporters like Vaiko.

She denied Mr Ramadoss's charge and said three of her Ministers, the AIADMK chief whip and most of the party MLAs belong to the most backward Vanniyar community. She accused Mr Ramadoss of indulging in unhealthy politics of casteism.

Former chief minister and DMK leader K Karunanidhi rejected his party ally's call for bifurcation and said Mr Ramadoss's proposal was unacceptable and impracticable.

"However, mere expression of an opinion does not deserve such all-round condemnation," he said referring to criticisms voiced by the Congress and other parties. He appealed to Mr Ramadoss not to pursue the issue "as it may lead to dangerous consequences".



J. Jayalalithaa

THE TIMES OF INDIA

22 JUL 2002

# Police file case against Vaiko under Pota

HT Correspondent  
Chennai, July 4

CONSEQUENT TO Jayalithaa's threat to use Pota against MDMK leader Vaiko, the Tamil Nadu police today filed a case against him and 8 others for supporting the LTTE.

The FIR was filed by the inspector of Thirumangalam police station after taking the permission of the Madurai SP. The FIR said that Vaiko's speech at Thirumangalam on June 29 attracted the provisions of the Pota and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act of 1967 as it was

in support of LTTE.

Along with Vaiko, former MP P Eswaramurthy and seven other functionaries of the MDMK who also made speeches have been listed in the FIR. The police are hunting for Bhoominathan, general secretary of the Madurai unit of the MDMK, who organised the meeting.

A police team is likely to receive Vaiko at Chennai airport when he returns from the US on July 10. On Wednesday, Vaiko had issued a statement describing Jayalithaa's letter to Advani as 'politically motivated' and said he would continue to support the

LTTE. This, it was felt, challenged the authority of the State Government and made a mockery of the laws passed by Parliament.

The State's politicians are, meanwhile, divided on the action against Vaiko. A close ally of Jayalithaa but a pro-LTTE political leader, K Veeramani of Dravidar Kazhagam, has urged Jayalithaa not to invoke the Pota for political reasons.

"Pro-LTTE speeches do not amount to unlawful activity. Do not create an unnecessary controversy by arresting him and instead concentrate on development works," he said. Another

pro-LTTE leader P Nedupharan has argued that since the Sri Lankan Tamil cause was synonymous with the LTTE, supporting the LTTE only amounted to supporting the Tamil's struggle for rights.

However, State Congress President EVKS. Elangovan, welcoming the belated action, also wanted the police to probe business links, if any, between Vaiko and the LTTE.

The TMC and Janata Party President Subramaniam Swamy have also said that the action against Vaiko was long overdue. Similar sentiments were ex-

pressed by the Tamil Manila Congress and Janata Party president Subramanian Swamy.

Earlier in the day, State Home Secretary Naresh Gupta returned from a visit to New Delhi. Gupta said his visit had nothing to do with the Vaiko case, "which is being handled by the chief minister directly". The day-long visit pertained to modernisation of the state police force, he said.

The Dravidar Kazhagam general secretary, K Veeramani, has said that the Government's request to the Centre for detaining Vaiko under Pota could cause controversy.



Jayalithaa  
Tough stand

THE HINDU

5 JUL 1987

# Was Vaiko's arrest a red herring?

Shekhar Iyer  
New Delhi, July 12

WHY IS Jayalalithaa gunning for Vaiko? An immediate answer is, of course, that the AIADMK chief cannot tolerate her political rivals.

She has had Vaiko on her hit-list after taking actions against DMK chief M Karunanidhi and his son, M K Stalin — who lost the Chennai Mayor's post under a law enacted recently.

In June last year, Karunanidhi was manhandled and arrested on a flimsy corruption charge. His nephew, Union Minister Murasoli Maran, who protested against his arrest, was taken into custody.

By doing this, Jayalalithaa intended to convey a message that she was not cowed down by the DMK's association with the Vaj-

payde Government. She had the satisfaction of detaining the Union minister for a night.

In Vaiko's case too, the AIADMK chief apparently wants to show that she is unaffected by the MDMK's proximity to Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani. The MDMK cadres are upset because the Centre has not been as critical of Jayalalithaa as it was last time.

Another very important reason behind Jayalalithaa's action is that the Tamil nationalism or a pro-LTTE stand no longer evokes popular support in her State.

In fact, since Rajiv Gandhi's assassination in 1991, any link with Tamil Tigers has been viewed as a dangerous one. Jayalalithaa has herself said the MDMK has been losing one election after another and any action

against terrorism is welcomed by the people.

Also, many observers believe the timing of Vaiko's arrest has a lot to do with the problems Jayalalithaa is facing on economic fronts and on the Cauvery issue.

In the past few months, Jayalalithaa has managed to rebuild bridges with the NDA. She backed the Centre on Pota and NDA's decision to field APJ Abdul Kalam as presidential candidate.

The AIADMK's votes are crucial for the election of Vice-President. The BJP is keen on support of all parties outside the Congress-Left fold to enable its candidate to win.

Since her return as Chief Minister four months ago, Jayalalithaa's performance has been rather lacklustre. The delay in the arrival of rains and Kar-

naika's refusal to release Cauvery water has only added to her woes.

Jayalalithaa has been forced to announce doles for Thanjavur farmers, who face this crisis every year. Politicians of all hues realise that Tamil Nadu, being a low-riparian State, cannot force Karnataka to release water.

In fact, major Tamil newspapers have been highlighting the plight of farmers and about dipping water levels in State's reservoirs. Vaiko's arrest now is likely to eclipse the Cauvery issue.

Besides, Jayalalithaa has been encountering problems with State bureaucracy, which was once remarkably docile. Recently, she had to replace State chief secretary after her critical comments in the Assembly started a near rebellion among bureaucrats.

13 JUL 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# AIADMK, DMK clash in RS

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MAY 2.** The AIADMK and the DMK clashed in the Rajya Sabha during the discussion on Gujarat under Rule 170 over the manner in which the NDA Government at the Centre handled the situation following the arrest of the former Chief Minister, M. Karunanidhi, by the Tamil Nadu Government last June.

While declaring that his party would abstain from voting as it had in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday, the AIADMK member, V. Maitreyan, wondered if the

Centre would have adopted the same "rigid approach" with regard to the resignation of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, had it been a non-BJP ruled State. His charge was that different standards were being applied to States ruled by BJP and its allies, and others.

Dr. Maitreyan said the Centre had sent a team of politicians led by George Fernandes to Tamil Nadu following the arrest of the former Chief Minister last year, sought a report from the then Governor and then, on the NDA not being satisfied with

the report, recalled the Governor. He wanted to know if any of this was done in Gujarat. Describing the Gujarat carnage as "a national shame and an international disgrace", he said the Centre knew what to do in Gujarat. What was needed was political will.

When the DMK member, C.P. Thirunavukarasu, justified the Centre's intervention on their leader's arrest last year and described the incident as a "black mark in history" just as the events in Gujarat were, the AIADMK members were on

their feet. Much of what he said was lost in the din that followed.

In the context of Gujarat, the DMK member emphasised that politics and religion should not be mixed. The immediate task in Gujarat was to restore normality and to punish the perpetrators of violence. "There should not be any fascism, only then can we face the challenge of poverty and hunger."

He said the Godhra incident was condemnable, but how could one talk of the Newton's law of action and reaction.

FRIDAY, MAY 10, 2002

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## LEGITIMISING THE SHIV SENA

IN FORSAKING ITS own claim to the office of Lok Sabha Speaker, lying vacant since the death of G.M.C. Balayogi last March, the BJP has obviously been dictated by coalition imperatives. But the fact that a Shiv Sena nominee, Manohar Joshi, has been picked for the prestigious office is at once a cruel irony and, in a way, a challenge to the very institution of Parliament and all the noble democratic ideals it embodies. First for the irony part. The primary avowed reason for the Telugu Desam Party not reclaiming the post — despite repeated feelers from the BJP leadership in Government — is Chandrababu Naidu's displeasure, if not resentment, with the Centre over its response to the Gujarat carnage, more specifically its refusal to move against the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi. And now the baton of Speakership has been passed on to the nominee of a party that backs Mr. Modi and his revengeful anti-minority offensive to the hilt; not surprising, though, given the Shiv Sena's shared ideological plank with the RSS. What the BJP has done is to deliver a resounding snub to the TDP and yet the latter, as it turned out, has seconded the nomination of Mr. Joshi.

As for the other part impinging on parliamentary democracy-related concerns, the Shiv Sena's supremo, Bal Thackeray, has made little attempt to conceal the utter contempt he had for governance by people's elected representatives and for such liberal concepts as the rule of law, secularism and pluralism that are the defining principles of India's Constitution-ordained democratic polity. It is no secret that Mr. Thackeray, an unabashed votary of authoritarian ways, found the democratic processes and institutions useful only to the limited extent of gaining control over the levers of 'power' and that he remote-controlled them wherever and whenever his party happened to acquire access, be it at the local, State or Central level. Consider also the brazenness with

which Mr. Thackeray mounted an inflammatory communal campaign to the point of attracting disenfranchisement by the Election Commission. As for Mr. Joshi himself, his talk of establishing the "first Hindu State" in Maharashtra was raised in an unsuccessful election petition. Nothing could be a greater insult to the cherished democratic values than vesting a Shiv Sainik with the authority of presiding over the nation's highest legislative body. At another level, it amounts to conferring more legitimacy on an anti-democratic and communal outfit with a divisive agenda.

The BJP leadership has of course gone through the motions of consultation with the NDA constituents and the major Opposition parties this time around, unlike in 1998 when it resorted to murky backroom manipulations before nominating the TDP's Balayogi in a coup-like operation, and Mr. Joshi is all set to get elected uncontested. It has indeed been a convention that the Speaker (or Chairman) is from the ruling party or coalition and that the choice be made through a process of consensus among different political segments of the House. But these virtues stand seriously undermined in the present case and, as such, an open contest, even in the face of a certain defeat because of the numerical superiority enjoyed by the ruling establishment, would have been in order. In this sense, by adopting a hands-off approach in the name of upholding a convention and by not forcing a contest, the Opposition has failed to root for a vital democratic principle. To his credit, it must be said, Mr. Joshi, now Union Minister for Heavy Industry, has good parliamentary and administrative experience, having also had a stint as Chief Minister of Maharashtra for over four years, and this should stand him in good stead while carrying out the onerous duties of his new assignment. One hopes Mr. Thackeray does not, true to style, start functioning as a 'remote control' vis-a-vis Mr. Joshi, the Speaker. //

THE HINDU

10 MAY 2002



## A REALISTIC MOVE

THE DECISION AT last by the leaders of the Tamil Maanila Congress (TMC) to effect a merger into the Congress is indeed a reflection of a mature reaction on their part to the inescapable ground realities in Tamil Nadu. It may be true that the announcement, in a sense, was only a formality after the discussions between the TMC chief, G. K. Vasana, and the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi's aide and AICC secretary (in-charge of Tamil Nadu affairs), Ramesh Chennithala, during the past couple of months. Mr. Vasana, it may be recalled, had also met Ms. Gandhi during this period and his own election to the Rajya Sabha, which was made possible only because his candidature was endorsed by the Congress (as also by the Left parties), was a clear signal that the two parties were coming together. But then, Mr. Vasana's insistence through this period that he would take a final decision on the merger only after elaborate consultations with his party's ranks did suggest that the actual merger could take longer. The TMC chief, after all, could not have glossed over the concerns within his ranks particularly over the manner in which those holding positions in the party organisation were going to be accommodated in the larger set-up.

The joint declaration now, after a meeting of the leaders of the TMC and the Tamil Nadu unit of the Congress (with representatives of the AICC establishment too participating in it), does convey the impression that such issues have been settled. This, however, cannot be taken as the final settlement. There are the feuds among the various "important" leaders within the TNCC establishment marked by frequent instances when one or the other of them rushes to the high command seeking a change of leadership in the State. The State unit president, E.V.K.S. Elangovan, has been the target of attack by the several past presidents of the TNCC and his efforts to steer the

party out of the AIADMK fold has met with concerted resistance from them. The AICC establishment too has refused to come out clearly on this and this has encouraged a whole lot of leaders in the Tamil Nadu unit to carry on with their inner party struggle. That the TMC too is not free from this problem is a fact that Mr. Vasana as well as the AICC cannot gloss over. While it remains to be seen whether those in the TMC, particularly a number of those elected to the State Assembly (when the TMC was an ally of the AIADMK), will go as far as to defy Mr. Vasana when the merger is formalised, the fact remains that there are a number of TMC MLAs who do not appreciate the idea of joining the ranks of the Congress Legislature Party particularly as long as the Congress unit in Tamil Nadu persists with the idea of forging a third front in the State.

Be that as it may, despite the party organisation that the TMC can claim to have in the State even at this stage, the fact is that Mr. Vasana is in no position to sustain the structure in the same way as his father, G. K. Moopanar, could. Moreover, the TMC organisation was even otherwise being prepared by Moopanar for a merger. This was the context in which Mr. Vasana inherited the mantle and in this sense he was in no position to reverse the trend. Apart from these factors, the ease with which the DMK and the AIADMK were walking in and out of the BJP-led alliance in the past few years had certainly created a situation where there was very little scope for the TMC to enter into a lasting political alliance committed to plural values. All these had rendered the TMC's merger into the Congress inevitable. While the merger now seems imminent, the leaders on both sides (particularly the Congress high command) will serve the party's cause better only if they make clear the strategy in the days to come vis-a-vis the DMK and the AIADMK in the State.

**THE HINDU**

16 MAY 2002

# MDMK to challenge Vaiko's arrest in Supreme Court

By J. Venkatesan

**NEW DELHI, JULY 20.** The MDMK has decided to move the Supreme Court either on Tuesday or Wednesday challenging the arrest of its leader, Vaiko, MP, by the Tamil Nadu Government under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA).

The two MDMK Ministers in the Union Cabinet, M. Kannappan and Gingee Ramachandran, who had extensive consultations with the former Union Law Minister, Arun Jaitley and other legal luminaries, are convinced that there was "patent illegality" in the arrest of Mr. Vaiko (on July 11) based on a non-bailable warrant (NBW) and his subsequent remand till August 7. The petition will assail the FIR, the NBW and the remand.

It is also being explored whether an application to grant bail to Mr. Vaiko to enable him to attend the current Parliament session could be filed along with the main petition.

According to MDMK sources, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, who met Mr. Vaiko, is understood to have impressed on him the need to tackle the issue through legal means apart from fighting it out politically.

The Tamil Nadu Government registered an FIR against Mr. Vaiko and eight others under Section 21 (2) and 21 (3) of POTA, Section 13 (1) (a) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, besides IPC Sections 109 and 120-B.

According to the FIR, Mr. Vaiko's speech at the public meeting in Thirumangalam near Madurai on June 29, extending open support to LTTE, a banned organisation, attracted the provisions of POTA.

## Legal flaws

However, according to legal opinion, no grounds exist for registration of a case for mere "verbal support" to a banned organisation without any overt or covert violent activity to further the cause of the outfit. Further, by no stretch of imagination, a political meeting organised by a political party can be construed as one organised to extend support to a banned organisation.

Also, the Madurai Judicial Magistrate is not vested with the jurisdiction to issue a NBW against Mr. Vaiko as under POTA, all cases are to be tried by a special court and the judge has to be

an additional sessions or a sessions judge or one who has been a sessions judge.

The "illegality" is further compounded as the remand was made by a magistrate, who was not vested with the jurisdiction.

Also, a magistrate cannot make a remand exceeding 14 days but in the case of Mr. Vaiko, he has been remanded for 28 days till August 7. According to the opinion, vesting of jurisdiction by the subsequent creation of a special court cannot have retrospective effect.

It will be interesting to note that in October last, the Supreme Court had the occasion to decide on the question of jurisdiction of a court to order remand — in the case of 'State of Tamil Nadu vs Paramasiva Pandian'.

In this case, the accused were facing charges under the Essential Commodities Act and offences under this Act were dealt by a special court constituted for this purpose. But as the EC Act ceased to exist, the accused were remanded by a court under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act.

When the three accused challenged their remand, the Madras High Court held that their detention was illegal as the NDPS court was not a validly constituted court to deal with offences under the EC Act and, therefore, the proceedings were without jurisdiction. The court ordered them to be released on bail forthwith. The Tamil Nadu Government preferred an appeal in the Supreme Court against this judgment.

Agreeing with the findings of the High Court, the apex court held that accepting the contention of the State that the NDPS court could also exercise jurisdiction to deal with offences under the EC Act would be contrary to the scheme of things under the Criminal Procedure Code.

Citing this direct case, it is pointed out that when once a law mandates a particular procedure, it cannot be circumvented by other means. When the additional sessions or sessions judge alone has the jurisdiction to deal with POTA cases, the two magistrates in Madurai, by granting NBW and ordering a remand, have exceeded their jurisdiction. The MDMK leaders are, therefore, confident that there are enough grounds to persuade the court to set aside the FIR.

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21 JUL 2002

THE HINDU

# All set for Vaiko arrest

By S. Vijay Kumar

**MADURAI, JULY 10.** The stage is set for the arrest of the MDMK general secretary and Sivakasi MP, Vaiko, under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA). A special team led by the Madurai Superintendent of Police, Ayushmani Tiwari, and the DSP (Investigation Officer), Karnan, reached Chennai today to execute the



non-bailable arrest warrant against Mr. Vaiko on his arrival at the airport from the United States via Mumbai.

According to police sources, Mr. Vaiko would be arrested and brought to a Tirumangalam court here by road tomorrow around 11 p.m.

On remand to judicial custody, he will be lodged at the Madurai central prison. Soon after Mr. Vaiko is taken into custody, the Lok Sabha Speaker

would be informed.

Elaborate security arrangements have been made in the southern districts. While preventive arrests started this evening, police ensured tight security at the Tirumangalam taluk police station and the court premises.

"We have alerted all the SPs in the south zone to enhance bandobust in sensitive pockets where the party (MDMK) has a strong presence.

Two companies of the Tamil Nadu Special Police will be deployed in Virudhunagar district (where the Sivakasi Lok Sabha constituency is located) as a precautionary measure," the Inspector-General (South Zone), T. Rajendran, told *The Hindu*.

The first MP to face arrest under POTA, Mr. Vaiko has been accused of making a pro-LTTE speech at a meeting at Tirumangalam on June 29. Since certain portions of his speech were found to "endanger the nation's security and integrity", police registered cases against Mr. Vaiko and eight others under various sections of POTA, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 and the IPC.

Police made frantic efforts to secure non-bailable warrants immediately after the cases were registered but since the regular judicial magistrate, S. Venkatachalapathi, was not available, the issue got deferred till Monday.

Shortly after issuing an NBW against Mr. Vaiko on Tuesday, the magistrate is said to have

proceeded on leave.

Meanwhile, police have initiated steps for the formation of a special court in Madurai to pursue the proceedings under POTA.

Our Chennai Special Correspondent reports:

The Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, held discussions with the Chief Secretary, Sukavaneshwar, the Home Secretary, Naresh Gupta, and the

## MDMK Ministers to be present

By Our Special correspondent

**CHENNAI, JULY 10.** The MDMK Ministers in the Union Cabinet, Gingee Ramachandran and M. Kannappan, are expected to be here with Mr. Vaiko at the time of his arrest, sources said.

Meanwhile, a PTI report from Delhi quoted Mr. Ramachandran as saying that over 20,000 volunteers would throng the Meenambakkam airport when Mr. Vaiko arrives tomorrow. However, the MDMK would not seek the Centre's intervention to avert Mr. Vaiko's arrest, he said.

Director-General of Police, B.P. Nailwal, on the situation arising out of the decision to arrest Mr. Vaiko.

THE HINDU

1 JUL 2002

# Eight Vaiko men held under Pota

Statesman News Service

CHENNAI, July 9. — Eight members of the MDMK, an NDA constituent, were arrested today under Pota for making pro-LTTE speeches at a rally in Thirumangalam near Madurai on 29 June.

This is the first case of Pota being invoked in Tamil Nadu. The eight have been remanded in judicial custody.

Thirumangalam judicial magistrate Mr S Venkatachalapathy issued non-bailable warrants against them on Monday. The magistrate is reportedly consulting the Lok Sabha Speaker about MDMK chief Mr Vaiko, an MP, who too had made pro-LTTE speeches. A senior official, however, said the magistrate had to only inform the Speaker about issuing the warrant and need not seek his permission.

Mr Vaiko is now in Chicago and is likely to return on 11 July. He described the arrests as "repression let loose by the fascist Jayalalitha regime". In a statement, issued by the party, he said: "Vinasha kaaley vipareetha budhi.

The arrests were aimed at strangulating the voice of democracy." He said he would return to the city as scheduled.

The MDMK party presidium chairman, Mr L Ganesan, has called on party workers to reach Chennai in large numbers to greet Mr Vaiko. He urged them to remain calm. If Mr Vaiko was arrested, he said, the party would demonstrate peacefully front of all taluk and district headquarters on 12 July.

NDA partners and allies have accused the chief minister of indulging in political witch-hunt. Questions are being raised why Miss Jayalalitha had not arrested Mr Vaiko or leaders of other pro-LTTE outfits, such as her friend and Dravidar Kazhagam leader Mr K Veeramani. Perhaps what had irked Miss Jayalalitha was Mr Vaiko challenging Pota publicly at a rally, sources close to Miss Jayalalitha said.

While the BJP has come out in support of Mr Vaiko, who has been a "trusted" ally, state officials said the Centre had washed its hands of the issue on the ground that law and order was a state subject.

THE STATESMAN

10 JUL 2002

# No solution yet, PDP wants CM post

HT Correspondents  
New Delhi/Srinagar, October 13

GOVERNMENT FORMATION efforts in Jammu and Kashmir took a new turn late tonight with the PDP insisting on Chief Ministership of a new coalition government and its potential ally Congress making it clear that "nothing has been finalised" on the tie-up.

The NC too is likely to spring a surprise by throwing its hat in the ring even as J&K Governor GC Saxena has asked the Congress, PDP and NC to meet him before Tuesday to discuss the formation of a Government.

NC insiders say the NC is in close contact with some rebel members who fought against the official candidates and won.

The Congress, with 21 members, is the second largest party. The PDP has 16 members. The Congress and PDP claim that they will form the Government jointly with support from Independent MLAs.

PDP chief Mufti Mohammad Sayeed, who met Congress president Sonia Gandhi yesterday and this evening, told her that "it is very important that his party should lead the government."

But Congress think-tank Manmohan Singh, after today's meeting, said: "Nothing has been finalised yet."

He announced that the newly-elected party MLAs will meet in Srinagar tomorrow afternoon where their views will be ascer-

tained on the PDP demand.

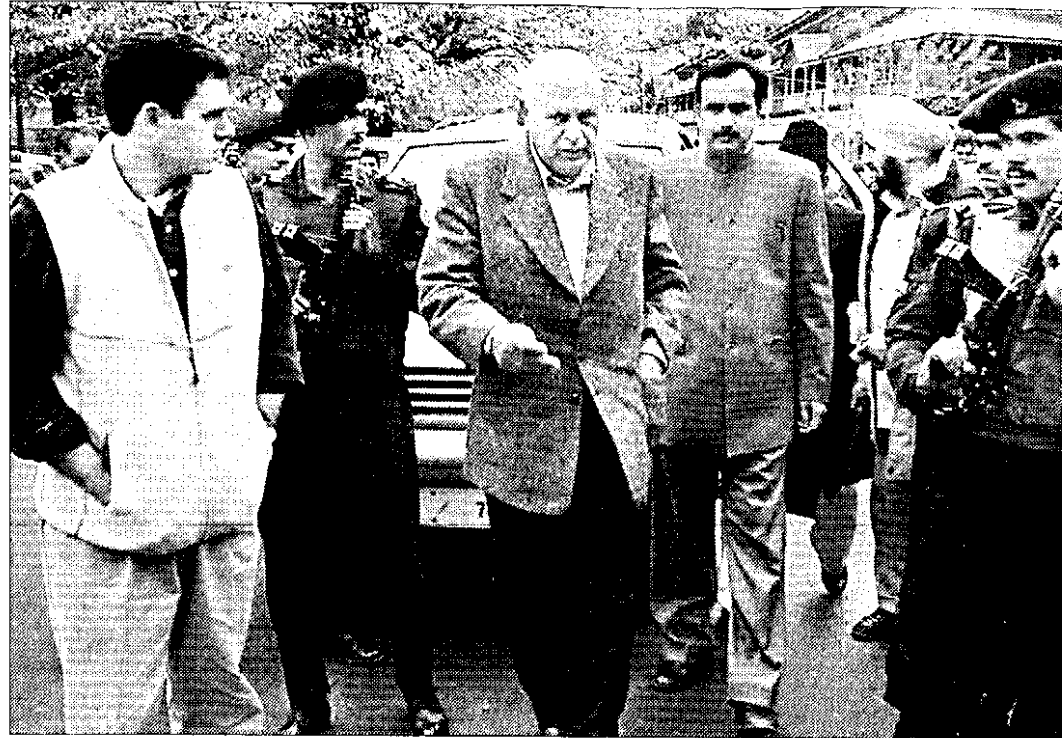
Senior NC leader Ghulam Mohiuddin Shah, however, said it was constitutional duty of the Governor to invite his party to form the Government. Asked if the NC would stake claim, Shah evaded a direct answer, but said if Panther's Party can stake claim with just four MLAs, "why shouldn't we? We have 28 members."

He indicated that his party was in touch with the Independents. "Many of them are our rebel members. After all they are our men," he said.

And the Independents too are thinking twice in view of the fissures between the PDP and the Congress over the Chief Minister's post and other contentious issues like disbanding of the Special Operation Group, annulment of Pota, release of militants and withdrawal of the Disturbed Areas Act.

They would like now to wait instead of rushing to offer their support to any group. The Congress, according to sources, is willing to sit in the Opposition but will not compromise on issues that can affect its prospects in the nine States, including Gujarat, Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, where elections would be due over the next one year.

The PDP fears that if the party wilts under pressure from the Congress on these contentious issues it could lose the base it has built over the past three years. Party sources said the PDP would much rather sit in



Farooq Abdullah with son Omar before a crucial meeting of the NC working committee in Srinagar on Sunday.

the Opposition.

Today, the Governor in his communications to NC chief Omar Abdullah and his Congress and PDP counterparts Ghulam Nabi Azad and Mufti Mohammad Sayeed had observed that time was of paramount importance as the current Assembly's life was expir-

ing on the 17th of this month.

There was a constitutional need to form the Government before that as the State might otherwise come under Governor's rule, Saxena added.

He has already had talks with legal experts regarding Government formation and the alternatives open to him if no party or

group comes forward with adequate numbers to stake a claim.

But the sources stressed that this must not be seen as an initiative to ask any of the three parties to form the Government. "These are exploratory talks he wants to have with leaders of the three main parties," Raj Bhawan sources told *Hindustan Times*.

# BJP walks tightrope on Vaiko arrest

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 5

THE BJP today reacted cautiously to the Tamil Nadu Government's decision to arrest MDMK leader Vaiko under the provisions of Pota.

Party spokesman Arun Jaitley reiterated Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani's line saying that the matter was a concern of the State Government and the Centre here had no role to play. He, however, added that a mere statement or speech without any other accompanying facts did not "warrant" the use of Pota.

Jaitley said Vaiko in his subsequent statements had clarified that he had made the remarks supporting LTTE in the context of the condition of Tamils in Sri Lanka and not with reference to Tamil Nadu.

"The provisions of Pota are very clear as to who comes under its purview and who does not. It is now for the investigating agencies to determine, on the basis of available evidence, as to whether or not Vaiko's remarks invite action under Pota," the party spokesman emphasised. The BJP obviously does not wish to antagonise AIADMK chief Jayalalithaa on the issue, as she has offered crucial support to it on several issues in Parliament.

Tamil Nadu BJP general secretary L Ganesan, however, said though his party ideologically differed with the MDMK on LTTE, it would support Vaiko within the parameters of law, since he had stood by the BJP and the NDA during difficult times.

Meanwhile, the Congress has termed MDMK chief Vaiko's stand on the terrorist outfit as a "huge irregularity" and supported Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa's views in this context.

Replying to queries on the Congress stand on issuing war-



AFP PHOTO  
A man walks by a poster of Vaiko in Chennai on Friday.

rants against Vaiko for his recent "pro-LTTE" comments at a public meeting, party spokesman S Jaipal Reddy said: "Our views on Vaiko are no different from that of Jayalalithaa."

Terming his reaction as purely "political", Reddy said the Congress has not taken any position on the applicability of Pota. "We are not the people to take a legalistic view," he said, while evading the question whether the party supported selective use of the draconian law. However, he reminded that the Congress had vehemently opposed the legislation even during the joint sitting of both Houses of Parliament.

After a meeting of the party's top leaders, the MDMK reiterated its support for the LTTE's struggle for the Tamils. It said the FIR against Vaiko was aimed at diverting people's attention from the failure of the Jayalalithaa Government in solving the people's problems. Party chairman L Ganesan said the MDMK's support to the LTTE was for its struggle in Sri Lanka and "if they take up arms in India we'll be the first to oppose them."

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

6 JUL 2002

## No role for 'observers': Omar

By Amit Baruah <sup>10.1</sup> <sup>9/8</sup>

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 8.** The Minister of State for External Affairs, Omar Abdullah, today said "observers" were free to travel to Jammu and Kashmir for the Assembly elections and draw their own conclusions about the polls. They would, however, not have any formal role.

Speaking to this correspondent today, Mr. Abdullah said the international interest in the elections was an indicator of the "intensive diplomatic activity" that had been going on from South Block to inform the international community about the relevance of India's position on the polls.

Downplaying the international angle, he said that at the end of the day no matter what the international community may or may not say, these were internal Indian elections. "They might have important international implications, but they still are our domestic elections. We have to handle them that way."

Asked about the outside presence during the polls, he said: "I expect to have a much higher presence of media... given the kind of statements that have emerged from London, Washington and other capitals." Mr. Abdullah said these "observers" were free to come on tourist visas, have a look at the election and draw their own conclusions. There will, he said, be a presence of most of the major embassies in Kashmir during the polls.

On the issue of Governor's rule being imposed before the elections, the National Conference chief said that if the Hurriyat announced that it was ready to contest the polls under Governor's

rule then he had "no problem" and would take the matter to his party. Asked whether he would be moving to Srinagar after the polls, Mr. Abdullah said his name had been circulating as a candidate but no decision had been taken so far.

Later, addressing a meet-the-press function organised by the Indian Women's Press Corps, he said the Jethmalani initiative to discuss the Kashmir issue was a "little late" in coming. He said international pressure was being brought to bear on the Hurriyat not to issue a poll boycott call while the Pakistan-based United Jihad Council was being told not to scuttle the poll process. The State Government, he said, wanted the deployment of more forces, but did not want the Army to be moved in from the Line of Control as this would send a wrong message to Pakistan about meeting India's core concerns about ending cross-border terrorism.

He said the next round of talks between the National Conference and the BJP leader, Mr. Arun Jaitley, would be held shortly. Mr. Jaitley, he said, would visit Srinagar.

About the National Conference Government, he said it was not a "perfect one", but there was a sea change in the law and order situation. Asked about his not being "in touch" with Kashmir, Mr. Abdullah shot back that the coming elections would demonstrate whether he was "in touch" or not. Stating that he was not prone to making false promises or tall claims, Mr. Abdullah pointed to his security restrictions as far as going to the people was concerned. It was, he said, a stark choice between staying alive and staying among the people.

# Omar accuses RSS, VHP of toeing Pakistan line

New Delhi  
7 JULY

Newly-appointed president of National Conference Omar Abdullah on Sunday asked organisations like the RSS and VHP to stop toeing Pakistani line by favouring division of Jammu and Kashmir and said such a stand would have international repercussions.

"We have to be very cautious while dealing with Jammu and Kashmir. Such statements implied that the RSS and VHP were actually following the two-nation theory of Mohammed Ali Jinnah," Mr Omar said.

Mr Omar, who is the minister of state for external affairs, said his party was not against healthy opposition. "Opposition on genuine matters always acts as a catalyst in speedy development, but opposition for the sake of opposition has always been disastrous," the Union minister said. He said such statements about the division of the state should be viewed as a conspiracy against the sovereignty of the country.

He said his party had been struggling for the last six years to bring the state to normalcy and instead of extending a helping hand, organisations are issuing such statements.



**PARADISE LOST:** Shikaras await passengers on the banks of Dal Lake in Srinagar on Sunday. The boats remain mostly idle as tourists have avoided Kashmir since insurgency began in 1989. — AFP

Talking on autonomy, Mr Omar said: "My party is firm on the idea of more powers to the state. We are not rigid to a particular position like pre-1953 but would prefer a healthy discussion on the issue with the Centre that could eventually lead to a solution." On human right violations in the state by the security agencies, Mr Omar said he was in touch with the state administration and police on the issue. "Human rights is a major issue for my party and we will leave no stone unturned to address the issue," he said and added "some plans are being worked out, which will

be shared with the press once they were formalised."

On his plans to revamp the party and enforce some organisational changes, he said: "As of now nothing drastic is going to take place but some disciplinary action might be taken against some party workers."

Amidst growing threat perception to his life from Pakistan-backed militants, Mr Omar said: "National Conference is a party, which has seen its cadres being wiped out by militants off and on. I am not scared of that. I will continue to lead my workers from the front as before." — AFP

9 JUL 2002

**The Economic Times**



Farooq hands baton to Omar

# Crown with cry of autonomy

FROM MUKHTAR AHMAD

Srinagar, June 23: The crown passed from a father to a son for the second time in Kashmir's first family as Farooq Abdullah handed the baton to son Omar in the race to acquire autonomy for the state, but the 21 years between one coronation and another showed up a political dynasty in unkind light.

"There will be no peace in the state till you (the Centre) give autonomy to Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh," Farooq, anointing his 32-year-old son the next National Conference chief, said.

Taking charge months before the state goes to polls, Omar vowed to soldier on, declaring that autonomy was not an empty slogan.

Farooq hugged his son repeatedly and placed his black cap on Omar's head. Outside the heavily-guarded Sher-i-Kashmir cricket stadium, two rifle grenades fired by militants exploded.

In 1981, at Farooq's coronation by Sheikh Abdullah, people had danced on the streets of Srinagar through the day and night. Today's ceremony was attended by 8,000 delegates and many, if not the majority, of them were from outside the Valley.

Twenty-one years ago, people showered petals on new leader Farooq along the route from Mujahid Manzil, the party headquarters in downtown Srinagar, to Iqbal Park. Ringed by the iron curtain of security, Omar was off limits to the people.

To National Conference leaders, it was still a historic occasion. And the party was doing its



Farooq puts his cap on son Omar's head at the ceremony. (Reuters)

best to rediscover its moorings as top ministers, bureaucrats, police officers and delegates sang in one voice: "*Lehraa ai Kashmir kay Jhanday* (Flutter high the flag of Kashmir)" after Farooq hoisted the party's red flag emblazoned with a plough.

The highly emotional Kashmiri song also conveyed the message that the party had not given up its demand for autonomy. Over a sea of red flags being waved by the gathering, the song rose: "*Harso lehray har dam lehray taha gayamat paiham lahray* (Flutter O Kashmir flag in all directions, all the time and continue to flutter till doomsday)."

Later, the National Conference passed a resolution saying the Centre's "unilateral and arbitrary" rejection of the autonomy resolution passed by the Assembly in 2000 had sent "negative signals about the legitimacy of our democratic system".

Farooq told the delegates:

"We were promised autonomy and former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao even went to the extent of saying that the 'sky was the limit'."

It was a reminder to his ally in Delhi, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, that a Congress Prime Minister had gone a long way beyond what this government was willing to concede. The Vajpayee government had dismissed the autonomy demand, but later indicated that it was willing to discuss the issue.

There has been speculation about Farooq bowing out of politics altogether and the chief minister strengthened such expectations as he bade farewell to the delegates, saying "*khoda hafiz*" thrice as tears streaked down his cheeks.

He leaves behind a legacy Omar might find more a burden than a blessing with the National Conference having hit the nadir of its popularity.

THE TELEGRAPH

THE TELEGRAPH

24 JUL 2002

# Centre ignoring Farooq: Omar

Press Trust of India

SRINAGAR, June 21. — Two days ahead of becoming the National Conference president, Mr Omar Abdullah today criticised the Centre for "ignoring" Mr Farooq Abdullah's vice-presidential aspirations and treating "his father shabbily". "To accept that the man will take anything that you throw at him like a grateful dog waiting for scrap is to add salt to the wounds you (the Centre) have inflicted."

The remarks were made at an extraordinary session of the party.

Mr Abdullah said his father had been "used" during times, when the situation was difficult. "He represented the country at the Geneva Commission where he negated the Pakistani propaganda single handedly."

After the nomination of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, Mr Farooq Abdullah had himself said that his chances to become the Vice-President were bleak.

The BJP today took exception to Mr Omar Abdullah's criticism of the Centre and said Mr Abdullah was always given due importance as a senior leader.

"As a minister, he (Mr Omar Abdullah) should not have made such a statement. Rather he should have discussed this in the Cabinet or at the NDA meeting," the BJP spokesman said.

**Cong reaction:** The Congress today said Mr Omar Abdullah's remarks were "unfortunate" as these had come at a time when the country was "unitedly" waging a war against cross-border terrorism, adds a report from Delhi.

22 JUN 2002

THE STATESMAN

## Farooq resigns as NC chief

By Shujaat Bukhari

SRINAGAR JUNE 12. The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, has resigned as president of National Conference (NC) clearing the decks for the election of the Union Minister of State for External Affairs, Omar Abdullah, as the new president.

Dr. Abdullah, who took over as the party president in 1980 from his father, the late Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, tendered his resignation to the party general secretary, Sheikh Nazir Ahmed. "I have accepted his resignation and the senior vice president of the party, Chuni Lal Khajuria, has taken over as the working president," Mr. Nazir said. The election process has begun and the party presi-

dent, in accordance with the constitution, has to step down 15 days before a new president is elected. The senior NC leader and Housing Minister, Mohiuddin Shah, has been appointed the Returning Officer.

Dr. Abdullah in his resignation letter said: "In the light of the decision taken by the party working committee in April that the leadership be transferred to new generation, I hereby tender my resignation respecting the decision. It is, therefore, requested that I may be relieved of my responsibilities as president of the party."

Mr. Nazir, however, took exception to reports in a section of media that Mr. Omar was being "crowned" as the party president.

"It is not a coronation cere-

mony but a democratic process which is going to take place in accordance with the direction of the Election Commission of India," he said, adding that the NC was a recognised party and "we have to follow the rules and elect our president under the relevant sections of our party constitution."

About 8,000 general council members and delegates will attend the convention when the election will take place and June 23 has been notified as the date for the elections. Mr. Omar will be filing his nomination papers later this week and is likely to be elected unopposed. He, however, will continue as a Central Minister as his father as Chief Minister, at least till the elections to Assembly are held in October, party sources said.

THE HINDU

13 JUN 2002

## NC looking for better representation at the Centre, says Omar

NEW DELHI: Minister of state for external affairs, Omar Abdullah, on Sunday justified his resignation offer on the Gujarat issue, but said it should not be seen as an end of ties between his party, the National Conference, and the NDA, as his party was in fact pressing for better representation at the centre.

"In the NDA, we are working under a common minimum programme and any issue beyond that has to be weighed by each individual constituent of the alliance at their own level," Abdullah said.

On the perception that his resignation was a drama to address his political rivals in Jammu and Kashmir, he said "In politics, critics will always exist. But I only wish if there would be constructive criticism. "My resignation was not linked to parting of ways with the NDA government, it was to register our party's dissent over the continued violence in the state," Abdullah said.

However, being a part of the government and still abstaining from the "vote did not go well with me and hence I offered my resignation, not once but twice."

Abdullah made it clear that even if his resignation was accepted, his party would continue to remain in the NDA. "In fact, our party which has five members in the Lok Sabha, has been asking for a better

representation in the alliance government at the centre."

Asked to confirm reports that his resignation offer had been turned down, Abdullah said "there has been no official communication about it from the Prime Minister's Office so far." However, highly placed sources in the PMO said his resignation had not been accepted by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. The sources said neither Vajpayee nor home minister L. K. Advani, who quoted Abdullah twice in his speech during the debate on Gujarat in the Lok Sabha, had favoured his resignation from the cabinet.

Abdullah, who is likely to take over the reins of his party later this month, is also of a firm opinion that he could be holding the dual charge as party president as well as a minister in the Vajpayee cabinet.

"We are from a state where Pakistan-sponsored proxy war is on for one decade. Any government in my state will have to join hands with the centre in order to give concerted response to our neighbour who is not willing to give peace a chance," Abdullah said.

Asked whether he could do justice to both sides, Abdullah said "I may not hold a strenuous portfolio like external affairs, may be some other, but I will also function as the president of the National Conference. (PTI)

## 11-10 Omar's Dilemma 2005

Over the last two and a half years, Omar Abdullah has emerged as one of the more acceptable faces in the NDA government. Young, dynamic and articulate, he discharged his duties with some measure of competence. However, it wasn't his competence alone that contributed to his rising stock in the government; his minority status — he is a Kashmiri Muslim — also played a part. As the "minority face" of the NDA, Mr Abdullah was the perfect foil to the government's Hindutva predilections. In his capacity as minister of state for external affairs, he has participated in various international forums (whether in the Muslim majority West Asia or the Christian West) to present and defend the government's secular-liberal credentials. But on Tuesday, before the crucial vote on Gujarat, Mr Abdullah turned his "liberal face" away from the NDA, ostensibly because his "conscience" prevented him from defending the government in the one forum where it really matters — the Lok Sabha. Sceptics would, of course, argue that moral imperatives aside, Mr Abdullah could not have voted with the government, or indeed even against it, without hurting the electoral prospects of his party, the National Conference. With assembly elections less than six months away in his Muslim majority home state of Jammu and Kashmir, voting alongside the NDA would have sealed the fate of his party. Apart from exposing the NC to the obvious charge of betraying Muslims, it would have ironically enhanced the BJP's image in the Hindu majority Jammu region, where the latter has been supporting the demand for separate statehood and where the NC is just about establishing a foothold.

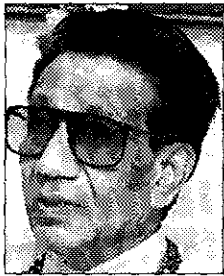
Conversely, supporting the opposition's broad-based motion that sought to censure the NDA for not providing "security to minorities all over the country" would have been equally problematic for the NC as its own human rights record in J&K is dubious. Moreover, the NC's main political opponent, the Hurriyat Conference, would have projected the party's indirect vote in support of the opposition as an indirect admission of guilt, and called for the NC government's dismissal for colluding with a Hindutva party to complete the "unfinished agenda of partition". Little wonder then that Mr Abdullah, in his criticism of the NDA in Parliament, tried to pre-empt the Hurriyat by invoking Pakistan's ISI, saying "If Godhra was the ISI's doing, then the reaction in Gujarat would have surpassed even their expectations". Indeed, given the NC's reliance on the moderate Muslim votebank, this last factor, more than any other, would have convinced Mr Abdullah to abstain from voting in the Lok Sabha. Even so, his symbolic act of shutting the door on the NDA government may not have helped him open a "window of opportunity" in the state. Already, the opposition in Srinagar is accusing the NC of "opportunism". It argues that, by not supporting the censure motion, Mr Abdullah has done little to redeem the NC's image. Indeed, by taking a stand and voting for the motion — notwithstanding the risks involved — the NC could have at least signalled to the people that it was ready to answer for its many misdemeanours and was keen to start afresh in the state. Whether in or out of the NDA, it's clear that Mr Abdullah will have his work cut out when he formally leads the NC to the polls in J&K.

# Maharashtra govt files case against Sena supremo

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 17 OCTOBER

**M**AHARASHTRA on Thursday seemed to be spinning towards a fresh bout of law and order problems as the state police slapped a case against Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray, accusing him of fomenting communal disturbance. "A case under section 153(A) of the IPC has been registered against Thackeray at the Shivaji Park police station," minister of state for home Kripashanker Singh confirmed in Mumbai on Thursday.

Mr Thackeray, addressing a Dussehra rally on Tuesday, had called for the setting up of "Hindu suicide squads" to tackle cross-border terrorism. If convicted, Mr Thackeray could find himself behind bars for three years, or be slapped with a fine, or face both punishments. Maharashtra deputy CM Chagan Bhujbal,



THACKERAY ROARS

18/11  
who also heads the home ministry, said here on Thursday. Copies of the tape, he added, have been sent to the Centre.

As news of the police case against Mr Thackeray spread, party leaders trooped to the Sena chief's residence in Mumbai for a closed-door meeting. After the meeting, leader of the opposition Narayan Rane told media persons that the government was "harassing" Mr Thackeray. He justified Mr Thackeray's speech, saying there was nothing wrong in what he said. "If the government takes any action, they'll have to pay a price; the Shiv Sena will launch an agitation..." he said.

His party colleague and Rajya Sabha member Sanjay Nirupam described the government's decision as "politically motivated". He warned that the party would fight the case legally and, if necessary, would even take to the streets.

*The Economic Times*

18 NOV 2002

# Sena land sires suicide camps

ANAND SOONDAS

Mumbai, Nov. 14: At least two organisations -- if not sponsored, then "inspired", by the Shiv Sena -- have sprung up to train suicide squads of youths from the majority community.

Some time ago, Sena chief Bal Thackeray had warned of forming such squads. A retired army officer, Lt Gen. P.N. Hoon, former commander-in-chief, Western Command, organiser of a training camp, said the instruction had come from Thackeray.

The Sena quickly distanced itself, saying "orders never came from Balasaheb".

Hoon said that, after the 15-day camp at Badlapur in Thane, he would move to Chandigarh and Jammu and then to other places. There was "tremendous enthusiasm among the young men and they have signed certificates saying they will lay down their lives for the country, if needed", he said.

The youths have been trained to use swords, lathis and guns, besides being given a crash course in karate.

Another retired armyman, Colonel Jayant Chitale, has enlisted around 50 young men for his suicide squad at Ambernath in Pune. Chitale said his was a private enterprise and that Thackeray's idea of forming suicide squads was only an inspiration.

"Thackeray only articulated what was in my mind for a long time," Chitale said.

"My Hindustan Auna Ghatki Pathak (Hindustan Suicide Squad) is made up of people who have volunteered to sacrifice their lives for the sake of the country. They belong to no party."

Sena leader Raj Thackeray said the camps had no links with the Sena and there was little it could do if the organisers had been inspired by Balasaheb.

The Maharashtra government has started the process of arresting Hoon and the group of people he has trained, and the legalities of proceeding against Chitale's "voluntary and private enterprise" are being examined.

Chitale charges Rs 2,000 for enrolment and the youths have to sign a bond saying they are willing to die for the country. After the 15-day course, the would-be suicide squad members get certificates, saying they are good enough to die for the country.

Chitale is not afraid of government action. He said he would wait another month to see the "progress" of cross-border terrorism. "Then, we will start our action and devise ways of infiltrating our suicide squads into Pakistan."

THE TELEGRAPH

15 NOV 2002

## SHIV SENA CHIEF STATES HIS FUTURE COURSE OF ACTION

# Thackeray blames NDA of non-performance...

19/10  
Our Mumbai Bureau  
18 OCTOBER

SHIV Sena chief Bal Thackeray on Friday warned the NDA government at the Centre that it should consider issues raised by the Sena or "be prepared to face the consequences. I have my limits... If they are crossed then I will come out in my full colours," Thackeray said at a crowded media gathering at his residence on Friday. "I have chalked out the future course of action in this regard," he said but refused to divulge details.

Mr Thackeray was reacting to questions that the NDA had not paid heed to his opinions on disinvestment, proposed labour reforms and withdrawing armed forces from the Indo-Pak border.

Mr Thackeray said the Centre should ban resale of disinvested property at least for 10 years.



Bal Thackeray at a press meet in Mumbai on Friday. — Reuters

Lashing out at the disinvestment policy saying: "it has become a business" and cited the purchase of Hotel Centaur by the Sahara Group for Rs 132 crore from Batra Hospitality, which had bought the entity for Rs 83 crore.

Those purchasing public sector entities should not be allowed to sell them for at least ten years," he said. The Sena chief said he was airing his views on issues "keeping the national interest in mind" and will not wait for the Centre's response. "I am not speaking for the Centre to respond. It is out of my love for this country... I speak for my Shivsainiks," he said adding, failure of the Centre to act on his suggestions did not "dishearten" him.

Reiterating that the Centre was doing little to stamp out terrorism, he said "their foreign tours, symposiums and seminars are going on. But there seems to be no action against terrorism." Asked about Lok Sabha Speaker Manohar Joshi's statement that Sena ministers will resign from the NDA if action was initiated against their leader, he said: "Joshi is first a Sena leader... What he says is the party's policy."

## ...not to seek anticipatory bail in criminal case

Our Mumbai Bureau  
18 OCTOBER

CHALLENGING the state government by reiterating his call to form Hindu suicide squads, Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray on Friday reiterated that he would not seek anticipatory bail in the criminal case registered against him. "Let them take whatever action they want," he said.

An unfazed Thackeray told a press conference that there was nothing objectionable in calling for formation of suicide squads to fight terrorism. He also denied

that his remarks were directed against Indian Muslims.

"If they were objectionable, I would never have uttered those words. I fully stand by my statement. It is (chief minister) Deshmukh and not (home minister) Bhujbal who is responsible for initiating action against me," the Sena supremo said.

The Maharashtra government on Thursday filed a case against Mr Thackeray for his allegedly inflammatory speech made during the October 15 rally, during which he had asked Hindus to form "suicide squads" to fight terrorism and asked for

"pro-Pakistan" and "Bangladeshi Muslims" to be thrown out of the country.

Clarifying that his statement was not against the minorities but against those who were "pro-Pakistan," Mr Thackeray said: "I have always accepted Muslims here as the citizens of India but am against those who are pro-Pakistan. I was only speaking against terrorism." Mr Thackeray said, adding sarcastically that the government would have also charged Mahatma Gandhi for his "do-or-die" call, had they been in power at that moment in history.

File 2... Time: 9 OCT 2002



H10-1  
18/10

## Case filed against Thackeray

P.P. Ghosh

By Mahesh Vijapurkar

**MUMBAI, OCT. 17.** The Maharashtra Government today filed a case against the Shiv Sena chief, Bal Thackeray, for his public exhortation to Hindus to "confront Islam and also form suicide squads" to counter what he called "Islamic terrorism".

The case has been registered under Sections 153 and 153-A of the IPC which are not bailable and are punishable with a prison term of up to three years or a fine or both. The moment this was made known to the media by the Deputy Chief Minister, Chhagan Bhujbal, the Shiv Sena's leadership gathered at Mr. Thackeray's residence and issued abrasive threats such as "We will not allow the Government to function if he is touched."

Mr. Bhujbal, who said he would send a

copy of the audiotape of Mr. Thackeray's speech to the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, said, "He should know what his ally is saying about him and the Centre. Further, what Mr. Thackeray says has nationwide consequence. It is for the Prime Minister to draw his inferences."

The IPC provisions are attracted because the police, prima facie, see a clear step towards promoting hatred between the communities with its potential consequences to the law and order in the State.

Mr. Bhujbal insists that "the police felt there was a case and registered one. It will later come to the Government for sanction and then alone I will apply my mind. The police are now doing their duty, nothing more."

He conceded that Mr. Thackeray normally spoke each line "only after consulting his

lawyers" and entered caveats such as "anti-national" while speaking about Muslims to escape hassles, but "this time we have to see how he has worded his speech."

Audiotapes, videotapes and even the extensive transcripts from the police's stenographers, who normally cover sensitive political events to keep track of the speeches, would come in handy to determine the outcome. "The police have only registered a case. No more," Mr. Bhujbal said. But the Sena views it differently.

The former Sena Chief Minister, Narayan Rane, said there was "nothing wrong in the speech." The Sena MP, Sanjay Nirupam, felt that it was an exhortation to Hindus to protect themselves, not a communal attack on Muslims; it was an "appeal to the people to protect themselves as the Government has failed in dealing with terrorism".

THE HINDU

1 8 OCT 2002

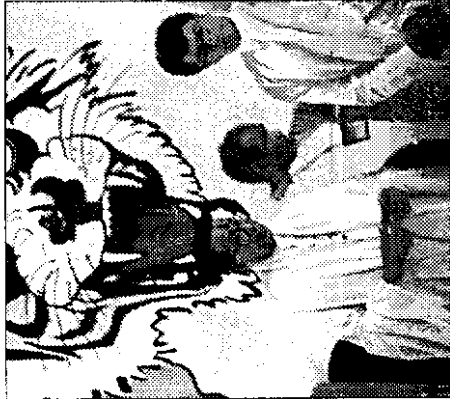
# Opposition wants Shiv Sena derecognised

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 16 OCTOBER

SHIV Sena chief Bal Thackeray's open call to his party activists to take to arms "for the cause of Hindu Rashtra" has the entire Opposition fuming. The Congress and the CPI(M) on Wednesday responded to the Sena supremo's Dussehra rally speech by demanding that the party be derecognised by the EC. The two principal Opposition parties shielded away from calling for his arrest for his allegedly inflammatory speech, preferring, instead, to demand proper legal action.

Mr Thackeray has already been disenfranchised by the Election Commission for his provocative speeches made during the post-Mumbai blasts riots of 1993. The Opposition now wants the EC to take cognisance of the Sena supremo's Dussehra speech as also the signed article published earlier in the party mouthpiece, Saamna, and withdraw the recognition accorded to Shiv Sena.

"Mr Thackeray has broken his own record of fire-eating fanaticism through his latest Dussehra speech," Congress spokesman S. Jaipal Reddy said here this afternoon, adding: "In doing so, he has not only all the forms and norms of public discourse, but has given an open call for the subversion of the Constitution. He has tried to incite people to take to terrorism by forming suicide squads."



THACKERAY: CALL OF THE TIGER

The Congress spokesman argued that Mr Thackeray was not only an influential individual, but also the formal head of a political party. "We may recall that in order to be recognised as a party, every political outfit needs to give a formal undertaking before the EC that it'll abide by every basic feature of the Constitution," Mr Reddy pointed out.

He also said: "The rule of law is perhaps the most important feature of the Constitution. By asking peo-

ple to take to arms, Mr Thackeray has in fact violated the basic feature of the Constitution.

"The Congress spokesman, however, found it difficult to answer queries as to what was holding the Maharashtra government, led by the Congress-NCP alliance, from ordering the Sena chief's outright arrest. More importantly, why was the Congress merely sticking to its demand for seeking the Shiv Sena's de-recognition as a political party?"

"The Maharashtra chief minister is in touch with us. He has told us that the state government is examining Mr Thackeray's speech closely, and will take necessary steps after examining his speech from all legal angles," the Congress spokesman said.

The CPI(M) also demanded that the Maharashtra government file against a case against the Shiv Sena chief for inciting communal hatred against religious minorities.

It also asked the Vajpayee government not to remain silent but denounce Mr Thackeray's speech made yesterday during the annual Dussehra rally calling upon Hindus to form suicide squads.

"The Maharashtra government must act immediately to show that Mr Thackeray is not above the law. It must file a case against him for inciting hatred against religious minorities," the party's politburo said in a statement issued here on Wednesday.

## BJP rejects Sena chief's suggestion

New Delhi  
16 OCTOBER



Jaitley

BJP on Wednesday rejected Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray's suggestion for formation of suicide squads by Hindus to

take on the menace of terrorism, saying it was for the government to tackle the problem.

"While we do appreciate the anger and annoyance of Indians, the Government of India is systematically moving on the matter and that is the real answer," party spokesman Arun Jaitley told reporters here. Mr Thackeray said: "If such suicide squads are formed then we can take on perpetrators of violence."

# Police to file case against Thackeray

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** The Mumbai police has decided to register a case against Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray for promoting communal disharmony. Mr Thackeray's speech at the Sena's Dussera rally on Tuesday has attracted the charge, it is learnt.

Action against Mr Thackeray will be taken under Section 153 (A) of the Indian Penal Code, according to sources. The section deals with offences relating to the promotion of enmity between different groups on grounds of religion, race and language, among others, and with acts prejudicial to the maintenance of harmony. Mr Thackeray reportedly made remarks against a particular community.

Deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal had said earlier that the tapes of Mr Thackeray's Dussera speech would be sent to the Union government for an assessment on whether the contents of the address were

provocative.

Mr Thackeray's criticism of Islamic terrorism seems to have activated the state home department which Mr Bhujbal heads. The Sena chief's 45-minute address was an acerbic indictment of cross-border terrorism. The state home department is also closely examining the contents of the Thackeray speech to ascertain whether it was communally "inflammable".

Speaking to this paper, Mr Bhujbal said the need to take note of the speech was felt in view of the Sena chief's exhortation to his followers to set up suicide squads to tackle cross-border terrorism.

In his speech, the Sena chief, in his characteristic style, poured ridicule on the Centre for not taking stern measures to curb terrorism. "Extremism should breed among Hindus as well. If we do not wake up from our slumber, we will be annihilated in our sleep," Mr Thackeray had said at the Tuesday rally.

98.850

## NAVEEN PATNAIK'S TRAVAILS

19-10  
29/9

THE SPLIT IN the Biju Janata Dal (BJD), after at least half a dozen members of the Lok Sabha belonging to the party decided to form a separate group, was indeed in the making ever since Naveen Patnaik took over the party after his father, Biju Patnaik's demise. Apart from the fact that Mr. Naveen Patnaik was a novice on the political scene, his anointment as party chief was essentially an outcome of behind-the-scenes manipulations carried out by a whole lot of young leaders (now leading the revolt) who constituted the organisational muscle of the party. Even when Biju Patnaik was alive, there were instances when a section of the second generation leaders in the fold had begun asserting their right to lead the party. They, however, resisted the temptation to part ways only because they were aware of Biju Patnaik's mass appeal in Orissa and his stature as a veteran on the national political scene. They had also benefited, at that stage, from the experience of Rabi Ray (undoubtedly a leader with a long record in public life). They all had watched from close quarters, the marginalisation of Mr. Ray on the State's political scene after he broke ranks with Biju Patnaik. The two prominent second rung leaders in the BJD — Bijoy Mohapatra and Nalini K. Mohanty — could not have remained mute spectators when Mr. Naveen Patnaik captured the organisation they had built over the years.

In this sense, the split in the BJD has nothing to do with any kind of ideological differences. The two young turks, Mr. Mohapatra and Mr. Mohanty, who are the force behind the six Lok Sabha members who have raised the banner of revolt against Mr. Naveen Patnaik, may be known to have opposed the BJD's alliance with the BJP in the State. However, this is not the issue leading to the split. This has been revealed so clearly by the fact that the Mohapatra-Mohanty duo has been, without any

hesitation, working along with Dilip Ray, who has been innocent of political convictions even when he was among the inner circle of Biju Patnaik. Mr. Dilip Ray, it may be recalled, had managed to garner votes cutting across party barriers to enter the Rajya Sabha in May 2002, causing ripples in the BJD, the Congress and the BJP then. While it remains to be seen as to whether the rebel leaders would succeed in their stated mission — to unseat Mr. Patnaik from the Chief Minister's post — with Mr. Dilip Ray on their side now, they are no longer short of resources to carry on with their project.

The split in the parliamentary party is significant for another reason too. The rebel faction in the Lok Sabha now consists of MPs from across Orissa. Apart from Prabhat Samantray, veteran trade union leader with a following among the workers in and around the Paradip port as well as in the Kalabandi belt, the rebels have been able to draw into their fold Prasanna Acharya from the Sambalpur region. Thus, it appears that the BJD organisation, built upon the strong anti-Congress legacy dating back to the socialist party days and maturing into a political platform in the form of the Janata Party (around Biju Patnaik), seems to have passed over to the rebels now. Mr. Naveen Patnaik is in serious trouble due to a combination of these reasons. A majority of those around him in the party (and in the Cabinet) are those who were marginalised at various stages after charges of corruption were made against them. Damodar Rout, for instance, seems to be his trusted aide now. It also remains to be seen as to how the BJP's State unit, now part of the ruling coalition, is going to react to the crisis in the BJD. Whether all this would lead to a change of leadership or not, the split, without doubt, will mark the beginning of a new political alignment in Orissa ahead of the elections to the State Assembly in 2004.

24 SEP 2002

THE HINDU

# Geete will replace Prabhu as Union power minister

By Ambarish Mishra  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray is in no mood to pay heed to the BJP central leadership's suggestion that Union minister for power Suresh Prabhu be allowed to remain in the Atal Behari Vajpayee government, according to Sena sources.

An official announcement of the acceptance of Mr Prabhu's resignation will be made by the PMO on Wednesday, it is learnt. "This time around, Balasaheb will not listen to the BJP. He wants Mr Prabhu to quit and that's that," a senior Sena leader told TNN on Tuesday. Last week, Mr Prabhu had put in his papers following the Sena chief's instructions.

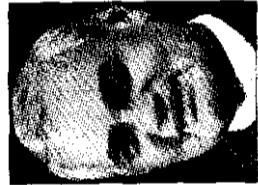
The real reason appears to be that Mr Prabhu had failed to collect funds for the party. Mr Thackeray had recently stated with characteristic sarcasm that Mr Prabhu was,



Bal Thackeray



Suresh Prabhu



A.B. Vajpayee

like the late Rajiv Gandhi, trying to be Mr Clean. Union minister of state for finance Anant Geete will be Mr Prabhu's successor.

However, Mr Geete said he was not aware of any move to make him the new power minister. But he added that he

would accept any responsibility bestowed on him by Mr Thackeray. "If Shiv Sena supremo Bal Thackeray thinks he should give me anything more important, I will take it as an honour."

On Prabhu's resignation as power minister, Mr Geete said he was not aware of it. Asked whether it was true that there had been a misunderstanding between Mr Prabhu and Mr Thackeray, he said every Shiv Sena member obeyed what Mr Thackeray said.

Mr Thackeray will choose between Sena MPs Anand Adsl and Eknath Thakur as the new incumbent for the office of the minister of state for finance, it is learnt. The name of party MP Subodh Mohite is also doing the rounds as Mr Geete's successor. The other aspirant is Sanjay Nirupam, but a section of the Sena is vehemently opposed to him. Over the last several months, the Sena's inner circle were agog with speculation that the party chief wanted Mr Prabhu to quit the Union cabinet.

21 AUG 2002

## No change in our stand: TDP

MS By Our Special Correspondent *AD-1*

HYDERABAD, MAY 1. The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister and Telugu Desam Party president, N. Chandrababu Naidu, says that his party will continue to press for the resignation of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi.

Talking to mediapersons who met him at NTR Bhavan here on Wednesday, Mr. Naidu said there was no change in the party's stand on the issue, regardless of the defeat of the censure motion against the National Democratic Alliance Government in the Lok Sabha earlier in the day. He blamed the Opposition parties for not being serious enough and diverting the focus of the House proceedings from the issue at stake.

Mr. Naidu followed the better part of the marathon debate including the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's reply and was in regular touch

with his MPs. Party leaders admitted that it was a setback for them that the main demand — resignation of Mr. Modi — was not conceded.

However, the Prime Minister's announcement of the Rs. 150-crore package for the Gujarat victims was some consolation. The party had put forward four demands — resignation of Mr. Modi, restoration of normalcy and effective maintenance of law and order, rehabilitation of the victims and no snap elections in the riot-torn State.

*S.P.P. - NDA TDP*  
Barring the change of leadership in Gujarat, the other demands were more or less met, they said.

The Gujarat issue figured briefly at the Cabinet meeting today when Mr. Naidu is said to have explained to his colleagues the party's limitations and compulsions in dealing with a "friendly" Government at the Centre.

THE HINDU

2 MAY 2007

# It is a national issue, says TDP

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 30.** The Telugu Desam Party today reiterated its demand for a change of leadership in Gujarat and said the situation in the State had become a national issue since the incidents had spilled over to the other parts of the country.

"If it was a State issue, a general issue and not a national issue, why did it extend to other parts of the country?" the TDP Parliamentary Party leader, K. Yerran Naidu, said while participating in the Opposition-sponsored censure motion in the Lok Sabha.

The TDP leader's speech was heard with attention in which he reasserted the party's demand for removal of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, and emphasised that it was the duty of the Centre, under Article 355 of the Constitution, to issue proper directives if the life and property of the citizens was not adequately protected by a State Government.

He said while the TDP did not want to interfere in the affairs of another State, or say who should be its Chief Minister, but since the party was extending support to the Vajpayee Government at the Centre and saw the Gujarat situation as a national issue, it had raised the demand.

Similarly, he elaborated the reasons behind his party's opposition to holding Assembly elections in Gujarat, and also stressed on the urgent need for liberal relief and rehabilitation for the over 1.4-lakh inmates in various camps and other riot victims.

He said the TDP had "no lust

for power" and was keeping the secular fabric of the country intact without taking part in the NDA.

The TDP support to the NDA was on the basis of a common minimum agenda and reminded that even in the past it had asked the Gujarat Government to withdraw its circular permitting its employees to take part in RSS activities.

## Omar offers to quit

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, APRIL 30.** The National Democratic Alliance today received another jolt with an NDA constituent, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference, deciding to abstain from voting on the Opposition-sponsored censure motion on Gujarat in the Lok Sabha and its Minister, Omar Abdullah, offering to resign from the Vajpayee Government.

The National Conference move comes a day after the Lok Janshakti Party of Ram Vilas Paswan decided to support the motion and Mr. Paswan tendered his resignation from the Union Cabinet.

The decision was conveyed to the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, by the NC representatives, Mr. Abdullah, and the party's Lok Sabha leader, Ali Mohammed Naik.

Mr. Abdullah decided to resign since he felt that it was morally untenable to remain as a Minister after the NC's stand.

TDP

# We stand by our demand: Naidu

By Our Special Correspondent

**HYDERABAD, APRIL 20.** The Telugu Desam Party, a key ally of the BJP-led coalition at the Centre, has made it clear that there is no rethinking or softening of its demand for a change of leadership in Gujarat and that it would continue to press for it in Parliament.

"There is no change. As a party, our decision is one hundred per cent right, which is why our MPs are vigorously pressing for debate. The decision is not influenced by narrow political considerations but larger national interests", the TDP leader and Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N. Chandrababu Naidu, told party leaders.

Mr. Naidu addressed letters to the MLAs, zilla parishad chairpersons, elected leaders, district presidents and other key functionaries to provide "clarity" on the important issue. He is also sending letters to them spelling

out his stand on reforms, particularly in the power sector.

He noted that the TDP was the first to condemn both the Godhra carnage and the contin-

uing violence. When law and order was threatened, it was the duty of the Government to act firmly to restore confidence of all sections. Obviously this was

not done. The Gujarat Government could not also make good use of the Army and paramilitary assistance. Mr. Vajpayee's visit failed to boost people's confidence. The Gujarat violence had an impact on other parts of the country, including Andhra Pradesh, where it was controlled by timely action. It had also prevented "kar sevaks" going to Ayodhya for "shilanyas" in March. Unlike other parties "it was not hasty" in calling for Mr. Modi's replacement as it felt the restoration of normality and succour to the victims were more important. With the situation worsening there and the administration failing to inspire confidence, the party was convinced that a change of leadership was inevitable in the larger national interest. The party reiterated its demand for effective maintenance of law and order, bringing the guilty to book and rendering all help to the victims of violence.

## Fernandes claim denied

By Our Staff Reporter

**TUTICORIN, APRIL 20.** The AIADMK Parliamentary party leader, P.H. Pandian, today categorically denied the Defence Minister, George Fernandes' claim that he had "clarified" to the latter that the party supremo and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, had not made any demand for removal of Narendra Modi as Gujarat Chief Minister. Mr. Fernandes' remark was "totally false and mischievous," Mr. Pandian told The Hindu over telephone here.

"I am amazed to see the statement of the Defence Minister that I met him in New Delhi on Thursday and made the clarification," Mr. Pandian said and recalled that the AIADMK Parliamentary party had that day adopted a resolution endorsing Ms. Jayalalithaa's stand that Mr. Modi should step down, paving the way for a change of guard to ensure the restoration of normality in the State and that there was no need for advancing the Assembly elections. She had already instructed the party MPs to seek Mr. Modi's removal, Mr. Pandian pointed out.

21 APR 2002

THE HINDU



# Desam turns BJP's in-house adversary

9 P P  
TDP

## OUR BUREAU

April 15: The Telugu Desam today unfolded a ginger-group policy inside and outside Parliament, signalling its potential to become either a constant headache for the BJP-led government or a possible rallying point for rebellion.

The party joined the Opposition in both Houses in punching the government on the Gujarat violence and the Prime Minister's explosive statement in Goa.

In Hyderabad, Desam chief Chandrababu Naidu vowed to continue his fight for the removal of Narendra Modi in the interests of protecting "national pride and secular values". But Naidu declined to spell out his plan of action if the BJP continued to brush aside his demand.

Naidu's public comments — the first in three days — came after he tried in vain thrice today to speak to the Prime Minister. Sources said CPM leader H.S. Surjeet spoke to Naidu.

In Parliament, the Desam went all out to make a "statement". Desam MPs, led by Yerran Naidu in the Lok Sabha and Alladi P. Rajkumar in the Rajya Sabha, pitched in with the Opposition to derail business in both Houses by forcing two adjournments each.

The overnight shift in the political climate was evident as soon as the Lok Sabha assembled for question hour.

The Congress, after an initial bout of reluctance, started clamouring for a discussion on the Gujarat situation. The BJP members readily returned the fusillade, chanting "we want question hour". But, much to the discomfort of the BJP, Yerran Naidu sprang to his feet and echoed the Congress' cry. He, too, demanded suspension of question hour and a discussion on Gujarat.

The remaining allies seemed to draw comfort from the fact that the bolts keeping the government in place had not been totally unhinged. Samata Party

MPs kept their distance from the furor. So did Mamata Banerjee's Trinamul Congress.

In the Rajya Sabha, BJP member S.P. Gautam tried to prevail upon agitated Desam members but parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan asked him to hold back.

In the Andhra capital, Naidu termed Modi's ouster as the "last resort" to restore public confidence in the NDA and improve the sagging international reputation of the country.

The international press' moniker "bloody India" in the aftermath of the Gujarat carnage had hurt the country's reputation for communal harmony, he said.

"All of us condemn the torching of the train at Godhra, but we cannot condone the inaction of the Modi administration later on. It is very painful and tragic that the government failed to contain the escalation of violence and, instead, provoked the communal frenzy," he added.

THE TELEGRAPH

# Naidu gulps after great growl

HT Correspondents  
Hyderabad/ New Delhi, April 14

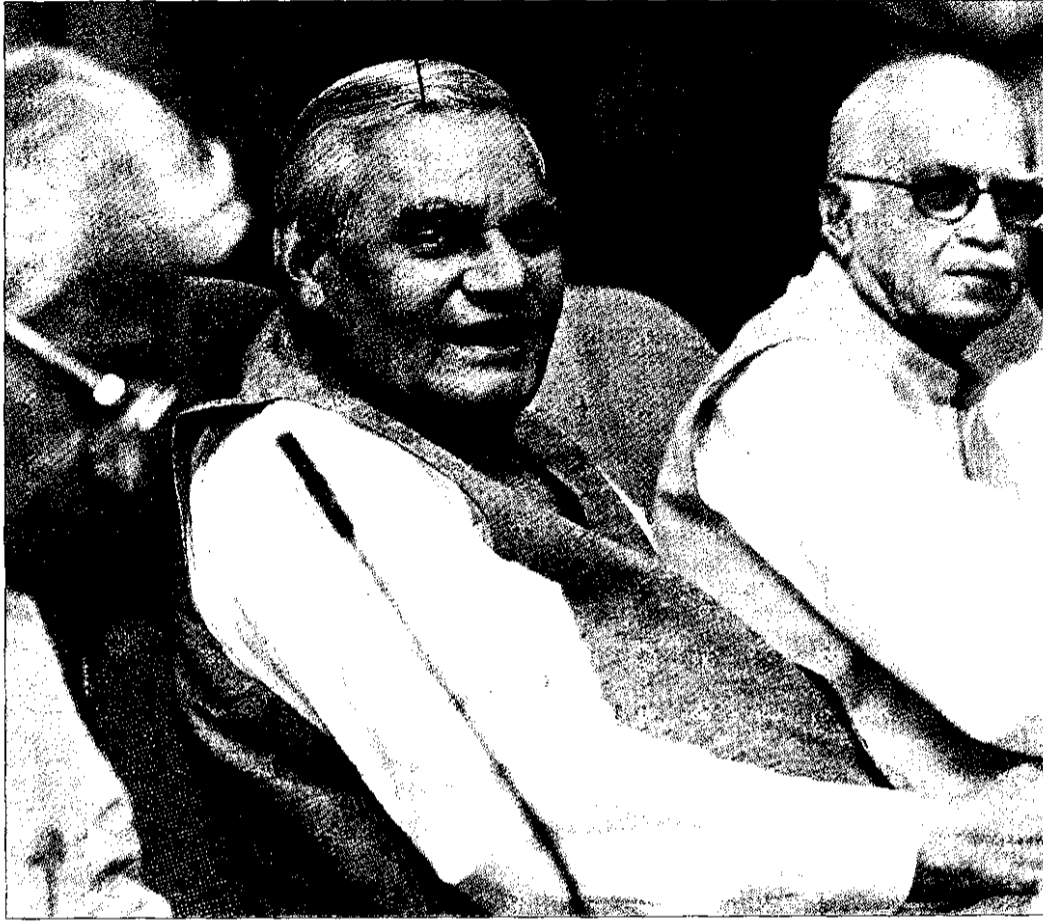
THE TDP remained huddled through the day, only to decide after sundown to take back its threat to withdraw support to the NDA Government, with a confident Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee saying in Delhi that his Government was at no risk, pullout or no pullout.

The only concession the TDP clinched was an assurance from NDA convenor George Fernandes that there would be no immediate initiative to hold Assembly polls in Gujarat. But Chandrababu Naidu stuck to his guns, saying Gujarat CM Narendra Modi must resign.

In Hyderabad, the day began with a resolute TDP bent on securing Modi's dismissal, failing which, it said, it would withdraw support from the Vajpayee Government. But a telephone call from George Fernandes to Naidu after the NDA meeting in Delhi seemed to make all the difference.

"The whole thing changed after George called Naidu during our politburo meeting, but we do not know what precisely transpired during the conversation them," a TDP leader told *Hindustan Times*. But other sources said Fernandes had sought "some time" on behalf of the BJP to consider the TDP's demands after which Naidu decided to give the NDA Government a temporary reprieve.

This call, the sources said, was followed by calls from BJP leader M Venkaiah Naidu and Union minister Bandaru Dattatraya. Whatever happened behind the scenes, senior TDP leader Yerranna told the media after eight hours of confabulations over three sessions at the party's parliamentary board and politburo meetings that the question of withdrawing support to the NDA had not even been discussed.



Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee smiles during a meeting of the National Democratic Alliance on Sunday. Flanking him are Home Minister L K Advani and Defence Minister George Fernandes.

He said the party would raise the issue of Modi's resignation and its demand for not holding elections in Gujarat during the Parliament session beginning tomorrow.

Yet, earlier in the day, the same Yerranna had refused to rule out withdrawing support to the NDA and kept up his tough talk.

Last night and earlier today, Prime Minister AB Vajpayee and other senior NDA leaders had spoken to Naidu but the TDP remained unmoved, saying

nothing short of Modi's resignation would do.

When the TDP politburo met in the morning for an hour, Naidu briefed his colleagues on his talks with Vajpayee last night. Other NDA allies like Mamata Banerjee too spoke to Naidu during the day.

The details of what transpired between Vajpayee and Naidu were not made public. Party sources said while Vajpayee pleaded with Naidu not to withdraw support to his Government, the Desam supremo stuck to his

guns on Modi's resignation.

The politburo adjourned in the morning, facilitating a meeting of the party's parliamentary board to meet and discuss the issue. The parliamentary board on its part passed a resolution authorising the politburo to take a final decision, following which the party's highest decision making body began its second meeting of the day.

The politburo awaited the outcome of the NDA meeting convened by Vajpayee in Delhi.

As it turned out, in an appar-

## BLOW BY BLOW

- The Prime Minister insists his Government is safe and faces no threat even if the TDP pulls out
- The TDP politburo meets in the morning, but can't make up its mind
- The TDP Parliamentary Party meets later in the day and authorises the politburo to decide on a pullout
- Chandrababu Naidu talks to Mamata Banerjee. She tells reporters that she'll wait for the TDP decision. She insists that Gujarat is in no position to go to the polls, but drops the demand for Narendra Modi's ouster
- Prime Minister chairs meeting of the NDA, which urges the TDP not to pull out. Mamata, Ram Vilas Paswan and Naidu skip the meeting
- George Fernandes briefs the press in Delhi and says there's no question of holding polls in Gujarat immediately
- Fernandes calls up Naidu in Hyderabad and wins over Naidu, who says support will continue, but Modi has to go

ent give-and-take, the NDA meeting ended with an appeal to the TDP to continue its support to the Government and Samata Party leader George Fernandes saying after the 90-minute meeting, "There is no proposal to go for elections in Gujarat now."

The Trinamool Congress boycotted the meeting. Lok Janshakti leader and Mines Minister Ram Vilas Paswan too could not attend the meeting as his flight got delayed.

More reports on Page 7

# Poll call communal: TDP

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

HYDERABAD, April 13. — The TDP today accused the BJP of pursuing "blatantly narrow and communal ends" by calling for fresh elections in Gujarat, and reiterated its demand to remove Mr Narendra Modi.

A terse TDP Politburo resolution re-emphasised that secularism was the basis for support to the NDA. The statement came after hours of confabulations between Mr Naidu and party leaders and ministers.

Importantly, the resolution chose to ignore the Prime Minister's speech in Goa yesterday where he had attacked the minorities

■ Allies look towards TDP, page 10

for provoking violence.

On the Goa call for fresh polls in Gujarat, the TDP said: "The party opposes use of the noble process of elections to achieve narrow and communal ends. To say elections would be held in Gujarat to decide on the

issue is trying to make political capital out of a human tragedy."

"It's a covert attempt to clothe narrow and partisan ends with the legitimacy of a democratic process. The Gujarat leadership has lost its moral authority to govern and devious use of the electoral process cannot restore such authority."

The resolution went on to add: "Effective and impartial interventions by law-and-order agencies would certainly have curbed

■ SEE TDP: page 10

4/A TDP: SC-10  
(Continued from page 1)

the gross human tragedy that unfolded ... and continues even today.

After the serious outbreak of violence, there has been a total failure of administration in restoring peace and normalcy. There have been accusations of gross partiality and complicity on part of the administration in handling law and order situation," it said.

"Observations of impartial individuals and organisations point to lapses in Gujarat in curbing violence and over relief and rehabilitation.... We reiterate our demand for change in leadership. The need of the hour is not elections but immediate restoration of peace, a healing touch and instilling confidence among the public."

Earlier today, a visibly-perturbed Mr Naidu said: "We have noted (BJP's) decisions".

# The blot is spreading, sack Modi now: Ally No 1

Change leadership in Gujarat immediately otherwise we'll be guilty of eroding public confidence in just, fair govt: TDP

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
HYDERABAD, AHMEDABAD, APRIL 11

**P**RESSURE from the allies on the Centre to sack Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi has been building up over the last few days but the Telugu Desam Party today dealt what could very well be the decisive blow.

In a scathing indictment of Modi and his government the night before the BJP top brass gather in Goa for the national executive, the TDP issued a virtual ultimatum, demanding that the "BJP...immediately effect a change of leadership in Gujarat."

Unless Modi was removed, it said, "we will be guilty of eroding public confidence and failing to provide just and fair governance to the citizens of the country."

The TDP, which has 27 members in the Lok Sabha, is the fourth NDA ally after JD (U), Trinamool Congress and the Lok Janshakti party, to seek Modi's removal. Although it did not specify what it would do if the BJP rejected its demand, the tone of the resolution made it clear that the party would have little choice.

Strongly indicting the Modi



government, the resolution said the administration and leadership in Gujarat "have failed miserably in effectively and impartially discharging the responsibility in not only quelling violence but also providing relief and rehabilitation to the victims."

"The nation cannot be held hostage to the partisan and short-sighted agendas of a few misguided organisations or people," the TDP said adding "adherence to secularism is one of the basic conditions of our support to the NDA."

"Any negation of this approach would be unacceptable. The recent developments in Gujarat have been a matter of grave concern and have tarnished India's image of being a liberal, modern and secular society," the party said.

Echoing the view expressed by Prime Minister Vajpayee that the Gujarat violence was a

"national shame," the TDP said that there was no place for "bigotry" in India which is multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-religious country.

"The tragic events marked by sustained communal violence threaten to undo the secular fabric of our country. As Prime minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has rightly mentioned, the brutality against innocent victims is a national shame," it said.

Meanwhile, officially, the word in Ahmedabad today was: no question of Modi going. But by late in the evening, even before the TDP's statement, speculation about Modi's removal was strong. This was fuelled by Modi's conspicuous absence at the state BJP's coordination committee meeting this evening.

Add to this, the silent arrival of Union Law Minister Arun Jaitley to Gandhinagar at 7.45 pm. Jaitley, one of the few Ministers in the Government to have strongly supported Modi in public even at the height of the violence, was with the Chief Minister till late evening.

He will stay here overnight and along with Modi, state BJP chief Rajendrasinh Rana and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2



Policemen try to snatch an effigy of Modi that Congress workers in Rajkot were about to burn. Express photo by Parish Joshi

## BJP goes to Goa with Naidu sword hanging

Party keeps saying: Modi is not going

SMRUTI KOPPIKAR  
PANJIM, APRIL 11



IN the ultra-luxurious environs of the Marriot Hotel on Miramar beach, not just Prime Minister AB Vajpayee but his BJP itself will begin some soul-searching tomorrow as the national executive gets underway.

Top leaders indicated that uppermost on the agenda for discussion over the next three days are the Budget for 2002-2003, the severe setback suffered by the party in four states in the recent Assembly elections and the strategy to contain increasingly restive allies in the NDA.

Gujarat is top on the agenda too but leaders are down-playing it. BJP leader Sunil Shastri said: "There was no question of demanding or discussing resignation (of CM Narendra Modi) though Gujarat situation will be discussed."

Modi and other leaders from Gujarat are expected to reach tomorrow morning. Vajpayee and Home Minister Advani too will touch down at Goa tomorrow,

### Guwahati vs Goa

**GUWAHATI:** The Congress will draw the battlelines for the next parliamentary elections in Guwahati tomorrow by showcasing its 14 state governments under the slogan of good governance. And going all out to make the two meets a study in contrast. Unlike the last two conclaves of chief ministers where report cards were prepared to assess individual performances, this time, the party intends to concentrate on "achievements," rather than failures. (SEE PAGE 3)

row, just in time for the office-bearers' meeting which is expected to set the tone for the following three days.

As crucial will be the discussion on how to tackle the allies in the NDA who have been making steady noises about the Gujarat carnage and demanding Modi's head.

The thinking in the BJP echelons now is that if a couple of the allies succumb to the "pressure" being mounted by the Congress and the Third Front, the NDA might be forced to "take some steps to re-establish its secular credentials" which could then

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

dustries Minister and number two in the Modi Cabinet, Suresh Mehta. Parallel to this, Rana, Gandhinagar-based senior RSS leader Bhaskarrao Damle and former Chief Minister Keshubhai Patel—whom Modi replaced—held a meeting at Patel's bungalow in Sector 19 in Gandhinagar till late in the evening. Both the meetings, the one at Modi's bungalow and the other at Keshubhai's house, were on till late tonight.

Officially, of course, Rana said, "There is no question of the party asking the Chief Minister to step down nor has he offered to. All such reports are figments of imagination. Major riots have occurred in Gujarat in 1969, 1985 and 1992. Never before had any CM to resign for this."

He glossed over the fact that former External Affairs Minister Madhavsingh Solanki was asked to step down in the wake of riots

12 APR 2002

ANAND EXPRESS

# TDP decision after PM's reply in LS

Statesman News Service

HYDERABAD, April 28. — Mr N Chandrababu Naidu will play his cards at the eleventh hour. The Andhra Pradesh chief minister has decided to wait till the Prime Minister replies in the Lok Sabha before deciding on how the TDP would vote on Tuesday's censure motion over Gujarat.

"Let us see how Mr Vajpayee reacts as head of the NDA during the discussion," Mr Naidu reportedly said at a Telugu Desam Parliamentary Party meet here. "What's the need for us to decide now? There would be several developments (till the end of the debate) and we could assess their impact."

Another key ally on whose support the numbers game may hinge, the National Conference, has reserved its decision for Tuesday. J&K chief minister Dr Farooq Abdullah, tonight told PTI from London, that his party, with five MPs in the Lok Sabha, would decide its stand over the motion on Tuesday. The NC met in Delhi yesterday at which views of all its five MPs were considered. Party MP Mr Abdul Rashid Shaheen said a "strong section" favoured abstaining as till now.

Mr Naidu told the MPs that the party's demands against advancing elections and stepping up relief and rehabilitation to the victims in Gujarat have been accepted — implying that the core demand of replacing Mr Modi would be met. The TDP supremo made it quite clear he was in no particular hurry.

Earlier in the day, his aides referred to media reports on the Prime Minister meeting RSS leaders last night, where it was decided that Mr Modi would be sacked. Mr Naidu is reportedly weighing the fallout of this development. Party sources said the impact could be felt even

before the Lok Sabha goes into vote.

Mr Naidu called for today's meeting at the instance of the MPs, who had voiced concern over not being consulted. The 23 members who attended the meeting, however, remained tightlipped.

Mr U Venkateshwarulu said at the meet that the party should not be found vacillating on the issue. He was of the opinion that even if it was a wrong decision, the party should vote against the government to salvage its image.

According to Mr Naidu, the next few days will be "dynamic". "There will be some more changes that will be occurring. It's better to proceed step-by-step. Why should we commit ourselves to something right now when there's a chance to wait and take advantage of the situation," MPs quoted him as saying. He told reporters "there still is lot of time... we have to discuss."

In the evening, Mr Naidu held one-on-one discussions with MPs at his Jubilee Hills residence to elicit individual opinion on the vote. Sources said there was hardly an MP who favoured a vote for the government. Opinion was divided over abstaining and voting against.

Mr Naidu told MPs any decision they took should not affect their stand on Gujarat or their secular credentials. He also said the decision should not pave the way for any unfavourable situation, implying the TDP would not precipitate a situation forcing mid-term polls.

Some MPs told him that the numbers were in favour of the BJP even if the TDP voted in favour of the motion. A mid-term poll, thus, was not imminent, they said.

**NDA meet over Gujarat:** Ahead of Tuesday's debate, Mr George Fernandes, convener, has called an NDA meeting in New Delhi on Monday to chalk out strategy on the discussion which will be followed by voting, adds PTI from Delhi.

## AGP to abstain

GUWAHATI, MARCH 25. The Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) has decided to oppose the Prevention of Terrorism Bill (POTO) in tomorrow's joint session of Parliament by abstaining from voting, though it had favoured the ordinance last week.

The AGP president, Brindabon Goswami, said here today that the AGP was never a part of the NDA and the party would oppose the Bill.

### Panja to vote

Defying the Trinamool Congress chief, Mamata Banerjee's directive to party MPs to stay away from the joint sitting of Parliament on the anti-terrorism bill, the rebel party MP, Ajit Panja, said in New Delhi that he would vote in favour of the legislation.

Panja told reporters here that if any whip were issued to the MPs to remain absent, it would not be binding on him as the Trinamool Congress had suspended him from the party.

### NCP divided

The Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) was gripped by sharp differences on the party's stand on the Bill, with senior leader Jagannath Mishra questioning the party's decision to support it. In a letter to the NCP chief, Sharad Pawar, Mr. Mishra described the Bill as "undemocratic and fascist" and urged him to instruct his MPs to vote against it.

### Jaitley optimistic

However, the Union Law Minister, Arun Jaitley, said in New Delhi the BJP-led NDA Government at the Centre would prove to the world tomorrow in the joint session of Parliament that the "country stands united in its fight against terrorism", debunking the "stubborn" stand of the Congress against POTO.

"Let wiser counsel prevail on the Congress. Even the United Nations has adopted an enforceable resolution after the September 11 attack asking the nations to oppose terrorism and adopt suitable laws to counter the menace," he said. — PTI, UNI

THE HINDU

26 MAR 2002

## Mahanta a liability

Party should look elsewhere

Assom Gana Parishad president Brindaban Goswami seems to be asserting himself. What prompted him to jettison Prafulla Kumar Mahanta from the party's political affairs committee is not known but dropping of four of his supporters made clear the attempt to weaken the former chief minister's position. The removal, however, needs to be followed up as Mahanta retains some friends in the committee. Goswami may have been provoked by recent reports that Mahanta is trying to stage a comeback. Regarded as the architect of the AGP, Goswami was education minister in the first Mahanta ministry but their relationship was far from cordial. He was one of the stalwarts who, along with Bhriugu Phukan and Dinesh Goswami, split the party in February 1991 to form the Natun Asom Gana Parishad. The 1993 reunion was merely a defensive move to assert the relevance of regionalism; the tussle over party leadership continued. Mahanta tried to advance himself by denying ministerial berths to both Phukan and Goswami after the 1996 assembly elections. Phukan has severed links with the AGP after his suspension and is with the Nationalist Congress Party now.

Mahanta's 16-year leadership was too long for the party's good and was cut short by an extraneous factor; the charge of an assembly secretariat employee that he had married her in a Mumbai temple. At least one former minister, Zoinath Sharma, has said that if Mahanta "can tide over those circumstances and emerge with a cleaner image, he should be welcomed back to the party". Can images be so easily cleaned? Goswami has the difficult task of shaping the party to win the 2006 assembly elections. He should remember that no one is indispensable. Mahanta was and remains a liability; his attempts to get back in are no more than the tantrums of a discredited politician out of work and out of sight.

# Killing doesn't mean failure of healing touch: PDP

HT-5  
2/12

**HTC and Agencies**  
*Srinagar, December 21*

THOUSANDS OF people bid a tearful farewell to slain PDP MLA Abdul Aziz Mir at his native village in Pampore of Konibal as the ruling party dismissed the suggestion that the killing meant a failure of its healing touch programme.

"It (the killing of Mir) does not mean that the healing touch programme has failed... If we want to put out a fire, there is a chance that we may burn our fingers," PDP vice-president Mehbooba Mufti, who had come here to visit the bereaved family, told reporters.

Asked if the militants had spurned the offer of

peace, she said the party would continue with its policy of persuasion for a meaningful dialogue.

Several senior State leaders including Housing and Urban Development Minister Ghulam Hassan Mir and Rural Development Minister Peerzada Mohammad Sayeed and MLAs attended the funeral of Mir, which was delayed by more than 24 hours as the family was awaiting the return of his daughter and son-in-law from Delhi.

Defending the party MLAs' policy of interacting with the crowds at public places, the Urban Development Minister denied that there was a security lapse in Mir's killing.

"Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi were killed despite heavy security. We are on a mission to nurse the wounds of the common man and there are chances of attacks but we will continue," he said. The Minister said though it seems that militants had not paid attention to Mufti's call to lay down arms, the offer was still open.



...PERFORMANCE...      ...LUKS...  
**Let's talk some  
more, PDP** 711  
29/10  
**tells Congress**

TIMES NEWS NETWORK  
P.P.P. ✓

**New Delhi:** The Congress on Wednesday decided to reopen negotiations with the People's Democratic Party for government formation in Jammu and Kashmir.

The decision came after PDP vice president Mehbooba Mufti spoke to Congress president Sonia Gandhi on the phone from Srinagar on Wednesday morning. The fresh round of talks will be held on Friday between Ms Gandhi and PDP chief Mufti Mohammed Sayeed.

In her conversation with Ms Gandhi, Mehbooba agreed to reconsider the proposals made by Congress leader Manmohan Singh in Srinagar, but said that the PDP would also present its own set of proposals.

Although Congress leaders claim they have an open mind on the talks, they do not force the party gifting the chief minister's post to the Mufti.

While maintaining the Congress' claim to lead the government, Mr Singh had earlier mooted three basic proposals—both parties could lead the government on a rotation basis for three years each, Mehbooba would be the deputy CM and the

Mufti would be the chairman of the coordination committee while the Congress led the government. The PDP had rejected all these, insisting on the CM's post for the Mufti.

Mehbooba's phone call to Ms Gandhi underlines the newfound flexibility in the PDP's stand. According to sources, one of the PDP's new negotiating points could be the rotation formula offered by Mr Singh—about who should lead the government first and for how long.

The PDP's climbdown is explained in terms of the Congress' unannounced decision to stake its claim to form the government. This had posed an immediate threat to the PDP because the Congress would have poached on PDP MLAs to form a government.

After an informal meeting of the Congress Working Committee on Tuesday, Mr Singh had told reporters that a decision on J&K had been taken and that Ms Gandhi would announce it later. The pressure tactic worked and the PDP has relented and will hold further talks on the issue. Now, the PDP will have to step down again from its stand of 'either the Mufti as CM or nothing'.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

24 OCT 2002

# Cong looks to engineer split in PDP

Rashid Ahmad & Arun Joshi  
Srinagar/Jammu, October 14

## NUMBERS GAME

THE CONGRESS today tightened the screws on the People's Democratic Party, hinting that it was ready to form a Government without the PDP and making an effort to split the party.

As the tussle over the Chief Minister's post locked the possible allies in a stalemate, the Congress elected Ghulam Nabi Azad — its candidate for the top job — as its legislature party leader and claimed the support of 17 Independents and four Panthers Party members.

Senior Congress leaders told *Hindustan Times* that some PDP leaders — including vice-president Muzaffar Hussain Beigh, Sarfaraz Khan and former Minister Ghulam Hassan Mir — might quit their party to join a Congress-led Government in the State. They said the Congress was ready to appoint Beigh Deputy Chief Minister.

The PDP is not recognised by the Election Commission and its members are not subject to the anti-defection law. If these PDP leaders do join a Congress ministry, they would give Azad the 44 votes he needs in the 87-member Assembly.

The PDP's anxiety grew today when Beigh skipped an emergency meeting of party legislators at the residence of their chief Mufti Mohammad Sayeed. A party leader, however, explained that Beigh was in Delhi. He dismissed claims that Beigh or any other member would support a Congress-led ministry minus the PDP.

As the chances of a Congress-PDP alliance ebbed, an upbeat NC threw its hat in the ring. Party chief Omar Abdullah met Governor GC Saxena and asked him to invite the NC to form a ministry. He argued that since the Congress and PDP haven't yet tied up — and since both have fewer seats than the NC — the Governor could not ignore the party with the highest number of MLAs in the State.

"We did not make any effort to

**MOVE 1:** Cong elects Azad legislature party leader and says it can form a ministry without PDP. Claims support of Panthers Party and 17 Independents amid speculation that 3 PDP members also may join a Cong-led Govt. This gives Cong the necessary 44 votes in the 87-member House

**MOVE 2:** Omar Abdullah tells Governor that with the Cong-PDP talks deadlocked, he had a duty to invite NC, the single largest party, to form the ministry. Cong accuses NC of 'kidnapping' pro-Cong Independents, implying the Abdullaha too might be trying some horse-trading

form a Government earlier as we thought a pre-poll understanding between the Congress and the PDP would automatically be translated into a post-poll understanding," Omar told reporters. "But they have not been able to forge a post-poll understanding."

With Independent MLA Shah Jahan Dar joining the NC today, its strength has gone up to 29, compared to the Congress's 20 and the PDP's 16.

A hint that the NC, too, was trying some horse-trading came when the Congress accused it of kidnapping four Independent MLAs who had promised support to the party. Congress leader Ashok Sharma said, "Four Independent MLAs — Moulvi Abdul Rashid from Banihal, Ejaz Ahmed from Arnas, Puran Singh from Darhal and Manohar Lal Sharma from Billawar — were whisked away in police jeeps as soon as they got down at Srinagar airport. But Rashid managed to escape with Ahmed and Singh."

**NC stays in NDA:** Omar today met Prime Minister AB Vajpayee and resigned as Minister of State for External Affairs, but said the NC would not snap its ties with the NDA.

Related report on Page 7

15 OCT 2007

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Sayed meets Sonia, mum on CM issue

By Salem Pandit & PTI  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The process of government formation in Jammu and Kashmir gathered momentum on Saturday with the People's Democratic Party (PDP) president Mufti Mohammad Sayeed meeting Congress chief Sonia Gandhi here and discussing the nitty gritty of sewing up a coalition.

"We exchanged ideas on the formation of a government. We held detailed discussions," Mr Sayeed said after emerging from the 45-minute meeting with Ms Gandhi.

He said the Congress and the PDP were the major parties and they discussed how to rope in other parties to form the government.

Before reporters could ask him whether the issue of chief ministership had been sorted out with Ms Gandhi, Mr Sayeed avoided a reply and got into his car in the midst of a heavy downpour.

Mr Sayeed said the people of the state had "great expectations" as they had voted against the National Conference because of its "misrule." Earlier, on his arrival here from Srinagar, he said that chief ministership was a "non-issue" between the PDP and the Congress. A "strategy and a programme" would be evolved for forming a coalition government, he said on his talks with Ms Gandhi.

"The question of who will be the chief minister is a non-issue. There is no dearth of appropriate candidates as there are a galaxy of leaders in the Congress and the PDP," he said.

Mr Sayeed, whose party won 16 seats, said the chief minister will be decided through "mutual consulta-



Sonia Gandhi M.M. Sayeed

tions." The Congress-PDP combine have 36 seats and need eight more to reach the magic figure of 44 in the 87-member house.

With the focus of formation of the new government in Jammu and Kashmir shifting to New Delhi, Mr Sayeed said his party alone could not name anybody for chief ministership and the issue needed to be decided mutually by the Congress, the PDP and other supporting groups.

"The first priority is to form a non-National Conference government as the people of the state have given a verdict against it and it needs to be honoured," Mr Sayeed said adding that an understanding and a common minimum programme needed to be evolved between the coalition partners.

Earlier, Saifuddin Soz, a Congress leader, reportedly compounded the situation in Srinagar by jumping into the race for the chief ministership.

The scene got even murkier with the four-member Jammu and Kashmir Panthers Party, headed by Bhim Singh, also claiming its stake to form the government.

In an interesting development, PDP vice president, Muzaffar Hussain Beigh, who won from the Baramulla constituency called on Farooq Abdullah. He, however, described his two-hour meeting as a courtesy call.

# Sudip hits back at Mamata

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Nov. 14. — For the first time, ever since the two fell out on the quit-NDA issue, Mr Sudip Bandopadhyay gave vent to his feelings about Miss Mamata Banerjee, prompted by the latter's remarks labelling him a "political upstart". Mr Bandopadhyay said Miss Banerjee's comment is not only "unfortunate" but also amounts to "character assassination".

"I am shocked at the manner in which our party chief could air her grievances against me. I haven't spoken a word against her, let alone question her political credentials. I wonder what prompted Mamata to make such personal remarks, that too in the presence of the party rank-and-file.

Moreover, what sort of message did he send to partymen by allowing senior Trinamul MLAs to speak against me at the 12 November party state committee meeting?" Mr Bandopadhyay asked.

Prior and even during the state committee meeting the Trinamul chief had remarked that stern action would be taken against party leaders not toeing the party line and instead inviting BJP ministers and leaders for "tea sessions". It was evident that she had Mr Bandopadhyay in mind. "We will initiate action against political upstarts who

are out to tarnish the image of the party," she had said.

Peeved at such remarks, Mr Bandopadhyay today said it was highly unbecoming of Miss Banerjee to label him a "political upstart" as such a comment "betrays her ignorance".

Mr Bandopadhyay said: "It was in 1972 that I became the West Bengal Youth Congress president and had worked in tandem with Indira Gandhi and Priyaranjan Das Munshi. For four years, I had been YC president with Somen Mitra as one of the district YC presidents. At that time Mamata was a mere Block Congress activist."

Mr Bandopadhyay had more to say. "After being elected thrice as Congress MLA, I resigned from the membership of the Assembly and contested the Lok Sabha polls as Trinamul Congress candidate. I won in 1998 and 1999. I am one of the founder members of the Trinamul Congress. After all this, I am distressed to note that Mamata called me an upstart. She should realise that I accepted her leadership despite being senior to her in age and political experience."

With Mr Bandopadhyay going for the jugular, the 16 November party working committee meeting is likely to witness fireworks as all sorts of "unpleasant" issues may come up for discussion, party leaders believe.

Mamata and Guup at Howrah station on Tuesday. Picture by Aratiya Bose

# Trinamul unity show

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

Calcutta, Sept. 10: Trinamul Congress chief Mamata Banerjee today succeeded in putting up a "show of unity" at the parliamentary party meeting that endorsed her decision to replace Sudip Bandopadhyay with Ranjit Panja as the party's chief whip in the Lok Sabha.

The meeting at the south Calcutta residence of Jadavpur MP Krishna Bose was attended by all Trinamul MPs, including Bandopadhyay. Rebel MP Ajit Panja was the only absentee.

He did not want to continue as the chief whip as he was over-burdened with the work of several standing committees, Bandopadhyay said. He denied differences with Mamata on organisational matters. "Today's meeting was held in an amicable atmosphere. We have decided to maintain solidarity and work together for the party's expansion," he said.

Briefing newsmen later, the Trinamul chief said the meeting expressed shock at the Rajdhani derailment near Gaya and called for the formation of an expert group to suggest steps to enhance passenger security.

The meeting did not demand railway minister Nitish Kumar's resignation, but felt there was need for greater vigil along the railway tracks and to intensify steps to ensure safety and security of railway equipment and passengers. It condoled the deaths and demanded adequate compensation for the bereaved families.

Mamata, accompanied by Bandopadhyay, went to Howrah station this evening.

Informed sources said Bandopadhyay realised the need for a patch-up with the Trinamul chief as his tiff with her was sending wrong signals to the party's rank and file and ultimately doing no good to his image.

Mamata, too, did not want to lose the confidence of her long-time associate and utilised today's meeting to put up an everything's fine show.

Sources said a move may be afoot to win over Ajit Panja, who was suspended for his anti-Mamata tirade and defying the party line on the partnership with the NDA. The new chief whip, Ajit Panja's younger brother, is likely to take a fresh initiative to bring Mamata and the rebel leader to the talks table.

DOOR OPEN FOR RECONCILIATION: MAMATA

# Trinamool not to be part of NDA

By K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI, AUG. 13. Irked at not being heard on the Eastern Railway bifurcation issue, the Trinamool Congress chief, Mamata Banerjee, today decided to distance her party from the National Democratic Alliance, but stopped short of pulling the drawbridges completely.

"Until and unless the issue of railway bifurcation is sorted out to its satisfaction, the Trinamool Congress will not be part and parcel of the NDA," said a unanimous resolution adopted by the party's working committee after an hour-long meeting.

Yet, as Ms. Banerjee's party sought to sound a warning note, the Vajpayee-led NDA Government could well look forward to the return of two MPs from Ram Vilas Paswan's Lok Janshakti to the coalition. The former Union Minister, Jai Narayan Prasad 'Nishad', and Ramesh Jigajmagi split from the four-member Lok Janshakti in the Lok Sabha and decided to form a separate party, the Janata Dal (JP), here today. Both the MPs met the Lok Sabha Speaker, Manohar Joshi, and sought separate seat allocation. Mr. Paswan, who left the NDA over the Gujarat issue, now has, besides himself, his brother, Ramchander Paswan, in the Parliamentary party.

Unlike the previous occasion — after the Tehelka episode — when she pulled out from the NDA, this time around Ms. Banerjee kept the door open for



reconciliation. While announcing the decision, she said she would meet the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, after the Independence Day to discuss the issue.

A day after she led a sit-in protest here and refused to vote for the NDA's Vice-Presidential candidate, Ms. Banerjee also had to make efforts to chalk out a "middle path" with half her party MPs apparently against leaving the NDA, while the others advocated a hard line.

Interestingly, of the nine MPs the Trinamool Congress has in the Lok Sabha, Ajit Panja had fallen out earlier. Of the eight, a section, including the chief whip, Sudip Bandopadhyay, and Ranjit Panja, favoured the party continuing in the NDA while another faction, including Nitish Sengupta, Krishna Bose and the Kolkata Mayor, Subrata

Mukherjee, preferred parting ways with the NDA.

While officially, the BJP spokesman, Arun Jaitley, appealed to Ms. Banerjee to reconsider its position, he pointed out that the Prime Minister had gone to the extent of having the bifurcation reconsidered by the Union Cabinet. With a comfortable arithmetic in its favour, the BJP does not seem too eager to accommodate Ms. Banerjee, especially after the resounding victory by its Vice-Presidential candidate, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat.

Incidentally, Mr. Shekhawat spoke to Ms. Banerjee today and the latter now plans to call on the Vice President-elect.

## Internal matter: BJP

UNI reports from Kolkata: The BJP in West Bengal today reserved its comment on the Trinamool Congress's decision to withdraw from the NDA, describing it as their "internal matter".

"For us it is an internal matter of the party in which the BJP has nothing to do," the West Bengal BJP vice-president, Muzaffar Khan, said. He said, "from AITC supreme Mamata Banerjee's statement it was not clear (to us) whether she had decided to snap ties with the NDA permanently or only conditionally".

"She had taken a similar step earlier also and so today's decision did not surprise us at all," he added.

# Trinamul divided over staying with NDA

571  
Statesman News Service

New Delhi, Aug. 12. — The unity, shown by the Trinamul Congress at today's dharna at Jantar Mantar, may not last long if Miss Mamata Banerjee decides to quit the NDA at tomorrow's working committee meeting.

Sharp differences in the party came to the fore after Miss Banerjee bluntly turned down requests from the Prime Minister's emissary, minister of state Vijay Goel to cast votes for the NDA's vice-presidential candidate Mr Bhairon Singh Shekhawat. The Trinamul leader clung to her word that the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee should first review the proposed bifurcation of Eastern Railway.

A party MP said: "Mr Goel's visit was perhaps the last face-saver that the government had to offer and it was unfortunate that she failed to see the writing on the wall. The decision to boycott the poll was naive in light of the fact that Mr Shekhawat won by a margin of 149 votes, 40 more than what was expected by the poll managers."

Even the BJP parliamentary party spokesman, Mr Vijay Kumar Malhotra, admitted that her dharna was an "embarrassment" to the

Centre.

1378  
"Miss Banerjee is in a severe dilemma and is apprehensive that her party being solidly behind her on the issue. Her credentials before the people in the state and elsewhere would go down considerably. A decision to this effect might be postponed for some later date", said another Trinamul leader.

Party sources said "She is likely to face stiff opposition from the person who had been regarded as her deputy, Mr Sudip Bandopadhyay, who favours continuance of ties with the NDA." "He might get support from other leaders including some MPs and the leader of opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Mr Pankaj Banerjee."

He said Mr Bandopadhyay had a "fierce" with Miss Banerjee in the last working committee meeting held in Kolkata on July 31 and a decision had to be postponed till August 13. He urged her in that meeting to join the Cabinet and continue with the NDA as a reverse decision would be suicidal for the party. Mr Bandopadhyay was of the opinion that the party could not wage a single-handed battle against all political forces in the state, namely the Left Front, Congress and BJP.

13 AUG 1997

THE STATESMAN

# Mamata hits left, right

OUR CORRESPONDENT

*9.8.10*

**Jhargram, Aug. 9:** The BJP-led Centre and the Left Front government in Bengal were the twin targets of Mamata Banerjee at a rally here this afternoon.

Addressing the meeting on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of "Quit India" movement, the Trinamul Congress leader ruled out any compromise on her stir against the bifurcation of Eastern Railway. She urged the people to get ready for a "long and sustained battle to save the state's economy threatened by the railway minister's move".

"We will fight against the Centre's step-motherly attitude

towards Bengal and the state government's atrocities on our party workers," she said.

Mamata said she would meet President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam "as a last resort to prevent the bifurcation if our dharna in front of the Prime Minister's residence on Monday fails to evoke any response". "If the President does not respond favourably, our movement will be a long and sustained one," she added.

Turning her guns on the Left Front, the Trinamul chairperson said the arrest of villagers in tribal areas of West Midnapore was a ploy to make the area "opposition-free" before the panchayat polls.

*10/8*

Without naming Avijit Saha, the excise official who committed suicide, and lecturer Kaushik Ganguly, who were arrested for alleged links with the People's War, Mamata said no one could condone the police torture on them.

"When such things take place, who can rest in peace?" she asked.

The Trinamul chairperson warned that the state government could not deter her supporters from fighting the CPM's atrocities. "The railways are going, the coal is gone, what will remain in the state are jails which will be filled by us," Mamata said.

THE TELEGRAPH

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# Oppose Mamata's quit-NDA move, partymen tell Sudip

Anindya Sengupta in Kolkata

Aug. 8. — Some Trinamul MPs and MLAs have asked Mr Sudip Bandopadhyay to oppose Miss Mamata Banerjee at the party's working committee meeting on 13 August if she decides to quit the NDA.

Leaving the NDA will be suicidal, they said. For, the resultant three-way split of anti-Left votes will give the Left Front a walk-over in next year's panchayat polls.

The move is reportedly an attempt to "cut Mr Subrata Mukherjee down to size". Many leaders hold him responsible for pushing Miss Banerjee into taking a hawkish stand against the NDA.

Mr Mukherjee has been lashing out at Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee and Mr LK Advani reportedly with the Trinamul chief's blessings.

Mr Bandopadhyay and some senior leaders are opposed to any criticism of the BJP/NDA. This would dash hopes of ministerial berths and the party would lose the political clout needed to fight the LF, they said.

Criticising the mayor's remarks against the Prime Minister and Mr Advani, Mr Bandopadhyay said Miss Banerjee had been "hijacked" by Mr Mukherjee. He reportedly said a dharna outside Rail Bhavan was okay, a sit-in demonstration outside the Prime Minister's residence was not. "How would she (Mamata) have reacted if there had been a dharna outside her Kalighat residence during her stint as railway minister." Mr Mukherjee's tirade against Mr Advani is an effort to create a rift

between the Deputy Prime Minister and Mr Vajpayee, he said.

Most MPs and MLAs have asked Mr Bandopadhyay to raise these issues at the working committee meeting, and, if necessary, take a stand against Miss Banerjee. Mr Saugata Roy and Mr Sobhandeb Chattopadhyay are trying to mobilise support for Mr Bandopadhyay. They have promised to back him at the meeting. Leaders like Mr Bikram Sarkar and Mrs Krishna Bose are still not sure what stand Miss Banerjee would take at the meeting.

Leaders are peeved at Miss Banerjee's decision to entrust Mr Dinesh Trivedi and Mr Nitish Sengupta, party MPs, with the responsibility of sorting out matters with the central BJP leadership.

Asked if Miss Banerjee would attend Sunday's NDA meeting, Mr Pankaj Banerjee, Leader of the Opposition, said: "She will take a decision at the right moment."

The BJP today said Miss Mamata Banerjee would be under pressure from within the party to attend the Prime Minister's dinner meeting on Sunday, adds a report from Delhi. This will be her last chance to redeem her image within the NDA. Leaders brushed aside the possibility of a split in the Trinamul but said the party would welcome it.

Miss Banerjee has urged the Union law minister to go by the Supreme Court's verdict on poll reforms. In a letter to the Centre, she said candidates should come clean on their activities and declare their assets. Mr Banerjee said the party was waiting for a reply from the Centre.

THE STATESMAN

9 AUG 2002

# Advani power behind the throne: Mamata

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, Aug. 7. — Eminent educationists today supported Miss Mamata Banerjee on the ER division issue, taking advantage of which the party described Mr LK Advani as the "repository of extra-constitutional powers".

The Trinamul chief said the Deputy Prime Minister was using such powers against West Bengal's interests. Till now, she had been criticising Mr Advani in her speeches, without naming him. Today's written resolution, in a sense, is a departure from earlier practice.

A party resolution, read out and adopted at the historic Town Hall this afternoon, condemned the manner in which "Mr Nitish Kumar had been directly aided and abetted by Mr Advani to take the country for a ride". "The Union Cabinet surrendered to Mr Kumar's unethical and unprincipled decision. Mr Kumar was supported by Advani," the Trinamul resolution said. The move will spell doom for Eastern and South Eastern Railways and "West Bengal's economy as a whole". The resolution urged Trinamul men to "unmask the Curzons and Mountbattens" of this era, presumably hinting at the BJP and the CPI-M.

Academicians today took seats beside Miss Mamata Banerjee, lending a dimension to her otherwise routine party gatherings and, in effect, giving a fillip to her "uncompromising" agitation on the ER division. Mr Pratap Chunder Chunder, former Union education minister, Mr Santosh Bhattacharyya, former Calcutta University



Miss Mamata Banerjee ties a rakhi on former Union minister Mr Pratap Chunder Chunder as part of her 'Unity Day' programmes to rally support over the ER issue. In Kolkata on Wednesday. — The Statesman

vice-chancellor, and Mr Dilip Sinha, former Visva-Bharati vice-chancellor, shared the rostrum with Miss Banerjee. They stressed the need for immediate Central intervention to "protect the interests of Bengal and the country as a whole".

An otherwise vociferous Miss Banerjee today took a restrained and mild approach while addressing the Town Hall gathering, probably prompted by the presence of the stalwarts. She reminded party leaders of the battle Rabindranath Tagore had launched from Town Hall against Bengal's division. BC Roy had forced Jawaharlal Nehru to replace Lal

Bahadur Shastri as railway minister as he had tried to split the railways against Bengal's interests. "Let history repeat itself", Miss Banerjee said, hinting that the Prime Minister should do a Nehru by replacing Mr Nitish Kumar.

The Trinamul chief said her party was not against the creation of 100 railway zones at Hajipur, but resented efforts to snatch West Bengal's "pride and property". "We are being labelled as parochialists. The labelers wouldn't mind calling Tagore a parochialist too. The Centre's decision is unfair and unjust. We will do whatever necessary to continue with our agitation."

Mr Santosh Bhattacharyya criticised moves to downplay the ER division and criticised the CPI-M without naming it. "The largest party in the state is against the ER division. But the party finds something wrong in bandhs and *mahamichhils*. This is contradictory. I'm not a political party member. But I have come here as the state's interests are being bartered away."

Mr Pratap Chunder Chunder praised Miss Banerjee's stand on the ER issue, hoping "good sense would prevail on the Centre". Mr Dilip Sinha supported the Trinamul resolution, decrying forces which had "joined hands clandestinely" to allow the division.

The party will observe 1 October as 'black day' and send a memorandum to the President.

It will hold a rally at the Brigade Parade grounds on 18 December to announce its "largescale agitation" on the ER division.

## Trinamool targets Advani

By Our Special Correspondent

**KOLKATA, AUG. 2.** The Trinamool Congress today launched a direct attack on the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, calling him "the villain" of the piece in the Eastern Railway bifurcation issue. The party leaders charged Mr. Advani and Bengal's ruling communists with entering into "a secret deal" by which the Centre, they claimed, would bail out the crisis-ridden Bengal by offering funds in exchange for which the communists would remain "silent" on the bifurcation issue.

Addressing a 'dharna' at the esplanade area in central Kolkata in protest against the bifurcation plan, Mayor Subrata Mukherjee mounted a scathing attack on Mr. Advani while the party supporters cheered him with slogans: "Advani hathao,

desh bachhao."

The Trinamool leader, Mamata Banerjee, maintained that the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, had the honest intention of looking into Bengal's case against the bifurcation with sympathy but was powerless to do so.

"He (Mr. Vajpayee) cannot do anything now though he is the head of the Cabinet. We continue to respect him but if he is not allowed to do anything and the Cabinet takes unilateral and a political decision on bifurcation, we cannot remain silent," she said.

Ms. Banerjee, however, offered the BJP-run NDA space for manoeuvre by suggesting that it could provide her with a "face-saver" by including Dhanbad and Katihar in the re-organised Eastern railway.

"We will appeal to the Presi-

dent of India to treat Bengal's case with sympathy if the Centre fails to do so," she said.

According to observers, Ms. Banerjee has realised that the BJP leadership is not in a position to bail her out especially after her attacks on Mr. Advani.

She is said to have told the party leaders that the Trinamool might have to "declare a war" against the BJP in the coming days and, if it did so, the principal target of attack would be Mr. Advani who is perceived to be backing the Railway Minister, Nitish Kumar.

As part of its new strategy, the Trinamool would try and project Bengal's ruling communists as "close to communal forces".

This, according to her, is reflected in the proximity they enjoy with Mr. Advani whose "links with the RSS" is well-known.

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## Mamata to wait till Aug. 12 on rly. bifurcation issue

By Our Special Correspondent

**KOLKATA, JULY 31.** Pressured by party MPs and key functionaries, the Trinamool Congress supreme, Mamata Banerjee, said that she would prefer to give the Centre "one more chance" to reconsider the proposal to bifurcate the Eastern Railway.

At a news conference at her south Kolkata residence, Ms. Banerjee said the party working committee which met here during the day reviewed the situation and decided to wait for a while before taking the "drastic step of quitting the NDA".

Ms. Banerjee apparently tried to limit the damage by assuring the NDA leadership that her party would not support the Opposition nominee but stay away from voting in the coming vice-presidential election scheduled for August 12.

"We will wait till August 12. By then, if the Centre does not review the bifurcation plan, we will have no option but to quit the alliance," Ms. Banerjee said.

According to Trinamool

sources, Ms. Banerjee is under tremendous pressure from the party MPs and senior leaders to "go slow" on the NDA.

They argued that Ms. Banerjee would commit yet another blunder if she snapped her ties with the NDA now. "Our credibility as a political party is rather low at this point in time because of our past actions in regard to the NDA. We cannot afford to be a laughing stock by once again leaving the Alliance on one particular issue," many leaders told the Trinamool chief.

The pro-NDA Trinamool MPs also told Ms. Banerjee that the party needed some more time to examine the repercussions of departure from the NDA.

Besides, the party would be required to find out whether the Congress was still keen on having it back as an ally. "The Trinamool cannot survive if it has to fight a hostile NDA, on the one hand, and collaborate with an Opposition aloof to the Trinamool's needs, on the other, the leaders said.

Ms. Banerjee, however, said that she had decided to wait

for a few more days only because Vijay Goel from the Prime Minister's Office and the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, today told her to do so.

"They telephoned me to say that I should not do anything drastic as the Government is trying to do something about bifurcation," she said.

Even though Ms. Banerjee did not make caustic comments about the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, she made it clear that her views on the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and his present position in the Government remained unchanged.

Without naming Mr. Advani, she suggested that the power levers were controlled by him and not by the Prime Minister.

"We supported the NDA because of the Prime Minister. But the way NDA is running now, we have no doubt that the Prime Minister has no powers," Ms. Banerjee said. She plans a Bengal bandh on August 5 and a sit-in demonstration in front of the Prime Minister's residence in New Delhi on August 12.

1 AUG 2002

THE HINDU

# Atal derails Mamata, Eastern Rly to be split

A political decision, says Trinamool chief

Deepak Razdan and  
Arindam Sarkar  
New Delhi, July 29

IN A clear rebuff to Mamata Banerjee, the Union Cabinet tonight reaffirmed its decision to create seven new railway zones, rejecting the Trinamool Congress chief's demand that the bifurcation of Eastern Railway be rolled back.

In Kolkata, a shocked Mamata emerged from her Kalighat house for a couple of minutes to say this was "a political decision taken to please some NDA allies. I presume it was taken to reward Nitish Kumar for what he said after the Godhra incident". She was, however, silent on the question of pulling out of the NDA. That decision will now be taken at a meeting of Trinamool MPs convened by her on Wednesday.

Today, Mamata sent a note to the Prime Minister in which she "hoped that justice would be done to the Trinamool demand". Realising that the entire decision to create a new zone at Hajipur would not be revoked, she pleaded that the lucrative Dhanbad division remain with Eastern Railway. Her letter was handed over to Union Minister Vijay Goel by Trinamool Rajya Sabha MP Dinesh Trivedi.

But at the Cabinet meeting chaired by the PM, Mamata's demand found few takers. Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani, NDA convener and Defence Minister George Fernandes stood solidly behind the Railway Minister's move to create new zones.

Political observers say that the Cabinet decision clearly indicates that the BJP leadership has made its choice between



Mamata Banerjee  
Stumped

West Bengal and Bihar, where the saffron party has greater political stakes. Railway Minister and Samata MP Nitish Kumar hails from Bihar and so does the JD(U) leader Sharad Yadav.

Asked if the Cabinet took note of the Trinamool Congress leader's protests over the new zones, Information and Broadcasting Minister Sushma Swaraj told reporters that Cabinet decisions were "administrative and professional" decisions taken without "political considerations".

She said the Cabinet not only confirmed the new zones' creation but upheld the Railway Ministry's notifications to operationalise them. While the East Central Railway headquartered at Hajipur, and the North Western Railway (at Jaipur) would be operational from October 1, the rest would start functioning from April 1, 2003.

## Didi undecided, Left to hit the streets

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, July 29

WHILE THE Trinamool Congress is still undecided over the course of action it is going to take to protest today's Cabinet decision, the Left Front has made up its mind to hit the streets from tomorrow.

"On Wednesday, our supporters will agitate at all railway stations. This will be followed by a massive demonstration in front of the Eastern Railway headquarters on August 2," State CPI(M) secretary Anil Biswas told reporters.

Mamata Banerjee today said that the Trinamool would frame its response by Wednesday. She has called a meeting of party leaders where the issue would be discussed threadbare. But some senior Trinamool leaders felt that pulling out of the NDA is the only option left before Mamata. They gave hints that the Trinamool leader would now go all out against Railway Minister Nitish Kumar and expose his role in hushing up the Godhra incident.

# Mamata firm on ER stand

ANINDYA SENGUPTA  
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, July 20. — The impasse in the Trinamul between senior leaders eager for more ministerial berths at the Centre and Miss Mamata Banerjee, who's refusing to budge on the ER bifurcation issue, has taken a new turn.

The Trinamul chief has now told her party colleagues that if they persist with their demand that she join the Cabinet and bargain for more MoS posts for the party, she will rejoin the ministry but quit if the Centre doesn't reconsider the ER issue.

Having not found enough reasons for continuing with the demand for a review of the ER bifurcation prior to rejoining the ministry, Trinamul leaders had argued that she should rethink. But Miss Banerjee's latest stand has ensured that the impasse remains.

When party leaders told her, in private, that her presence in the council of ministers (and more ministerial

berths) rather than two ER divisions would be more advantageous, Miss Banerjee reportedly told them that she was amenable to acceding to their request if they had no objections with her quitting the Cabinet if the Centre refused to accept her demands.

Miss Banerjee has been clearly told by the NDA leadership that she will have to rejoin the Cabinet without setting pre-conditions. A mini-reshuffle is expected on 27 July and Miss Banerjee will have to make up her mind at the earliest as party leaders believe that chances of yet another reshuffle are remote. Mr George Fernandes, NDA convener, made it clear to her, at a one-to-one in his chamber on Thursday, that it won't be possible for the NDA to reconsider the Cabinet decision unless she joins the ministry.

Miss Banerjee, on the other hand, wants the NDA to provide her with a face-saver in the form of keeping work relating to the creation of new zones in abeyance.

# Cabinet unlikely to do Mamata bidding on ER

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 14 JULY

**M**S Mamata Banerjee and her supporters have launched into celebrations over Saturday's decision to send the matter of new rail zones to Cabinet for reconsideration even as there are few signs to suggest that the top deci-



MAMATA: FLIP-FLOP

sion-making body could undo the work of railways minister, Nitish Kumar.

Ms Banerjee, according to reports from Kolkata, welcomed the idea of a review by the Cabinet, while supporters said that Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee's decision has removed the hurdles from the Trinamool leader's return to the Cabinet.

NDA circles, however, remain sceptical that the Cabinet on Tuesday could order the rollback that Ms Banerjee is looking forward to. After starting off as a Bengal versus Bihar tussle, the matter has acquired wider dimension bringing in many states. Saturday's newspapers carried full-page insert issued by the Orissa government in support of Mr Kumar's decision to create new zones, one of which is to come up in Bhubaneswar. Chief ministers of other states where NDA has important stakes—Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh—have already publicly endorsed the decision, and that leaves Prime Minister with little room to accommodate Ms Banerjee.

There are other factors working to the disadvantage of the Trinamool leader. First, her opposi-

## George talks Mamata into attending NDA meet

New Delhi

14 JULY

A day after the government decided to refer the Eastern Railway bifurcation controversy to the Union Cabinet, NDA convenor George Fernandes spoke to Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee after which she participated in the NDA meet.

"We are very keen that she joins the government," Mr Fernandes told reporters on Sunday. He said the bifurcation issue did not figure in the NDA meeting. "This matter has been referred to the Cabinet. I am sure something will emerge," Mr Fernandes said.

Following her discussion with Mr Fernandes, Ms Banerjee left Kolkata to participate in the NDA meeting, which was also attended by Railway Minister Nitish Kumar. Before leaving Kolkata, Ms Banerjee referred to her talk with Mr Fernandes as fruitful and welcomed the decision to reconsider the bifurcation issue. "I am happy with the decision and am grateful to both the Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and deputy prime minister L.K. Advani," she said. —PTI

tion may have found endorsement from retired railway officials, but are easy to be countered on the political plane. She was supportive of the decision and turned against it only after Mr Kumar decided to hive off Mughalsarai and Dhanbad divisions of the Kolkata-headquartered Eastern Railway.

Secondly, the Vajpayee, Advani and Fernandes trio is aware that their colleague will walk out rather than commit harakiri by supporting any move to reverse the decision.

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# Track to nowhere

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*Mamata Banerjee's obsession with the CPI(M)'s excesses has made her blind to the big picture. Having lost her political moorings, she is now helplessly adrift in both Bengal and Delhi, says Amulya Ganguli*

MAMATA BANERJEE'S could have been a success story resembling a fairy tale. A woman from a humble background ditching her own decrepit party and taking on Goliath in the shape of the CPI(M). In a real sense, she was a phenomenon waiting to happen for she represented the suppressed anger and frustration of every one of those who were at the receiving end of the CPI(M)'s arrogance and anger.

For many years before Mamata's emergence as a prominent leader, Bengal presented the curious picture of a major all-India organisation, with a secure 40 per cent vote bank in the state, hamstrung by its own factionalism and inefficiency. Nowhere else has a party with a seemingly impregnable and not inconsiderable base of support failed as miserably as the Congress has in Bengal. The Congress secured 36.2 per cent of the votes in 1991 that rose to 39.4 in 1996. In contrast, the CPI(M) received 35.2 per cent in 1991 and 36.7 in 1996.

The reason why the CPI(M) still remains in the driver's seat is that the Left Front, as a whole, got more — 48.7 in 1991 and 49.08 in 1996. If the Congress failed, it is obviously because it lacked leadership. While its younger generation was never quite able to shed its Youth Congress image, which had helped it so much in the late Sixties and early Seventies to face the first Leftist challenge, its elderly leaders acted either like clowns (like Siddhartha Shankar Ray) or as canny time-servers (like Pranab Mukherjee) or were simply unfit in all senses of the term (like Barkat Ghani Khan Choudhury).

Little wonder, therefore, that when Mamata gave some indication of filling the vacuum, she received enthusiastic support from the traditional Congress supporters. In their fervour, Mamata's supporters were willing to overlook many of her obvious flaws — her lack of sophistication (no mean requisite in a state replete with culture vultures), her whimsical nature, born perhaps of an innate lack of confidence which makes her overtly combative, and her ideological blind spot, which was to play havoc with her political postures later.

When she first made her presence felt, the CPI(M) was unnerved, for not since the demise of the Naxalites had the Marxists faced anyone like her. It was not surprising, therefore, that there were at least two attempts to eliminate her physically — an aspect of politics about which the communists have never been squeamish.

But they needn't have bothered. They could have banked on the Congress to



PHOTO: SUBHANKAR CHAKRABORTY

Mamata Banerjee is her own worst enemy. Her constant tantrums have begun to alienate even her loyalists, eroding her famous mass base.

shoot itself in the foot. Whether it was Pranab Mukherjee or Somen Mitra, neither was willing to let Mamata have her way against the CPI(M) under the overall leadership of the party. For in that case she would have stolen their thunder.

The Congress's customary factionalism first led to her marginalisation within the outfit and then to the party's split. A look at the percentages of votes secured by the Trinamool Congress shows how the standard 40 per cent vote bank of the party had been divided between the two. In 1998, the Trinamool secured 24.3 per cent to the Congress' 15.04 while in 1999, the Trinamool got 26.06 to the Congress' 13.2. In 2001, the Trinamool secured 30.6 per cent to the Congress' 8.2. But the CPI(M) no longer had any

reason to worry.

It knew that Trinamool's alliance with the BJP meant that it was moving into an orbit of politics whose future was uncertain. For a start, such a tie-up will always be something of a liability in a state in which the BJP doesn't have a base — the BJP's share of votes in Bengal having fallen from 11.4 in 1991 to 6.4 in 1996 and 5.1 in 2001. At the Centre, the Trinamool's alliance with the BJP is of limited use considering the rickety nature of the present coalition in Delhi and because of the possibility that the BJP may not be able to form one at the time of the next general election because of the party's return to its hardline Hindurva agenda. The Trinamool is in a sinking boat.

All that it may expect to get out of its

ties with the BJP is a ministership. But that will not hide its irrelevance at the state level. In this respect, the Trinamool seems to have joined other such locally irrelevant parties as Samata, which is now of little consequence in Bihar, or Janata Dal (United) which doesn't seem to have a base anywhere, or parties like the PMK or MDMK which play no more than a marginal role in Tamil Nadu.

Arguably, Mamata is her own worst enemy. Having left her natural home (the Congress), she has lost her political moorings and is now helplessly adrift both in Bengal and at the Centre. What is more, her tantrums have begun to irritate even her (steadily dwindling) number of supporters. Besides, as her quick-fire changes of allegiance at the time of last year's election from the BJP to the Congress and back showed, she has no firm convictions. If she is not categorised as an opportunist, it is because of the apparent sincerity with which she expresses herself. In this respect, she is considered naive rather than a schemer. But that doesn't make her any more reliable as an ally than a traditional *aya ram gaya ram* brand of a politician.

The main reason for her present plight is that her strength has become her weakness. Her single-minded obsession with the CPI(M)'s excesses (of which there is no doubt) has made her oblivious of the overall picture. She doesn't have a national vision. She didn't realise that her alliance with the BJP will make her court a brand of politics that has negative features like communalism.

In the context of Indian history, the BJP represents a political philosophy based on fascist and revivalist concepts which are as distinct from the Congress and Leftist ideologies as black is from white. Mamata, however, appears blissfully oblivious of this distinction and unaware of the danger of her ties with the BJP alienating her from the minorities and the liberal-minded among the Hindus. What she failed to realise is that it is possible to oppose a party at the state level while cooperating with it at the Centre in keeping with a larger vision, as both the Congress and the CPI(M) have been doing. And as she is now doing over the issue of bifurcating the Eastern Railway. It is a pity, however, that she failed in her original mission, allowing the CPI(M) to forge ahead with an even greater vigour than before. There was a need for someone to offer resistance to the unrelenting Marxist juggernaut in Bengal. But it had to be done in a sophisticated and imaginative manner. Mamata lacked both these attributes.



# The self-destructive trait

Winston Churchill was once told by Lloyd George that a Prime Minister should be surrounded by people who could stand up to him and say "No", not once but thrice. Mamata Banerjee, the *enfant terrible* of Indian politics, doesn't have men of this category around her.

Or she wouldn't have ditched herself and her party by correlating ministerial berths with an issue that has little to do with the well-being of the people of West Bengal, let alone the rest of the country.

Sudip Bandopadhyay, who used to be her trusted aide, has suddenly fallen from grace for being too close to senior BJP leader Pramod Mahajan. Nitish Sengupta doesn't dare to speak out, fearing that Miss Banerjee might put an end to chances of him becoming a minister.

Ranjit Panja, a doctor of international repute, loves to be a patient when it comes to Miss Banerjee. Krishna Bose is down with increasing infirmities of age. Bikram Sarkar has still not been able to shed his bureaucratic attire, making him an amateur politician, much to Miss Banerjee's comfort.

As for Anandamohan Biswas and Akbar Ali Khondakar, Miss Banerjee's is the last word.

That sums up the arrogance and haughtiness of the Trinamul Congress chief: brusque, and taking decisions regardless of the opinions of other party MPs and leaders.

Unless political calculations change dramatically over the coming days, she must have understood by now that the Vajpayee government could not care less when it comes to acceding to a demand raised by her. Miss Banerjee's demand to have the Eastern Railways bifurcation issue reviewed and tag it to the Trinamul Congress's reinduction into the ministry is but another suicidal step which has exposed her to public ridicule.

It has been proved yet again that she believes in putting the cart before the horse and loves to pay a high price for the umpteen blunders she continues to commit.

Mamata Banerjee's demand to have the Eastern Railways bifurcation reviewed and tag it to the Trinamul's reinduction into the ministry is but another suicidal step which has exposed her to public ridicule. It has been proved yet again that she loves to pay a high price for the umpteen blunders she continues to commit, writes ANINDYA SENGUPTA

Take the ER bifurcation issue. Nitish Kumar's decision would certainly rob ER of its revenue-elastic Dhanbad division as it heavily contributes to the ER coffers through a huge amount of freight handling.

This means that the proposed East-Central Railways, with Hajipur as its headquarters, would be the beneficiary, meaning Bihar and Jharkhand.

Nitish Kumar wants to carve out new zones for Bihar's benefit, while Miss Banerjee wants ER, and hence Bengal, to retain its pride of place. But the question is that a Bengal-Bihar tussle would, in no way, affect the revenues of Indian Railways.

ER's revenue loss could be East-Central Railways' revenue gain. But Indian Railways, as an integrated network, remains unaffected in terms of revenue. Nitish Kumar's decision is certainly a step towards balkanisation, as confining railway operations to state boundaries would mean a Railways general manager often being pulled up by a chief minister or a state minister. But Miss Banerjee needs to explain how it is going to affect West Bengal.

Miss Banerjee's decision, prompted by regional considerations, isn't something new. In the early 1950s, the issue of whether linguistic considerations should be the premise for the reorganisation of states had turned into a raging debate.

Sensing this early, the then Congress leadership had formed

state units, like the Andhra Pradesh and Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee, even when there wasn't an Andhra or a Kerala. Telugu had been the basic reason for an agitation which led to the creation of Andhra Pradesh.

Hence, Miss Banerjee's penchant for regionalising demands can be understood given the profile of her party. But what is inexplicable is the complete absence of notions of realpolitik by linking this to the acceptance of ministerial berths.



Mamata Banerjee with her party leaders in Kolkata. The existence of the Trinamul Congress cannot be fathomed beyond the hallowed portals of the West Bengal Assembly. — Sailendra Mal.

the Consultative Committee on Railways far more effectively with his leader as minister.

The ER decision is to be implemented on 1 October, meaning that Miss Banerjee's acceptance of ministerial berths would have paved the way for a protracted battle in the Union Cabinet against Nitish Kumar's decision.

There was also a chance of some of the ministers throwing their weight behind Miss Banerjee in this regard. In Bengal, she could have judiciously utilised the issue by directing partymen to launch a massive agitation, even by feeding parochialism, if necessary.

However, she prefers to be the National Democratic Alliance's problem child, always looking up to the Prime Minister for succour. One could give thanks that her political naivete may end up sparing us all. But for Trinamul leaders, Miss Banerjee's decisions have left them tearing their hair.

Indeed, the Trinamul Congress has largely become a legislative party, with every party meet being managed by party legislators.

The existence of the party cannot be fathomed beyond the hallowed portals of the Assembly where the Trinamul Congress is too busy flexing its muscles with the Congress than the Left Front.

A party that used to be known for its organisational strength in the city, either side of Gangetic West

Bengal and 100 miles around the outer limits of the city, is gradually falling by the wayside, with disenchanted voters queuing up in front of polling booths to exercise their franchise in favour of the Left Front as Miss Banerjee has failed to offer a viable alternative.

After the serious drubbing in the Assembly polls, Miss Banerjee's trip to Agartala saw the Trinamul Congress candidate forfeiting his deposit. Her district tours to drum up support for the municipal polls saw the party being humbled, failing to bag a single municipality.

Eleven of her party candidates revolted and withdrew their nominations for the Haldia municipal polls. Her candidate for the Howrah South seat forfeited his deposit.

At such a critical juncture, she decides to sulk at Harish Chatterjee Street, having convinced herself that she had fought a valiant battle for the people of West Bengal.

She still doesn't realise that her innumerable blunders won't keep the Trinamul Congress flag flying in Bengal, with a "resurgent" Congress out to reap the benefits of her inexplicable actions.

Her party rank and file, as well as MLAs and MPs, keep discussing how fatal her decision to stay away from the ministry could be. But they do not have the gall to question her acts as she keeps dishing out crazy, nonsensical decisions to the party.

With the panchayat polls less than a year away, ministerial berths for the Trinamul Congress would have enabled Miss Banerjee to take the wind out of Alimuddin Street's sails.

A rural development ministry would have worked wonders for her, come panchayat polls next year. A Cabinet berth could have set the ball rolling for her and would have certainly lifted the spirits of beleaguered Trinamul activists.

But she won't budge. Mamata Banerjee, without her streak of self-destructiveness, amounts to Hamlet without the Ghost.

(The author is Special Representative, The Statesman, Kolkata.)

7 JUL 2002

# Mamata puts Atal Govt on 24-hr notice

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 3

ADOPTING A tough posture on the issue of splitting the Eastern Railway zone, Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee today put the Vajpayee Government on notice by giving the Prime Minister 24 hours to settle the dispute in her favour. Failing this, she threatened, her party would take to the streets in West Bengal.

The Trinamool leader reportedly told Vajpayee that things could "go beyond her control" if her ultimatum was ignored.

According to sources, Mamata emphasised that the Centre's inaction on the issue would only strengthen the impression that the BJP is "only a party of the cowbelt". She also complained that the decision on creating a new railway zone headquartered at Hajipur seemed to be influenced by the fact that the Union Council of Ministers was dominated by MPs from Bihar while West Bengal was grossly under-represented.

With the PM himself looking into the matter and NDA convenor George Fernandes conducting negotiations on his behalf, the deadlock is expected to be broken soon.

Sources said there was a strong possibility that Mamata would accept a "face-saving" proposal from the Government for setting up a Cabinet sub-committee to review the railway zone proposal. The plan to start the new Eastern Central zone could be held in abeyance till the committee submitted its report.



Mamata Banerjee

Railway Minister Nitish Kumar met Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani this evening and is believed to have discussed the contours of the formula that is being considered.

But earlier in the day, there was a showdown between the Railway Minister and MPs from Bengal, when Trinamool and Left representatives on the Railways Consultative Committee walked out of a meeting in protest against Nitish Kumar's remark that there was no question of reviewing the decision to bifurcate Eastern Railway and that the new zonal headquarters at Hajipur would be functional by October 1. Trinamool MP Sudip Bandyopadhyay led the walkout stating that creating the new zone was politically motivated and would deprive West Bengal of economic development.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

20 JUL 2002

## Missed opportunity

6.1.17 Mamata refuses to learn *g. p. h. c.*

Mamata Banerjee is her own worst enemy. She gives the impression that she doesn't need the CPI-M to hurt her. Her offer to accept any other portfolio except Railways provided she got two more berths could only have irritated her friends. The BJP felt no obligation to go that far to placate her. Fear of a fall-out over Tehelka led her into a petulant resignation. There were two dozen major railway projects, including five in West Bengal, when she quit and she must have known that this would result in their falling by the wayside. Her political stakes in these projects like Tamluk-Digha rail link and Metro Railway extension were high. Her image as a leader who not only promised but also delivered hinged on their early completion. The Marxists, scared of the popular impact of her projects, branded her a Bengali chauvinist who was "Bengal's and not India's railway minister". They heaved a sigh of relief when she quit. It was a missed opportunity.

History repeated itself during the recent reshuffle when she was offered rural development and also a choice of three other portfolios. Her senior party colleagues counselled her to opt for the first because of the immense scope it provided to improve the country's rural life. For West Bengal the portfolio had a special significance because of the massive misuse of central funds for rural development which she could have exposed. It would have made it possible to put the entire panchayat operation under a scanner. The Trinamul could have reaped political benefit and made deep inroads into rural Bengal. With the state panchayat elections due next year the timing would have been perfect. But that was not to be. She missed another opportunity, which could prove very costly.

THE STATESMAN

6.1.17

# Mamata backtracks, again...

Sanjay Singh in New Delhi

July 2. — With the government in no mood to relent, Miss Mamata Banerjee today climbed down a bit from her stand.

She had demanded the railway ministry for herself or an assurance that the government would not go ahead with the proposed division of Eastern Railway. Today, she asked the government to set up a committee to review the decision.

NDA leaders are trying to defer a showdown between Miss Banerjee and Mr Nitish Kumar. "We consider Miss Banerjee's latest gesture as positive. First, she had demanded railways. Now she has agreed to accept any other portfolio if the government promised to form a committee to review the ER division proposal. An assurance on this might be given to her," an official said.

Sources said Miss Banerjee would later take up the issue of inducting two of her party

representatives as ministers of state, sources said. She is still awaiting a response from the government.

Trinamul chief whip Mr Sudip Bandopadhyaya said: "We have not received any communication from the government. Our leader has stated her position to the Prime Minister. It is for him to respond. Pending constitution of a committee and submission of its report, the proposal should be in abeyance. We would also have to see what modalities the government wants to offer and it has to be acceptable to Miss Banerjee and Mr Kumar."

Mr Bandopadhyaya said the stand-off wouldn't have any bearing on the party's support to the NDA.

The railway ministry's parliamentary consultative committee meets tomorrow. Mr Bandopadhyaya is a member in the committee. Mr Kumar will chair the meeting.

**Jaya gets her way:** Even as Miss Banerjee is sulking over a suitable Cabinet berth, Miss J Jaya-

## Nitish back to business

NEW DELHI, July 2. — It's business as usual for Mr Nitish Kumar at the Rail Bhavan. Amid hectic negotiations for a re-entry into the Cabinet, the Mamata Banerjee camp continues to fume.

Mr Kumar has minister refused to comment on Miss Banerjee's refusal to accept a ministerial post till she got the railway portfolio or Mr Kumar was divested of its charge. His supporters dismissed Miss Banerjee's demand as "day-dreams" and her protest as "yet another gimmick". They ridiculed her latest demand that the decision to carve an East Central Railway zone out of Eastern Railway reviewed. "The decision on East Central Zone cannot be reversed in isolation as the move to create seven new zones was a collective decision," an official said. Miss Banerjee's demands seeking a "review" of the decision by a panel or the restoration of the Dhanbad division to the eastern zone are "face-saving devices", he said. "The decision to create an east-central zone has its administrative reasons and it will stand any scrutiny."

Mr Kumar said he had assured Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee that the proposed new zone would not affect the interests of West Bengal or the eastern zone. — SNS

lalitha had her way with the Centre. She had demanded that three Tamil outfits — the Tamil Nadu Liberation Army, Tamil National Retrieval Troops and Akhil Bharat Nepal Ekta Samaj — be banned under Pota. The

Centre today declared these outfits terrorist organisations and banned them under Pota with immediate effect.

**Editorial: Counter-productive:** page 4

## Samata plays the upper-caste card

NEW DELHI, July 2. — Four Samata Party MPs today accused the NDA leaders of "overlooking the delicate balance of caste politics" and warned that the ruling coalition would face its adverse effects when elections are held.

"NDA will face the consequences at least in Bihar. We will suffer too... Dominant castes have been ignored in the Cabinet expansion," MPs said at a press conference. They said they would launch mass-contact programmes in Bihar to "look for an alternative to the BJP".

Mr Prabhunath Singh, Mr Manjay Lal, Mr Arun Kumar and Mr Rajiv Ranjan 'Lalan' however said they had no plans to quit the party.

**Yechury on reshuffle:** The Cabinet expansion has made a mockery of the principles of governance and turned the Union council of ministers to a joke. CPI-M politburo member Mr Sitaram Yechury said in Bhubaneswar today. — SNS

## ... As letter delay dashes hopes

Anindya Sengupta in Kolkata

July 2. — Miss Mamata Banerjee was prepared to reach Rashtrapati Bhavan for being sworn-in as a minister without a portfolio, hoping that she would get a call from the PMO with the assurance that the Eastern Railways bifurcation issue would be reviewed.

A delayed decision, however, with regard to dispatching the letter to the PMO dashed her hopes.

Trinamul Congress sources in Delhi said today that the party was still hopeful of getting ministerial berths. The exercise would have been complete had the letter to the Prime Minister arrived early in the day, they said.

Miss Banerjee, after having learnt that she won't get the railways portfolio, tried to press the bargaining lever by raising two demands — that Mr Nitish Kumar be removed from railways, or the ER bifurcation issue be reviewed.

The decision was taken late in the afternoon and party MP Mr Dinesh Trivedi was asked to take the letter and hand it over to the PMO. Mr Trivedi reportedly assured the party leadership that he would ensure a review of the ER bifurcation.



Miss Mamata Banerjee

Hearing this, Miss Banerjee prepared to go to Rashtrapati Bhavan to participate in the swearing-in ceremony, having convinced herself that being a minister without any portfolio would boost her party's image. Mr Trivedi, however, met with little success and the Trinamul chief didn't even get a call from the PMO throughout the evening.

It is learnt that Mr Sudip Bandopadhyaya, party chief whip in the Lok Sabha, remained closeted in Miss Banerjee's Delhi residence, trying to explain the necessity of joining the Cabinet. Mr Pankaj Banerjee, leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, contacted Miss Banerjee from Kolkata in the afternoon and said her presence in the Cabinet was essential regardless of the portfolio allotted.

It was Mr Subrata Mukherjee who reportedly told Miss Banerjee that her decision to stay away from the Cabinet on the ER division was a "historic" one.

Some Trinamul MPs are blaming Mr Mukherjee for "misleading" Miss Banerjee. Besides her Cabinet berth, Miss Banerjee had reportedly decided to ask for two minister of state posts for Mr Ananda Mohan Biswas and Mr Nitish Sengupta, disregarding Mr Bandopadhyaya's "objection claim".

# Atal sop for derailed Didi

HS Bartwal &  
Arindam Sarkar  
New Delhi/Kolkata, July 2

THE DEADLOCK over the Trinamool Congress joining the Vajpayee Cabinet is likely to end soon with the Prime Minister deciding that an expert committee would be set up to examine the feasibility of bifurcating the Eastern Railway zone.

Mamata today was asked to choose between the Coal and Mines and the Surface Transport portfolios, and the Trinamool chief is said to be keen on the latter.

Throughout the day, NDA



Mamata Banerjee

leaders debated Mamata's demand for revoking Railway Minister Nitish Kumar's order splitting Eastern Railway. One section felt that this was a sensitive issue which may well backfire on the alliance

in Bihar should a hasty step be taken. With the State Assemblies of both West Bengal and Bihar having passed opposing resolutions on Nitish Kumar's move, it has rapidly assumed the character of a Bengal-Bihar dispute.

While Mamata has high stakes in West Bengal where she can't afford to be seen as having compromised on the State's interests for a ministerial berth, many NDA leaders are apprehensive that RJD chief Laloo Yadav will train his guns on them in Bihar, where they are in the Opposition, if the Government drops the proposal.

The Bihar Assembly passed a unanimous resolution welcoming the move to create the East Central railway zone at Hajipur and congratulating Nitish Kumar for the decision.

Most NDA parties, too, supported the resolution wholeheartedly. It would be deeply embarrassing for them to back out now, argued many NDA leaders.

A face-saving formula has reportedly been worked out: an expert committee would be set up to review the feasibility of the decision to bifurcate the Eastern Railway zone. In this manner, the matter could be shelved for some time.

4 JUL 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

# Mamata bargain for 3 ministries hits BJP wall

SIN  
217  
D.P.P. T.M.C.  
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 1. — The official reason for Miss Mamata Banerjee not joining the Cabinet was the Centre's move to divide the Eastern Railway.

The real reason was the BJP's refusal to accept her condition: She would give up her demand for the railway ministry if two other representatives from the Trinamul were inducted as ministers of state.

But the BJP didn't yield to the demand. Besides a Cabinet berth, it offered the Trinamul one minister of state slot, the representation the party had in the government before Miss Banerjee resigned over the Tehelka expose.

Talks are, however, on and NDA leaders expect she'll agree to join the government.

The Trinamul chief whip in the Lok Sabha, Mr Sudip Bando-padhyay, said Miss Banerjee's refusal to join the Cabinet was in protest against the Centre's move to divide Eastern Railway, which will "harm the economic interests of Bengal". She had raised the issue during her talks with the Prime Minister and NDA convener Mr George Fernandes.

Had she been assured that the government would review the decision, she would have joined the Cabinet even without a portfolio, Mr Bando-padhyay said. Sources said the Prime Minister was keen to have her in the Cabinet but wanted her to be more amenable. After the swearing-in, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee was asked whether Miss Banerjee would be inducted. "Everything is possible," was his response.

The Trinamul today submitted a memorandum to Mr Fernandes, protesting against the decision to transfer four of the seven divisions of Eastern Railway to the proposed Hajipur-based East Central Railway. Mr Bando-padhyay even threatened to launch an agitation against the move "to appease Bihar" at the cost of other states. "A minister shouldn't behave like Mohammed-bin-Tughlaq," he said, referring to Mr Nitish Kumar.

Miss Banerjee's decision to stay away from the Cabinet has shocked her party colleagues, SNS adds from Kolkata. Mr Jayanta Bhattacharyya, Trinamul MP, described her decision as "unfortunate because as a Union minister she would have worked more for Bengal's betterment".

Mr Partha Chatterjee, party MLA, flew from Mumbai to Delhi before the swearing-in to impress upon her that she should take up any portfolio to boost the flagging morale of Trinamul workers.

State BJP president Mr Asim Ghosh, too, described Miss Banerjee's decision as unfortunate. "This shows the Trinamul doesn't appreciate the difficulties the Prime Minister faces in running a coalition government."

Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee hinted that Miss Banerjee's decision wouldn't affect the state because her earlier stint at the Centre "didn't benefit Bengal in any way". But wouldn't it have helped the state in placing its demands before Delhi had Miss Banerjee in the Cabinet? Mr Bhattacharjee said: "This is regularly done by me and my finance minister."

More reports on page 1

1 JUL 2002

MAMATA SETS THREE-DAY DEADLINE FOR ER DIVISION REVIEW

# Spectre of 72-hr bandh

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, July 21. — The Trinamul Congress has threatened to call a 72-hour Bangla bandh if the Union Cabinet does not change its decision on the Eastern Railway division by 24 July.

Miss Mamata Banerjee announced this at a rally today. She said she would reveal her party's agitation plans on 24 July if the current decision is not put on hold.

There was no official reaction from the Centre or the BJP on the 72-hour deadline, adds SNS from New Delhi. Sources close to the Prime Minister said the government was closely monitoring the Trinamul chief's conduct. Mr M Venkaiah Naidu declined to comment on the matter. The PMO spokesman did not respond to Miss Banerjee's latest threat. "Such outbursts will not help resolve the differences within the NDA over the division of railway zones," a BJP leader said.

Miss Banerjee said if the ER headquarters was shifted from the city, the North East Frontier Railways headquarters should be shifted to Siliguri from Maligaon.

The rally was held in memory of Congress workers killed in police firing on 21 July 1993.

The Trinamul chief asked CPI-M and Congress workers to "drop party

flags and join Trinamul activists in this agitation in the state's interest."

She urged the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister to correct the "injustice about to be meted out to West Bengal at the whims of the railway minister".

"I am not against any development project in Bihar, but it should not be implemented at the cost of West Bengal."

## CM urges restraint

KOLKATA, July 21. — Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee has urged the Trinamul Congress not to call a 72-hour Bangla bandh over the Eastern Railway division as it would affect the state adversely.

The chief minister said the division was a sensitive issue and should be dealt with very carefully. "We must see that the interest of no state is affected."

Mr Bhattacharjee said he had discussed the matter with the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, and both had assured him that the Cabinet would take up the matter. "Their assurance should be honoured and they should be given time. It would not be wise to go in for a confrontation now ... The interest of the state and the interest of any individual should not be mixed up."

Asked if the Congress would support the 72-hour bandh, Mr Pranab Mukherjee, PCC chief, said his party had not taken any decision.

— SNS

Mr Subrata Mukherjee said the move to divide Eastern Railway was an attempt to partition Bengal and that agitation was the only way to stop it.

Mr Sudip Bandopadhyay, chief whip of the Trinamul parliamentary party, criticised Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee for making token gestures to stop the division. Miss Banerjee was trying to draw the country's attention to the "injustice" being meted out to West Bengal, he said.



NUMBERS TO SHOW: Will they bring West Bengal to a standstill? The Trinamul rally at the CR Avenue-Bentinnck Street crossing on Sunday. — The Statesman (Rally cuts off N Kolkata, Kolkata Plus 1)

# Mamata becomes parivar's Bengal face

BY ASHIS CHAKRABARTI

**Calcutta, May 2:** In taking her place firmly in the Sangh parivar during the Gujarat debate in Parliament, Mamata Banerjee has risked her credibility, as never before, to not only Muslims but also sections of her middle class constituency. She will henceforth be counted among those worthies who rose in defence, not just of the Vajpayee government, but of Narendra Modi whose administration stands accused on national and international platforms for the pogrom in Gujarat.

In other words, she took her place among the accused. Yet she was the first among the BJP's allies to cry foul over Gujarat and demand Modi's resignation at a time when even the biggest ally, Telugu Desam, was

dithering on the issue. Once the Desam chief and Andhra Pradesh chief minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, too, joined the out-Modi chorus, an elated Mamata promised she would do as Naidu did.

Then came the volte-face she did not care to explain even to "friend" Naidu. She still wanted Modi to go but announced that she would vote with the government against the Opposition-sponsored censure motion on Gujarat.

She did so, while the Desam walked out of the Lok Sabha in disapproval of the Prime Minister's reply to the debate on Gujarat.

Publicly, she offered an explanation for the about-turn, which rang pathetically hollow. She had to vote against the motion, she said, to ensure the govern-

ment's — and the country's — stability. She had to do her bit to save the government because the people did not want another mid-term election.

The argument was so ridiculous that even Mamata could not deceive herself enough with it. The fact clearly was that the support, opposition or abstention of her nine MPs in the Lok Sabha during the voting would have made no difference to the government's survival.

Nobody expected the government to fail, not even if the Desam joined smaller allies like the Jan Shakti and the National Conference to abstain from voting because the 13-member Bahujan Samaj Party moved in to back the government in return for the BJP's support to Mayavati's chief ministership of Uttar Pradesh.

A quid pro quo was actually Mamata's logic, too, though she would not admit it in public. She too had struck a deal a la Mayawati — to return to the Union Cabinet — and Gujarat was a price she thought she could afford to pay for it. That is why she could not do what the Desam did.

After all, the Desam supports the NDA government from the outside. But she was — and waiting again to be — an insider. She thinks she needs a place in the NDA government to breathe life back into her fight against the Marxists. But her political compulsion has become something of a trap, forcing her to pay a huge price.

Yet, the Gujarat motion gave her an excellent opportunity to stand up and be counted differently. After making her

party's point about Gujarat, she could have stayed away from the voting. That would have salvaged her credibility without unnecessarily worrying Mamata about the government's stability.

Two basic things would now stare her in the face on home turf in Bengal. She would lose the confidence of the Muslims almost completely.

In political terms, this could be a huge loss because, leaving aside Jammu and Kashmir, West Bengal has the second largest Muslim population — 24 per cent against Assam's 28 per cent — in the whole country.

To this, her predictable relict would be that West Bengal's politics is polarised, not on communal, but ideological lines. She had to compromise on the Muslim support, she might

argue, the day she decided to join the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance.

True, breaking away from the BJP and alighting with the Congress did not stop her from losing the Assembly polls. But the Gujarat carnage has come as a test for each political party and it is bigger than a number's test. Mamata may have to pay dear for failing that test.

The other consequence of her supping with the saffronites will unfold in Bengal as never before.

Despite the early attempts by the Hindu Mahasabha and the legacy of Shyamaprasad Mukherjee, the saffron parivar failed to strike roots in the state. Mamata now will be the parivar's most recognisable face in Bengal, no matter what her other preferences are.



# Mamata stands by PM

BY OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

**Calcutta, April 16:** The Trinamul Congress today gave breathing space to an ally-assailed Atal Bihari Vajpayee, saying it will support any confidence motion moved by the Prime Minister despite its differences with the BJP on the Gujarat developments. But the party will continue to put pressure on the Centre to strictly adhere to the national agenda for governance.

Talking to reporters here this afternoon, Trinamul chief Mamata Banerjee explained that her party did not favour the idea of a Lok Sabha election every alternate year as it hampered national development and put a fresh burden on the common people.

"But our support to the Vajpayee government will not be blind support. We have certain

specific commitments to the people and intend to take them up with the Centre from time to time," she said.

The Trinamul leader, who has been in constant touch with Telugu Desam Party chief Chandrababu Naidu over Gujarat for the past few days, conceded that the two parties had come closer due to their "ideological affinity".

Mamata reiterated her party's stand on Narendra Modi's removal as Gujarat chief minister and opposed snap polls in the riot-ravaged state. "We are one with the Desam over the Gujarat issue and feel the administration's main task is to maintain peace and restore people's confidence," she asserted.

Mamata distanced herself from the Congress-led Opposition gameplan to expose differences among the NDA partners by seeking a vote on the continu-

ation of the Modi government under Rule 184.

But she refused to commit her support in the event of a vote under Rule 184. "Our MPs will take a decision if and when the matter comes up in the Lok Sabha," she said.

Asked whether NDA convenor George Fernandes had contacted her, Mamata said: "Many NDA leaders have been in constant touch with me. I can name 15 leaders who have talked to me on the recent developments. I will also talk to the Prime Minister when I go to Delhi next week."

Sources said several factors have prompted Trinamul not to quit the NDA despite the BJP's refusal to replace the Gujarat chief minister. One of them is finance minister Yashwant Sinha's hint of a rollback of some budget proposals that had gone against the middle-class.

# Mamata firm on oust-Modi demand

9.11.10

5-10

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, April 13. — Miss Mamata Banerjee stands by her demand that Mr Narendra Modi should resign. "We have not changed our stand on this issue," she told reporters today while attending a convention organised by the Indian Medical Association on the amended Clinical Establishment Act.

About Mrs Sonia Gandhi's invitation to NDA allies to discuss the secularism issue, Miss Banerjee said: "She has done her bit — inviting the allies for a discussion. Now it is for each of us to decide how we should respond to the call."

Asked her to comment on the announcement of polls in Gujarat, she said: "I'm not



Miss Mamata Banerjee

comfortable with this kind of politics."

At the IMA convention where doctors expressed their resentment towards the amended Clinical Establishment Act, Miss Banerjee

19/4  
said: "The Left Front government is ensuring that health services become inaccessible to ordinary people. Before increasing charges for health facilities, it should improve infrastructure...The arbitrary hiking of licence fees for clinics and professional taxes of doctors who practice privately will eventually take its toll on the people because doctors will increase their fees to make up for the extra expenditure."

The Trinamul chief further said: "The amended Act is for crorepati doctors, not ordinary ones."

Miss Banerjee asked the doctors to move a deputation on the issue so that her party could raise it in the Assembly.

# Mulayam elected leader, is hopeful

By Our Special Correspondent

LUCKNOW, FEB. 26. The Samajwadi Party (SP) leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav, today said that the Uttar Pradesh Governor, Vishnu Kant Shastri, would honour democratic traditions by inviting him to form the next Government in the State.

Talking to newsmen after being formally elected leader of the Samajwadi Legislature Party, Mr. Yadav said that as the largest single party in the State Assembly, the SP should be called to form the next government. He cited the case of 1996

when A.B. Vajpayee was invited to form the government as leader of the largest single party in the then Lok Sabha.

However, if the Governor did not call him on his own he would go to meet him to stake his claim after the constitution of the new Assembly, Mr. Yadav said. This could be tomorrow or the day after, he added.

Mr. Yadav, however, said that he would not take any list of MLAs. A majority support to the Government could be proved on the floor of the Assembly in keeping with past rulings by courts.



The Samajwadi Party president, Mulayam Singh Yadav, who has been elected leader of the legislative party, with the party general-secretary, Amar Singh, in Lucknow on Tuesday. — Photo: Subir Roy

## Mantle for 'Maharaja'

By Sarabjit Pandher

CHANDIGARH, FEB. 26. History of sorts was made today when the democratic process restored political power to one of Punjab's most famous royal families. Amarinder Singh, scion of the royal family of the erstwhile princely State of Patiala, was elected by his party to head the

next Government in Punjab.

Still fondly addressed by many as "Maharaja Sahib", the election of Capt. Amarinder Singh as the leader of the Congress Legislature Party (CLP) was formally cleared by the party president, Sonia Gandhi, who had previously been unanimously authorised by the elected legislators to make the announcement. The choice was disclosed by Ahmed Patel, who was part of the four-member delegation of central observers, which also included the general-secretaries, Ambika Soni and Moti Lal Vora, and secretary, Hari Prasad.

The party then sent a delegation of senior leaders to the Governor, Lt. Gen. (Retd) J.F.R. Jacob, to stake claim to form the Government. The press was informed that the next Chief Minister would be sworn in on Wednesday, the birth anniversary of Sant Ravi Das.



## Nitish budget anti-people, says Mamata

Team ET

KOLKATA 26 FEBRUARY

WHEN IT comes to taking a stand on the Rail Budget, bitter political rivals can become strange bedfellows in this state. Former Union rail minister Mamata Banerjee went the Leftist way in calling Mr Nitish Kumar's Budget as "anti-people." It's altogether a different matter that her Trinamool Congress is part of the ruling NDA at the Centre. The CPI, part of the Left Front in the state, paid her a compliment. "As far as West Bengal is concerned, this Rail Budget is no match to the Mamata Budget," said Manju Majumdar, state secretary, CPI.

Estranged she may be from the Congress, but the latter too is concerned over Ms Banerjee's Bengal-centric Budget. "We are concerned over the fate of all the projects proposed by Mamata Banerjee. West Bengal has been totally deprived," said Mr Manas Bhuniya, state Congress spokesman. Ms Banerjee stayed away from the proceedings in Parliament on Tuesday and stayed put at her south Kolkata residence. She said she will voice her protest at the appropriate place and appropriate time.

The reason for political foes in the state making common cause against the Rail Budget is understandable. Unlike Mamata Banerjee, whose Budget was loaded with goodies for her home state, Mr Kumar has laid down norms for each state according to which allocation for new projects will be made. The rail minister has proposed to introduce three new trains and two super fast Jana Satabdi Express for the state. There is no mention of the extension works of Metro Railway or Circular Railway.

The Economic Times

67 130 22

# Jayalalithaa wins a war, Modi a battle

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: For one candidate, it was a 'vindication', for another it was a triumph in times of trouble. For a third, it was carrying forward the family's legacy.

On Sunday, her 54th birthday, AIADMK supremo J. Jayalalithaa perhaps received the best gift of her life as the people of Andipatti returned her to the Tamil Nadu assembly, paving her way to assume the chief minister's office once again. She defeated her DMK rival, Vaigai Shekhar, by 41,200 votes.

Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi also triumphed in the Rajkot-II assembly seat even as the state's ruling BJP suffered a setback, losing to the Congress in two of the three assembly seats for which by-polls were held.

But the most remarkable victory for the Congress was in the by-polls for the Guna parliamentary seat. Jyotiraditya Scindia won it by a margin of more than four lakhs votes, almost double that secured in 1999 by his father Madhavrao

Scindia, whose death had necessitated the by-election.

However, a discordant note for the Congress came in Karnataka when its candidate D.K. Shiva Kumar lost to former prime minister H.D. Deve Gowda of the Janata Dal(S) by 53,536 votes.

Soon after the Andipatti result was announced, AIADMK legislators elected Ms Jayalalithaa as their legislative party leader. Chief minister O. Jayalalithaa celebrate her victory in Chennai on Sunday.

her name, later submitted his resignation to governor P.S. Ramamohan Rao. He was asked to continue as chief minister until Ms Jayalalithaa was sworn in.

The governor then invited Ms Jayalalithaa to form the govern-

ment. It is still to be decided when the swearing-in ceremony will take place. It is likely next week and will be on a grand scale.

Earlier, Ms Jayalalithaa said her victory had created political history. She said no political leader any-

where had been subjected to this kind of "victimisation" or had had to face "such trials and tribulations, hardships and obstacles".

She said that five years ago, several political parties had written her off along with the

AIADMK. "We have now proved all the critics wrong and I think this victory will serve as an inspiration to anyone who may be subjected to such hardships and difficulties."

With Mr Modi's victory, the BJP burst into celebrations in Rajkot

and Ahmedabad and took out victory processions. He polled 45,297 votes while Ashwin Mehta of the Congress got 30,569 votes.

Although the victory margin was not very flattering, it is significant considering the small size of the electorate and the fact that Mr Modi polled nearly 15 per cent more votes than his nearest rival.

Many Congress leaders, who were hoping for the biggest political upset in recent times, blamed the vicious pamphleteering against Mr Modi towards the end of the campaign for alienating many upper caste and middle class voters. They felt the personal attack was in bad taste.

There were others in the Congress who believed that without the last-minute blitzkrieg against the former chief minister, the Congress stood no chance against a candidate who had the might of the administration and the weight of his position behind him. But the BJP's preoccupation with Rajkot seems to have cost it dear as it lost the other two constituencies.



Supporters of AIADMK chief J. Jayalalithaa celebrate her victory in Chennai on Sunday.

## RSP raps 'status quo'

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

KOLKATA, Feb. 16. — The RSP today accused the CPI-M of trying to "slow down" the Left Front's fight against vested interests to maintain the status quo. The Left Front was not so interested in fighting capitalism "represented by the Khaitans, Goenkas, Todis and Bajorias", the RSP state secretary, Mr Debabrata Bandyopadhyay, said at the open session of the party's national conference.

Consequently, he said, the LF's weapon to safeguard the interests of the poor and downtrodden had become "blunted" and the coalition exists "merely on paper". Without naming the CPI-M, he warned the Marxists that the RSP wouldn't "tolerate interference" in the functioning of the departments headed by its ministers, though it would accept "supervision".

"When we criticise the LF's tendency to compromise with vested interests, we don't speak from any grudge against the CPI-M. It's a question of policy and tactic. As in a party there are hardliners and softliners, so is the case with the LF on the question of doing away with or maintaining the status quo," Mr Bandyopadhyay said. If the issue is not properly addressed, the LF will lose its dynamism.

"In fact, the alliance has become marginalised in the country. The state government functioned well during the first seven years of its rule, but thereafter has increasingly become status-quoist," he said.

Mr Kshiti Goswami, former minister, said the RSP wouldn't allow the government to adopt any "autocratic" measures such as legislating Poca. Mr Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee plans to introduce the Bill after discussing it with LF partners.

■ See RSP: page 5

THE STATESMAN

17 FEB 2002

## RSP:

(Continued from page 1)

Mr Goswami said his party was "not happy" with the way the government was run. There hadn't been much response to RSP's suggestions to improve government functioning, he said.

**Anil's reaction:** The RSP contradicted itself by accusing the CPI-M of hobnobbing with capitalists but admitting concentration of power in panchayats, Mr Anil Biswas said. "Panchayats are run by the poor. The truth is we've to work with capitalists even when we fight for the poor."

He also brushed aside the charge that the LF had become averse to organising movements. "In the past three years we organised 650 rallies and processions, 300 of them under the LF banner. There is need for unity in the LF and we're committed to working through discussion, though partners have ideological differences."

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# RSP cries war on 'anti-people' CPM

HT Correspondent  
Kolkata, February 16

THE RSP today declared it would step up its fight against the "arbitrary and high-handed attitude" of the CPI(M) in the functioning of the Left Front.

"We are thoroughly disgusted at the way the CPI(M)-led Left Front is functioning in the State," said Debabrata Bandopadhyay, RSP State secretary. "The CPI(M) has completely deviated from its ideals and principles. A party meant to uphold the voice of the masses has become a stooge."

"The high-handedness of the CPI(M) and the clout it enjoys in the Front cannot be tolerated. We condemn the CPI(M)'s attempt to maintain a status quo with the industrialists. We will intensify our fight against the anti-people designs. The fight is now in the open."

Addressing a mammoth gathering in front of Shahid Minar to mark the beginning of the 18th National Conference of the RSP, Bandopadhyay said: "This



(From left) Biswanath Chowdhury, Kshiti Goswami, K Pankajakakshya and Debabrata Bandopadhyay at the RSP meeting in Kolkata on Saturday.

is a fight between hardliners and moderates, a fight between two sections where one tries to work on the lines of the ideals that led to its inception and the

other differently." Accusing the Left Front of having lost its edge, he said: "Today's Left Front has lost the sharpness that used to be its hallmark in

the days it came to power. In the past 25 years of left Front rule in the State, the sharp face of Left was seen in the first seven years of Jyoti Basu's reign.

Concerted effort should be made to work towards a better and progressive Left, which should work on the ideals of power equilibrium among the different constituents of the Left Front."

Stressing the need for a "united Left" to tackle imperialism and capitalism, Bandopadhyay called for the involvement of workers at grassroots level to evolve a "forward looking Left".

Echoing him, RSP leader Kshiti Goswami too called for the establishment of a "united Left". Expressing "dissatisfaction" at the functioning of the Left Front, Goswami came up with an alternative.

"More interactions and discussions should be arranged within the Left Front constituents and efforts should be made to understand the needs of the workers at the grassroots level. Only if we able to achieve this, a progressive and united Left will be able to put up a fight against the imperialist designs," he said.



## Crisis deepens in Trinamool as Panja seeks EC recognition

HT Correspondents <sup>21</sup> ~~HT~~  
New Delhi/Kolkata, January 1

THE TRINAMOOL Congress today was caught in a deep crisis, with Former Union Minister Ajit Panja and the camp led by Mamata Banerjee spoiling for a fight.

The Mamata camp hit back by getting Partha Chatterjee, a general-secretary of the Trinamool, to file a complaint with the police in Kolkata asking how a suspended member of the party could use Trinamool flags and banners. When contacted in Delhi for his comments on the matter, Panja said, "Mamata's men are using the Left Front police to harass me."

In Delhi, Panja said he would urge the Election Commission (EC) for recognition as leader of the All India Trinamool Congress, the "real" Trinamool. Mamata Banerjee's election to the top organisational post was "illegal", he said.

Inaugurating the party office at his 17 Windsor Palace official residence, Panja said he would approach the EC because he was the "democratically-elected chairman" of the party. Panja's house had been turned into the Trinamool office on this day in 1998 when Mamata Banerjee broke away from the Congress.

He said he would send the EC all papers relating to the party's organisational polls through the State Election Commission. He also played for the press a video-cassette of the polls and said he would hand it over to the EC.

Panja denied he had been suspended from the party. "I have not received a single letter in this regard except for one from Trinamool Chief Whip in Lok Sabha Sudip Bandyopadhyaya".

Asked if he would oppose Mamata Banerjee's re-induction into the Cabinet, Panja said it was the Prime Minister's prerogative. He also called on BJP president Jana Krishnamurthy.

BJP spokesman Sunil Shastri said "Panja called on Krishnamurthy only to wish him a Happy New Year".

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

2 JAN 1999

Is the Forward Bloc a wounded tiger waiting to claw the CPI-M? Or is the image of a roaring tiger that the party's state leadership has sought to create at its state conference two weeks ago a mere illusion, as innocuous as the painted tiger emblazoned on the party flag?

The Forward Bloc is nursing its wounds, but all the noise that the party is making against the CPI-M is no more than shadow-boxing intended to browbeat the major Left Front partner and extract its pound of flesh. The timing and the manner in which the junior partner has tried to vilify the CPI-M have caught everyone, even the Trinamul Congress, unawares.

Few people expected any of the Left Front constituents to turn the heat on the CPI-M when a new-look government under the stewardship of Buddhadev Bhattacharya with solid backing from party state secretary, Anil Biswas, got off to a flying start and created an impression of dynamism and cohesion.

The Left Front's stunning victory in the May Assembly election has left the firebrand Trinamul chief, Mamata Banerjee, dazed and she has gone into a limbo. The decks for Mr Bhattacharya - kickstarting a rusted administration - were cleared with a virtually non-existent Opposition.

For, the Trinamul has all these months been more busy making

Muslim clerics preaching in British prisons were told on Friday that they were being watched carefully after two were suspended for allegedly delivering anti-American sermons to young inmates after the 11 September attacks.

One imam was apparently caught praising the hijackers to inmates at Feltham Young Offender Institution in West London, where shoe bomber Richard Reid converted to Islam while serving a sentence for petty crime in the early 1990s.

A second cleric was excluded from Aylesbury Young Offender Institution in Buckinghamshire, north of London, after passing around the transcript of a

# Forward Bloc's claws need paring

Growing ambition and a desire for a larger share of the spoils of office alone can explain the sudden hostility of the junior partner towards the CPI-M, writes UDAY BASU. The creeping suspicion is that Kamal Guha's return to the Forward Bloc fold has emboldened his party to raise its vocal pitch against the stronger partner

conciliatory moves towards the BJP in the hope of getting one or two berths in the National Democratic Alliance government rather than playing the role of an effective Opposition in West Bengal. Then came the Prevention of Organised Crime Ordinance followed by proposed legislation on it. The chief minister termed his climbdown as a democratic way of finding a consensus within the Left Front as its junior constituents had reservations about it.

But, the partners, especially the Forward Bloc, became emboldened by their success in not allowing the chief minister to promulgate the Ordinance even after it was cleared by his Cabinet. The Forward Bloc also became vocal about the formation of a core committee of ministers chosen from different constituents of the front to discuss major government decisions before placing them for the Cabinet's approval.

The Left Front committee discussed the Forward Bloc's suggestion and the chief minister is said to be in favour of forming such a committee. Apparently, this boosted the Forward Bloc's ego, especially, after its secret ambition to stake claim to the Left Front chairman's post was

dashed when the CPI-M retained it.

The Forward Bloc leadership probably hoped to enjoy more of the loaves and fishes of office in its capacity as the second-largest constituent of the Left Front in terms of the number of Assembly seats it has won. But the party has overlooked the fact that the margin of seats between the first and the second-largest constituent is 118, the CPI-M having won 143 seats against the Forward Bloc's 25. The party also wished away the reality that it is virtually non-existent in the state, except in Cooch Behar.

The Forward Bloc's organisational report states: "Cooch Behar is considered our most



Forward Bloc leader Kamal Guha: At it again?

powerful unit. Of the nine Assembly seats in the district, we have won five and have also been retaining the lone Lok Sabha

seat for the past 25 years. There are 3,690 active party workers and 4,717 auxiliary members in the district."

The common refrain of the report on the party's organisational set-up in the remaining 20 districts is that it is either riven by factional feud or is too weak to conduct any party programmes. The report on the Kolkata district unit is the most damning: "Kolkata is the state capital. But the party organisation here is by no means good. There is no programme to help the party forge ahead. Lack of leadership is the main impediment to organisational growth."

The Forward Bloc has three MLAs from Hooghly, but even

there the party has a dearth of whole-timers and activists to monitor party work. "The unit, which was once so strong, is fast becoming weak for lack of organisational planning and programme."

The Purulia unit is considered well organised with 739 active and 2,093 auxiliary members. The district unit is also active. Yet, the party failed to retain its organisational base and the defeat in the Jhalda Assembly seat was a "major blow."

Apart from the Cooch Behar unit, the Forward Bloc has been able to somewhat organise its Murshidabad unit which ensured victory for the Assembly seat. The question is how can a party with such a ramshackle organisation challenge or even hope to tarnish the image of the front's strongest partner known for its formidable organisational network that often proves to be the crucial factor for the electoral victory of the constituents.

Growing ambition and a desire for a larger share of the spoils of office alone can explain the sudden hostility. The creeping suspicion is that the rejoining of the redoubtable agricultural minister, Kamal Guha, in the party fold has enabled the Forward Bloc to raise its vocal pitch against the

CPI-M.

Mr Guha had to give up his agriculture portfolio during the Jyoti Basu regime for publicly accusing the chief minister of knowing nothing about the problems of the people living in the Kuchlibari enclave of Cooch Behar. He was also expelled from the party for his revolt against Mr Basu. He is now believed to be scripting the defiance against the CPI-M.

The Forward Bloc endorses such a stand, as its only hope of retaining its base in North Bengal is by doing well in the panchayat elections slated for this year. Winning panchayat seats will not be enough. The Left Front constituents must be given the power to handle the funds, a job which, the party alleges, is monopolised by the CPI-M.

This also explains the Left Front partner's renewed clamour to ensure the percolation of Left Front unity to the grassroots level. This can be construed as giving liberty to the partners to use panchayat funds at will.

The Forward Bloc's conference document is a give-away: "If we can't fare well in the coming panchayat elections, our party would be threatened with extinction."

There lies the rub. (The author is Special Representative, The Statesman, Kolkata.)

## Imams on watch-list

Ministers have come under pressure to prevent British prisons from becoming recruiting grounds for Islamic extremists. IAN COBAIN reports

inappropriate comments about 11 September." Mr Narey said a "reasonably tolerant" attitude to all views was adopted in prisons, but added that imams had been warned after the 11 September attacks that their comments would be monitored.

"We have made it very plain to all our imams that there are certain comments about being critical of the USA or in praise of what happened on 11 September which are utterly unacceptable," he said.

The imam at Feltham, Abdul Rahman Quresh, was suspended

on 15 November for "alleged unprofessional behaviour", which included making anti-American comments. He is reported to have referred to the "big devil America" during sermons, and prison officers reported finding literature in cells that described America as "the great evil, which must be wiped out".

Mr Quresh has been suspended pending an investigation. His father is reported to have been an imam at Feltham while Reid was at the institution.

The imam at Aylesbury, Ahmad Bilal, was excluded on 1

October after an investigation found that he had been handing around inflammatory radio broadcast transcripts. He had been working at the prison for less than three months.

The imam at Belmarsh maximum security prison in south-east London was also suspended, on 14 September, amid allegations that he had links to Islamic fundamentalists. He has been cleared by a Prison Service investigation, but must undergo

security checks before being reinstated. The Prison Service dismissed reports on Friday that prison officers at 10 jails around the country had complained about imams making anti-American comments.

Mr Narey said: "Overwhelmingly, imams make a huge contribution. If someone converts to Islam, or returns to their faith, it is more likely that when they are released they will go home to a stable community, be

accepted by the mosque in that community, which means it is less likely they will commit crimes, and that is very important."

There are more than 100 imams serving the 137 prisons and young offender institutions in England and Wales. At least three work full time, while others are paid between £11.06 and £13.18 an hour.

- The Times, London.