

We should have capability of minimum defence: Kalam

By John L. Paul

g. prakash 110-11
KOCHI, NOV. 17. The cornerstone of India's nuclear policy is our 'no-first-use' pledge, the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, has said.

He was answering a question by a student whether Dr. Kalam's recent statement that the country would not dither on the use of the nuclear option contradicted his admiration for Mahatma Gandhi's policies. The interactive event was organised here today by the Akhila Kerala Balajana Sakhyam and the *Malayala Manorama*.

"India cannot afford to be inactive. We should have the capability of minimum defence.

For well over 3,000 years, India was at the receiving end, having been invaded by outside powers.

But not once has India invaded or launched an attack on another country."

Speaking on the topic 'India of my dreams', he said, "I believe that a small aim is a crime. I have a dream, of making India a developed country".

"Ever since I took over as President, I have met over a lakh students from across the country. On many occasions, they pose to me the question about living in a happy, prosperous and secure India. We have to uplift the 300 million people who live below the poverty line.

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" We also have to increase the annual growth rate of our GDP, from 5 to 10 per cent. We have a road map cut out for us — focus on agriculture, food processing, health and education," he said.

"The message that I put across through my website (www.abdulkalam.com) is aimed at youth below 20 years of age, since they have ideas and thoughts that are innovative. I had posted two questions in my website — 'how can we transform India into a developed country?' and 'when can I sing a song of India?'

A Malayali girl posted her reply: 'I will be like a flower, many of which are put together to make a garland. This way, unity of minds can be achieved'.

A boy replied: 'I am like an electron, which moves continuously in orbit. I too will be like it, working ceaselessly.' Yet another boy's reply was: 'I will sing a song of India when India is strong enough to put economic and technological sanction on other countries' ".

When a student asked him about the turning point that made him a scientist and later President, he said that it was sweat and dreams that made him a scientist. "Becoming the President was an accident," he said. "Excel in studies. Hard work has not damaged anyone in the world."

Kalam lauds N-E herbal potential

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J. President H.T. 6



Abdul Kalam, in traditional Khasi headgear, at NEHU in Shillong on Friday.

EASTERN PROJECTIONS

HT Correspondent
Shillong, October 25

PRESIDENT Abdul Kalam today said the North-east, a biodiversity hotspot, can be a major player in the \$65 billion global market of herbal medicines, if harnessed systematically.

Kalam was here to inaugurate a National Symposium on Bio-diversity at the North Eastern Hill University (NEHU). Praising NEHU for bringing together top biodiversity experts under one same roof, Kalam said a little value addition to the products can make the region the a major contender in the global herbal market.

Citing example of his friend Professor Balakrishnan, who took out extracts from a plant to cure cancer, Kalam said several such molecules can be developed from herbs found in the region. "The molecules can sub-

sequently be patented. While China is contributing \$6 billion in the global herbal market, this region can also emerge as a major player. I was always overwhelmed with the beauty and diversity here," he said.

The President urged bio-scientists to train farmers so that they can produce high-quality gingers, "which will have all 18 components of curing diseases like those in Brazil, Philippines and Indonesia. The Indian gingers have only 12 components.

Gogoi greets President

The President today landed in Guwahati en route his three-day Meghalaya-Nagaland tour. He flew to Shillong in an IAF helicopter an hour after landing at the LGBI Airport in the morning. Chief Minister Tarun Gogoi and his Cabinet colleagues greeted him.

Former Isro chairman is missile man's role model

HT Correspondent
Shillong, October 25

THE SAYING goes — noble birth is an accident of fortune, noble deeds characterise the great — and President Kalam seems to believe this strongly.

An ordinary lad from a non-descript Tamil Nadu village, today's missile man-turned-politician still hasn't forgotten his primary school teachers. "They were my role models in early life and inspire me a lot even today," he says.

Speaking to students here,

Kalam said his role models in life were persons, who were noble and good leaders. "While my parents encouraged me a lot, former ISRO chief Satish Dhawan is one who taught me the real philosophies of life."

Recalling the first-ever satellite launch from Sriharikota on August 19, 1979, he said, "It was a matter of embarrassment for me when the Rs 20-crore rocket plunged into the Bay of Bengal." Kalam was in charge of the mission. "Though the failure of the mission was due to lapses on my part, I was surprised when

A monk's unique mantra for peace

THE PRESIDENT has borrowed a unique message of peace from a monk in the 400-year-old Tawang monastery in Arunachal Pradesh. "When I went to the monastery, I requested the chief monk to give me a message for the people of the country. He

said: 'If you want peace get rid of I and me. This will eliminate your ego. Ego eradicated, you can do away with hatred. Hatred gone there'll be no violence. And then what is left with us is peace'."

HTC, Shillong

Satish Dhawan took the blame on himself and promised the people a successful launch with-

in a year," he said.

On July 18, 1980 — when the ISRO's second attempt to

launch a space satellite was successful — Kalam recalled: "Everyone in the organisation heaped praises on my mentor, but he directed me to brief the Press on the success. He was the only man I have met in my entire life who had the courage to shoulder the biggest failure and give away the credit of success to his team." He added that such a person should be the role model for today's youth.

"If you want to excel, dare to dream. Nothing happens if you do not an aim" — this was his parting advice to the students.

Kalam fuels N-E dreams

OUR CORRESPONDENT

Shillong, Oct. 25: Children in the audience clapped and teachers became students as President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, in characteristic style, today exhorted the people of Meghalaya to try and build a society where violence is taboo and economic progress the top priority.

Addressing the 72nd session of the National Academy of Sciences, India, and a national symposium on bio-diversity at the North Eastern Hill University, the President alternated between philosophy and subtle humour to steal the hearts of the audience.

Kalam, who inaugurated the Myntdu-Leshka hydro power plant in Jaintia Hills district later in the day, underscored the need to consider the Northeast "a single economic zone". He admitted to being astonished to discover that the region had such an abundance of natural wealth and yet continued to be less prosperous than some other states of the country.

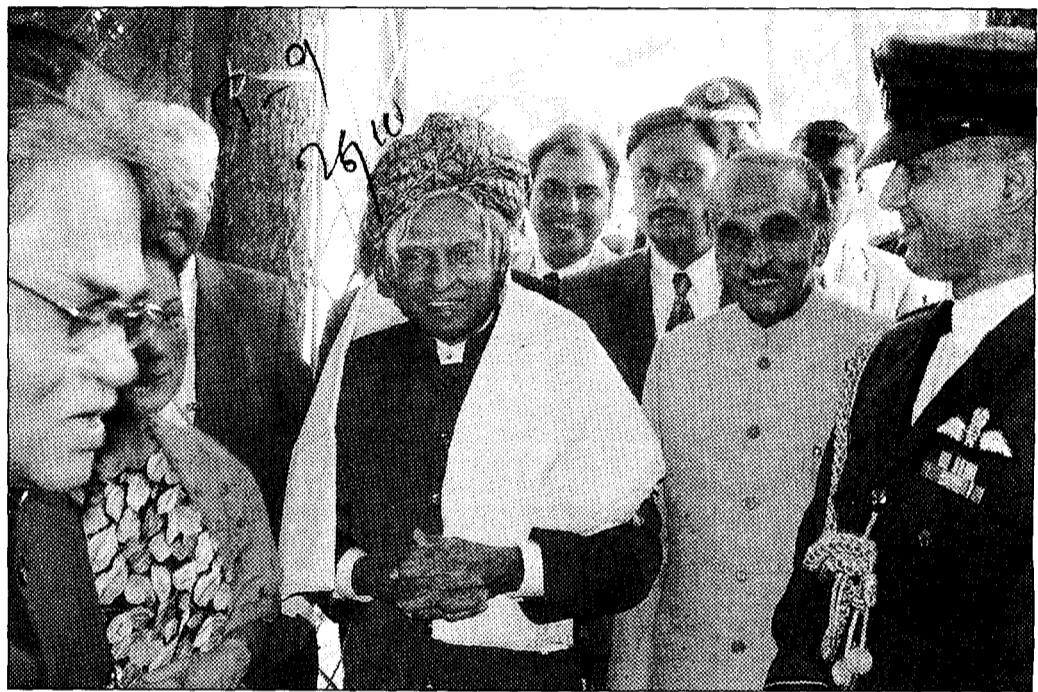
Since taking over as President, Kalam has visited five of the seven northeastern states.

"Nature has bestowed abundant wealth on the Northeast. A nation's strength predominantly resides in its natural wealth," he said, making a case for scientifically exploiting the bio-diversity of the Northeast for its good.

The President said the Centre and the states should ensure that bio-diversity is not destroyed, but judiciously used for the benefit of the people. "We must treat it as an economic entity," he added.

Kalam said he was convinced

PRESIDENT MOOTS SINGLE ECONOMIC ZONE



President APJ Abdul Kalam in traditional Khasi headgear at the North Eastern Hill University in Shillong on Friday. Picture by Eastern Projections

that the Northeast could be the crux of the country's herbal products industry, which is close to generating revenue to the tune of \$1 billion. He urged entrepreneurs in this sector to follow the example set by China, which has a \$6 billion herbal product industry.

Drawing on his vast knowledge of science and technology, the President said, "Value addition to our bio-diversity products with medicinal potential is most important. We have to transform molecules with me-

dicinal values into drugs. Ginger, if cultivated scientifically, can be used to make drugs instead of just being exported."

In his description of Meghalaya, Kalam was both poetic and philosophical.

"Meghalaya is a beautiful state. It is a house of clouds, but the mind should be beautiful as well. And if beautiful minds dream, you get beautiful thoughts."

The President appealed to the people to "dream of a society where science will flourish" be-

cause that was what the future would be about. He seconded the views of the chief of the National Academy of Sciences, S.K. Joshi, who had said that the next decade would be dominated by "nano technology".

Kalam also supported Governor M.M. Jacob's views that traditional knowledge should not be frowned upon.

"I am impressed by the vast knowledge base of traditional societies of the Northeast. There is a lot to learn from the storehouse of traditional wisdom."

Kalam inaugurates power plant in Manipur

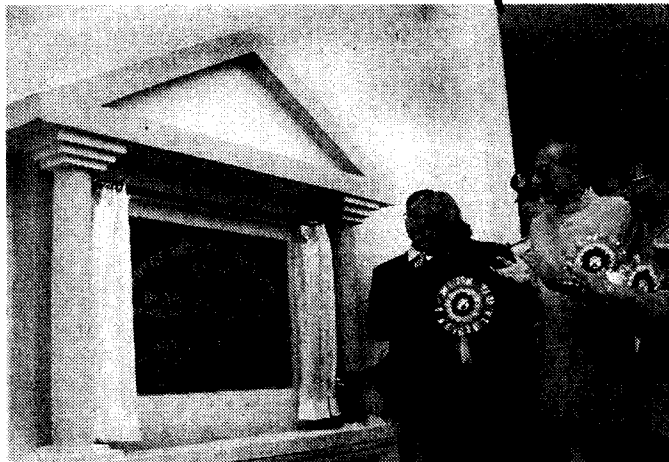
By Our Correspondent

IMPHAL, OCT. 5. The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, today inaugurated the 36 mw heavy-fuel based power plant at Leimakhong, 20 km from Imphal. It was constructed at a cost of Rs.125.38 crores from the non-lapsable Central pool fund. The plant is the first of its kind in the north-eastern region. Dedicating it to the people, Dr. Kalam said Manipur was rich in human and natural resources.

The Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd (BHEL) and the State electricity department informed him that 90 per cent of the power needed by the State would be generated by the plant and he was happy that Manipur would get about 35 MW without interruption.

The cost of the project is about 10 per cent higher than hydro and thermal projects. Manipur required 120 MW. The other source of power was the NHPC-run Loktak project.

He also underlined the need to maintain connectivity among roads, education, information, electronics, physical and economy. There should be a vision for the development of the north-eastern States, including Sikkim. He was very hopeful that Manipur could be made an ideal and modern State since



The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, inaugurating the 36 MW heavy-fuel based power plant at Leimakhong near Imphal in Manipur on Saturday. On his left are the Manipur Governor, Ved Marwah, and the State Power Minister, Phungzathang Tonsing. — PTI

there was adequate human resource.

He said the Chief Minister, Okram Ibobi, and the Governor, Ved Prakash Marwah, should make a pledge to realise this vision in 10 years. Mr. Marwah, Mr. Ibobi and the Power Minister, Phungzathang Tonsin, and many Ministers were present.

The Manipur People's Liberation Front (MPLF), the apex body of the three underground outfits, the UNLF, the RPF and the PREPAK boycotted the visit

with a 12-hour curfew beginning from 6 a.m.

The United Committee Manipur, an NGO also boycotted the visit protesting against the "cavalier" attitude of the Centre towards the national highway blockade, which began from Sept. 7.

There was a cultural programme to entertain the President who also interacted with teachers and students. Later in the afternoon the Mr. Kalam left for New Delhi.

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INDO

Kalam ignites students' minds

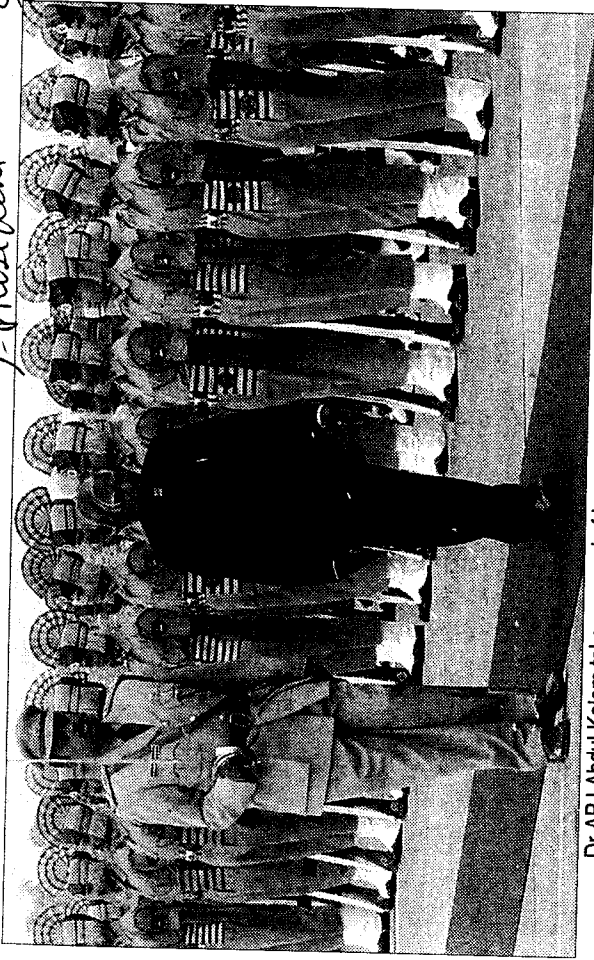
Statesman News Service

AGARTALA, Oct. 4. — President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam today asked students to have a vision and realise it with a missionary zeal.

Addressing students here during his two-day visit, he said his dream was to do away with poverty. The focus should be on eradication of poverty as 30 per cent of the population is below the poverty line, he added.

He said the country had made remarkable progress in communication and information technology and after satisfying its needs in these fields, it could support others.

Dr Kalam stressed the need to develop infrastructure in the state and utilise its natural resources. "I am hap-



Dr APJ Abdul Kalam takes a guard of honour at Agartala airport on Friday. — AFP

py that the Tripura government has implemented schemes on education and health

care." He said the state was ideal for developing small industries, including fruit processing units.

Ibobi appeal: The Manipur chief minister said the Cen-

tre had assured of additional security on the national highway in the region and appealed to the United Committee Manipur, apex body of all social organisations, to call off its boycott of Dr Kalam's visit to the state tomorrow on the highway security issue, PTI adds from Imphal.

Mr O Ibobi Singh said the Centre would send additional forces to protect the highways, particularly Imphal-Dimapur NH-39 and Imphal-Jiribam NH-53, in view of the lootings, extortions and other crimes by ultras.

But the UCM said it would boycott the President's visit since no concrete step had been initiated by the Centre to provide adequate security on the highways.

Kalam rings alarm bell again

Reminding the judiciary that it was "the guardian of civilised life" and its members "inviolable role models, the perfect incorruptible ideals of a civilised society," he said nobody should be allowed to devalue any life. "Particularly, the judiciary cannot be a mute witness to this inhuman act."

"Judiciary is not simply making judicial pronouncements or enforcing law in a case. Judiciary is the whole process of interpreting the social, political, economical and human environment to ensure that wholesome life with dignity and distinction is sustained. The edifice of justice thus stands exalted, high on a pedestal that the whole nation looks up to."

Spelling out "essential needs" for a developed India, he said the GDP growth should be targeted at nine per cent annually with the number of people below poverty line reduced to nil or a very small part.

Saying India has to be "economically and commercially powerful, at least to be one of the four top nations in terms of size of the economy," he called for near self-reliance in Defence needs with "no umbilical attached to any outside world."

Almost resenting that industrially developed countries were trying to make laws and treaties to protect their national interests and priorities instead of working for win-win partnerships, Kalam said India should work for win-win situations even in business and trade with ethics.

"There is need to innovate on new laws to suit the Indian environment so as to be able to solve our specific problems and accelerate overall development."

Referring to trade related aspects of intellectual property rights (TRIPS), he said laws will have to be framed to meet international obligations. "I feel it will become necessary very soon in our country to set up suitable systems to deal with such cases with knowledgeable judges." He also said there was need for a law for protection of Indian space above 30 km altitude as the international law on space may not be sufficient.

Intolerance: Kalam rings bell again

■ BHO PAL SPEECH | 'Judiciary can't be mute witness to violence'

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, SEPTEMBER 5

TROUBLED over the "increasing intolerance for views of others" and the tendency to express these differences through "lawless violence," President A P J Abdul Kalam today gave a wake-up call to the judiciary, saying they could not be a "mute witness to this inhuman act."

In Bhopal for the inaugural function of the National Judicial Academy, Kalam, describing the judiciary as "the angel and marshal that ensures such a democracy survives," emphasised the need for constantly maintaining its purity.

"There cannot be any erosion

of values, corrosion of quality or any cobwebs in the procedure. The majesty of law and justice has to be maintained with magnanimity and magnificence."

Dwelling on judicial performance, he called for "developing necessary attitudinal

changes to improve judicial integrity and efficiencies." Economic growth and social development, he said, could not be achieved in countries "where the judicial system fails to be effective, unbiased, timely and conscientious." For a country to become



a developed nation, it was necessary for judicial officers to function with efficiency.

In a near repeat of his address to the nation on the eve of the Independence Day, Kalam rebuked the "increasing intolerance for views of

others," saying there could be no justification for "increasing contempt about ways of lives of others or their religions or the expressions of these differences through lawless violence against people."

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Polls Likely In November-December, Hearing On Presidential Reference On Sept 17

SC rules out early elections in Gujarat

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 2 SEPTEMBER

THE Supreme Court, on Monday, accepted the Election Commission's decision to defer the Gujarat Assembly elections. The apex court expressed its inability to give an opinion on the presidential reference on the matter by the October 6 deadline, stipulated by Article 174 of the Constitution.

Meanwhile, the constitution bench, headed by Chief Justice B.N. Kirpal, was specifically informed on Monday by the Commission's counsel, Mr K.K.

Venugopal, about the EC's decision to hold the Gujarat elections in November-December.

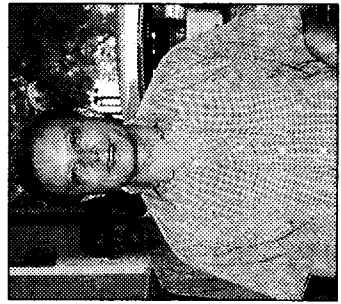
The bench, delinking the issues raised in the presidential reference over EC's powers under Article 324 and the mandatory sitting of the Assembly every six months under Article 174 from the holding of polls in Gujarat, said: "Perhaps November-December is the most likely date for holding the polls in Gujarat. So, Gujarat is not an issue before us."

The government seemed to have reconciled to the Supreme Court's stand with law minister Jana Krishnamurthy saying

complete the polls within this year itself may come as a partial relief considering that demands were being made for deferring the polls to as late as February-March. With the EC saying that it will hold elections in November-December, the BJP is hopeful that the momentum of its campaign, to be aimed at en-cashing the saffron consolidation following the recent communal riots, can be sustained.

During Monday's hearing, solicitor general Harish Salve pressed for an early commencement of the hearing on the presidential reference. The bench, while stating that it

would be "our endeavour to give an opinion on the presidential reference as expeditiously as possible," expressed its inability to do so by October 6, which is the time by which the Gujarat Assembly will be dissolved. The date for the next hearing on the presidential reference has been fixed for September 17. Whether or not the Modi government can continue beyond October 6 is to be decided in the future course of hearing. The apex court made it clear that it will not entertain any clarifications on the facts enumerated by the EC as a basis for its decision to defer the polls.



LYNGDOH: THE RIGHT WAY

that the observations "were not altogether unexpected." For the BJP, the SC's decision to

Poll case on SC fast track

OUR LEGAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Aug. 29: The Supreme Court will begin expeditious hearings on the presidential reference on the Gujarat elections from Monday.

A five-judge Constitution bench presided by Chief Justice B.N. Kirpal said the matter would be heard "as expeditiously as possible" in view of the important questions involved, particularly relating to the six-month gap between two sittings of an Assembly.

But the hearings — almost on a day-to-day basis — would begin only from Monday since chief secretaries of several states were yet to be served notices.

The Gujarat Assembly had last met in April and the six-month period gets over on October 1. According to a provision of the Constitution, the House has to be convened on October 2. Since it has been dissolved and the Election Commission has said it would hold elections in the state only in January 2003, the question assumes emergent proportions.

All states, through the chief secretaries, and all state advocates-general were issued the notices as the question involved interpretation of the Constitution regarding holding of Assembly elections.

The judges asked the Centre to ensure that notices reached all the state governments while adjourning the matter to Monday for regular hearings.

Solicitor-General Harish Salve, appearing for the Union government, suggested to the apex court that a time schedule could be drawn up today for hearing the reference.

Senior counsel Kapil Sibal, a

Congress Rajya Sabha member appearing for the party, countered Salve, contending that it would not be proper to fix a time schedule for the hearings without service of the notices being complete in the court's records.

After hearing the arguments, the bench observed that "the reference raises several important issues which needed to be decided as expeditiously as possible".

The court had issued notices to the Election Commission, all state governments, all state advocates-general and six national parties on August 26 to seek their views on the reference.

The President has referred under Article 143 three questions to the court for its opinion:

■ Is Article 174 subject to the decision of the Election Commission under Article 324 as to the schedule of elections of the Assembly? Article 174 stipulates that there should not be a gap of more than six months between two sessions of an Assembly. Article 324 states that the poll panel has powers over "superintendence, conduct and control" of elections.

■ Can the Election Commission frame a schedule for elections to an Assembly on the premise that any infraction of the mandate of Article 174 would be remedied by a resort to Article 356 by the President? Under Article 356, the President dissolves an Assembly and imposes Central rule. The Election Commission, in its order postponing polls in Gujarat, had suggested to the Centre that President's rule be imposed in the state.

■ Is the Election Commission under a duty to carry out the mandate of Article 174 by drawing upon all the requisite resources of the Union and the state to ensure free and fair election?

30 AUG 2002

Ordinance gets Kalam's assent

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 25. — President APJ Abdul Kalam cleared the air about his intentions by giving his assent to the electoral reforms Ordinance within hours of receiving the communication from the Cabinet late last night. The President only exercised his powers conferred upon him by the Constitution by seeking clarification on certain clauses suggested by the Supreme Court but not incorporated in the Ordinance.

Dr Kalam was under no obligation to sign the Ordinance last night since the Constitution does not speak of any time bar to sign on a Bill or an Ordinance sent to the President for the second time, legal experts said today. But the President honoured the constitutional convention and the pre-eminence of the parliamentary system by signing on the Ordinance without delay, the experts said.

The government put the Ordinance in the official gazette today and hence the new law on electoral process has come into force. The EC guidelines stand nullified.

Things moved fast in Rashtrapati Bhavan after the

Attorney-General met the President yesterday. Mr Soli J Sorabjee "conveyed to the President that the Ordinance was the exact replica of the Representation of the People Act (Amendment) Bill 2002 which was the result of a total political consensus on the subject", a source said.

Mr Sorabjee explained to Dr Kalam that changes in the Ordinance were not possible.

Constitution Bench

NEW DELHI, Aug. 25. — A five-judge Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court will meet tomorrow the presidential reference seeking the Court's opinion on the Election Commission recommendation on the Gujarat polls. The Bench comprises Chief Justice Mr BN Kirpal, Mr Justice VN Khare, Mr Justice KG Balakrishnan, Mr Justice A Bhan and Mr Justice Arijit Pasayat. The registry has issued notices to the Attorney-General, Mr Soli J Sorabjee and Solicitor-General Mr Harish Salve. — SNS

"Any amendment to the RPA Act Ordinance can be taken up only when the Ordinance is placed before Parliament in form of a Bill", he has reportedly told the President. Dr Kalam was convinced of the constitutional niceties and gave his assent.

The Congress has questioned

the government's claim of "total political consensus on the Ordinance". The Congress spokesman, Mr Anand Sharma, said his party was in favour of disclosure of assets and liabilities of candidates before seeking elections and giving details of their criminal antecedents at the time of filing nomination papers.

But Mr Sharma evaded the question if the Congress would support changes in the Ordinance once it comes to Parliament in the winter session.

The BJP, CPI-M and the Samajwadi Party are against any change in the Ordinance. All political parties had objected to the clause which called for disqualification of a candidate from contesting elections if he or she is chargesheeted in two criminal offences of heinous nature like murder, rape, dacoity, drug trafficking and so on. The parties had suggested that only a person convicted of a crime should be disqualified from contesting elections and not only the basis of a chargesheet. Even this suggestion was not incorporated in the the Ordinance.

The Union law minister, Mr K Jana Krishnamurthy, dismissed any confrontation between the government and the President on the Ordinance.

Centre stifles President protest

R.VENKATARAMAN

New Delhi, Aug. 24: Overruling all his objections to the electoral reforms Ordinance, the Centre today politely but firmly asked President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam to sign on the dotted line.

The Union Cabinet met to take stock of the "issues raised" by Kalam and decided to send the Representation of People's Act (Amendment) Ordinance, 2002, back to him. An official spokesman said that "in the backdrop of a political consensus", the President had been "requested" to clear it. He is now left with little option but to give his assent.

The Supreme Court had in March directed the government

and the Election Commission to bring in a series of reforms to the Representation of People's Act, of which three guidelines became contentious:

■ A candidate would have to declare his criminal record while filing his nomination;

■ He would have to declare his assets and liabilities, including those of his spouse and dependents;

■ He would have to make his educational qualifications public.

Kalam is believed to have asked the government what the legal implications of these directives are and why they should not be implemented. Two all-party meetings had earlier decided to junk them.

After the first all-party meeting in July, the government

brought in provision Section 8-B in the amendments, under which a candidate would be disqualified from contesting if two heinous crimes were registered against his name. But the second meeting deleted this clause also. Practically all parties claimed that any chief minister could register two such cases against his rival and disqualify him.

The amendment Bill was poised for introduction in the monsoon session, which was abruptly ended due to the petrol pump scam. This necessitated the promulgation of an Ordinance by the President.

The government today fielded principal information officer N.J. Krishna to brief reporters instead of the Cabinet's autho-

rised spokesperson Sushma Swaraj.

Asked if Kalam had "returned" the Ordinance, Krishna said: "Watch my words... I am only telling you the Cabinet considered the issues raised by the President."

President Giani Zail Singh had sent back the postal Ordinance when Rajiv Gandhi was Prime Minister. Though it has been officially stated that Kalam "raised certain issues", he, too, had virtually returned the Ordinance.

Krishna said attorney-general Soli J. Sorabjee and additional solicitor-general Mukul Rohatgi were present at today's Cabinet meeting to "assist legally". Soon after, Sorabjee made a "courtesy call" on Kalam.

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GOVT. TO PROVIDE CLARIFICATIONS

g. President

President returns ordinance on poll reforms to Cabinet

By J. Venkatesan and Vinay Kumar

NEW DELHI, AUG. 22. The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, is understood to have returned to the Union Cabinet the ordinance to amend the Representation of the People Act, seeking certain clarifications on some of the controversial provisions in the proposed ordinance.

The Government, which is keen on giving effect to the ordinance before the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections, finds itself faced with an embarrassment, as the Rashtrapati Bhavan returned the draft ordinance, even as the Election Commission issued the notification for the first phase of the polls.

The Union Law Minister, Jana Krishna Murthy, told *The Hindu*, "the President has sought certain clarifications on

the ordinance (which was sent to the President last week for his approval) and I will be replying to them".

Indications are that the Union Cabinet, scheduled to meet on Saturday, is likely to consider and answer the President's queries before sending the ordinance back to the Rashtrapati Bhavan for approval.

According to highly-placed sources, the President's decision to seek clarification is a sequel to the opposition voiced by a group of eminent citizens from across the country that the ordinance, if approved, would violate the fundamental right of a citizen to know the antecedents of the candidate before electing him to the Legislative Assemblies or Parliament.

The signatories, who included Rajinder Sachar, former Chief Justice of the Delhi High Court, Kuldip Nayar, journalist

and Rajya Sabha member, N. Bhaskar Rao of the Centre for Media Studies, Syed Shahid Mahdi, Jamila Millia Vice-Chancellor, R.H. Tahiliani, former Navy Chief and Kamini Jaiswal, advocate, pleaded with the President not to sign the ordinance. They said the ordinance was unconstitutional and urged the President to exercise his extraordinary powers to refer the matter to the Supreme Court for its opinion.

The ordinance gives effect to the suggestions made at the all-party meetings held by the Government and the provision that candidates chargesheeted for two offences could not contest an election was deleted.

The draft RPA amendment Bill virtually nullifies the Election Commission's June 28 notification giving effect to the Supreme Court directions and dispenses with furnishing of in-

formation in an affidavit by candidates about their criminal antecedents, assets and liabilities and educational qualification.

The draft Bill was initially circulated by Mr. Krishnamurthy to various political parties and leaders for their suggestions and comments and after another round of talks, the controversial clause on "charge sheets" was deleted and sent to the President in the form of an ordinance as the Bill could not be presented in the monsoon session of Parliament. The furnishing of educational qualification of the candidate at the time of filing nomination has also been dispensed with in the Bill, which defines heinous crimes as murder, treason, kidnapping for ransom, rape, dacoity, dacoity with murder, drug smuggling and causing death by terrorist act.

23 AUG 2002

THE HINDU

Kalam causes poll reform rethink ripple

OUR BUREAU

New Delhi, Aug. 23: The fragile consensus over electoral reforms has suffered a jolt following President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's move to return an Ordinance, questioning its ability to curb criminalisation of politics.

The Trinamul Congress, the Left parties and former Prime Minister V.P. Singh hailed Kalam's intervention. Trinamul leader Mamata Banerjee said the provisions of the Ordinance should be the "letter and spirit" of a Supreme Court directive on poll reforms.

The CPI today even questioned the Atal Bihari Vajpayee regime's move to bring an Ordinance when the development as the first sign of Kalam emerging as an "activist President".

Kalam had returned the Ordinance on Wednesday seeking clarifications on two key points regarding a candidate's criminal antecedents. Informed sources said he had raised the issue with Vajpayee on Tuesday. The Prime Minister had then asked the law ministry to work on it. Official sources said the law ministry's response to the President's queries would be placed before the Cabinet, which would decide whether to make changes in the Ordinance or send it back to the President "as it is".

Rashtrapati Bhavan insiders said one of the questions the President raised was about the omission of an Election Commission guideline on seeking information from candidates about their conviction in any case. They said Kalam also wanted to know why the government had dropped from its proposed Ordinance the earlier provision for disqualifying candidates if charges had been framed against them in two heinous offences, such as rape and murder.

Kalam reportedly scrutinised the Ordinance after a delegation from an NGO, the National Campaign for Electoral Reforms, called on him, saying the Ordinance would violate the fundamental right of citizens to know the antecedents of candi-

dates before electing them. Advocate Kamini Jaiswal, journalist Kuldip Nayar, Jamia Milia University vice-chancellor Shahid Mehndi and former Delhi High Court chief justice Rajinder Sachar said the Ordinance was unconstitutional. It is a replica of the Representation of People's Act Amendment Bill, which could not be placed before Parliament as the House was prorogued earlier than scheduled. The Union Cabinet on August 16 had approved and sent it for President's approval.

The debate over electoral reforms came under focus after the Supreme Court directed the poll panel to ask candidates to furnish details of their assets, liabilities, educational qualifications and criminal antecedents, if any, so that voters could think before making a choice.

In yet another move, which may not be appreciated by the hardliners in the Sangh Parivar, the President advised the National Commission of Minorities to adopt a proactive role and promote communal harmony.

Kalam told the panel that instead of sitting in Delhi, the members should travel the length and width of the country and work towards inculcating secular feelings among the people. The President said communal disturbances were neither good for the image of the country nor its development.

Advocate Kamini Jaiswal, journalist Kuldip Nayar, Jamia Milia University vice-chancellor Shahid Mehndi and former Delhi High Court chief justice Rajinder Sachar said the Ordinance was unconstitutional. It is a replica of the Representation of People's Act Amendment Bill, which could not be placed before Parliament as the House was prorogued earlier than scheduled. The Union Cabinet on August 16 had approved and sent it for President's approval.

The debate over electoral reforms came under focus after the Supreme Court directed the poll panel to ask candidates to furnish details of their assets, liabilities, educational qualifications and criminal antecedents, if any, so that voters could think before making a choice.

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Kalam

QUESTIONS OVER ELECTION COMMISSION'S POWERS

President refers Gujarat poll tangle to Supreme Court

By J. Venkatesan

NEW DELHI, AUG. 20. The Supreme Court today received a reference from the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, raising three important questions of law relating to the interpretation of Article 174, vis-a-vis the Election Commission's powers under Article 324, and whether the Commission could recommend imposition of President rule under Article 356 of the Constitution.

According to Registry sources, the reference would be placed before the Chief Justice, B.N. Kirpal, for the constitution of a Bench and fixing a date for hearing the matter.

Article 143 envisages that "if at any time it appears to the President that a question of law or fact has arisen, or is likely to arise, which is of such a nature and of such public importance that it is expedient to obtain the opinion of the Supreme Court upon it, he may refer the question to that Court for consideration and the court may, after such hearing as it thinks fit, report to the President its opinion thereon".

The three questions are: Does Article 174 of the Constitution yield to Article 324, viz., whether the time-frame provided in Article 174 would be subject to the decision of the Election Commission under Article 324 to hold Assembly elections; Can the Election Commission frame

a schedule for elections to an Assembly on the premise that any infraction of the mandate under Article 174 would be remedied by resorting to Article 356 by the President; Is the Election Commission bound by the mandate of Article 174 by drawing upon all the requisite resources of the Union and the State to ensure free and fair elections.

Under Article 174, there should not be a gap of more than six months between two sessions of a State Assembly. And it is the BJP's argument that as the last Gujarat Assembly session was held on April 6, the next session should be held before October 6 and the Election

Commission is duty-bound to hold elections before that.

The court has been asked to interpret this Article as different views have been expressed by constitutional experts, with some saying that Article 174 will apply in all situations and some expressing the view that it will apply only to an existing Assembly and not to a dissolved one.

Under Article 324, the Election Commission is vested with absolute powers of superintendence, conduct and control of elections.

Therefore, the issue before the Supreme Court would be, whether an executive order passed by the Commission un-

der Article 324 (to defer the polls till November-December) would have overriding powers in derogation of Article 174.

In the Government's perception, the Commission's order (in paragraph 11) that "the non-observance of the provisions of Article 174 (1)... would mean that the government of the State cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution within the meaning of Article 356 (1) of the Constitution and the President would then step in," was the most objectionable part of the 40-page order.

Government sources said the Union Cabinet did not have any objection to the Commission's own assessment of the law and order situation.

But when the Commission in its order had accepted that Article 174 had to be complied with, it went overboard in suggesting that Article 174 must yield to Article 324.

The Cabinet was of the view that instead of taking a confrontational attitude a dignified procedure of clearing the legal doubts should be undertaken and so it unanimously decided to seek the opinion of the Supreme Court on the issues involved.

It was felt that what had happened in Gujarat should not become a precedent and the Supreme Court should clarify the position, sources added.

'GAURAV YATRA' FROM SEPT. 3

By Manas Dasgupta

AHMEDABAD, AUG. 20. The Gujarat BJP unit has decided to revive the controversial "gaurav rath yatra" of the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, from September 3.

Announcing the programme to 'kick off' the party's Assembly election campaign, the State party president, Rajendrasinh Rana, said the revised programme had been approved by the high command and there was no question of its being cancelled again.

The 'conditions' in July, when the 'yatra' was originally planned, were 'different' compared to the situation now and the party did not foresee the National Human Rights Commission or any other organisation posing problems.

The July 4 'yatra' was cancelled at the behest of the high command, particularly the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, after the NHRC, the Congress and other political parties expressed apprehensions of another round of violence.

21 AUG 2002

STATE BJP TO CHALLENGE EC POLL DECISION

GUJARAT:

Kalam seeks SC view on Gujarat

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 19. — President Dr APJ Abdul Kalam today made a reference to the Supreme Court under Article 143 of the Constitution to seek the Court's opinion on the Constitutional validity of the Election Commission's decision on deferring the Gujarat Assembly elections. The Cabinet had sought the Presidential reference at its meeting yesterday.

According to official sources, the Cabinet resolution was sent to the President this morning. Dr Kalam, after going through the contents of the resolution, held consultations with officials before sending it to the Chief Justice of India.

The Supreme Court is likely to take up the matter within a day or two in order to fix a date for the hearing and to constitute the Bench. The solicitor-general, Mr Harish Salve, is to bring up the Gujarat issue before Chief Justice Mr BN Kirpal tomorrow or the day after.

Experts believe the Supreme Court has three options: to return the case without hearing it, to hear it and not interfere with the Election Commission's verdict, or pass judgment. Article 143 deals with the power of the President to consult the Supreme Court. "If at any time it appears ... that a question of law or fact has arisen, or is likely to arise, which is of such a nature and of such public importance that it is expedient to obtain the opinion of the Supreme Court upon it, he may refer the question to that Court for consultation ... and the Court may, after such hearing as it thinks fit, report to the President its opinion", it says.

The three-member Election Commission last

week declined to hold the Gujarat Assembly elections before the six-month time bar between two sessions elapses on 5 October [as per Article 174(1)]. The EC said Article 324 has overriding power and that it is the discretion and prerogative of the EC to decide poll timings.

But the deputy Prime Minister, Mr LK Advani, today said the Election Commission had deviated from its Constitutional role. Its mandate is to hold elections and not otherwise. Mr Advani said the EC was a Constitutional body and the government did not want any confrontation with it. At the same time, he asserted that never in its 55-year

history had the EC made a decision not to hold elections. Elections were held in Assam and other North-Eastern states when only five to eight per cent of the electorate had exercised their franchise.

Mr Advani was particularly critical of the EC's suggestion on imposition

of President's rule. The EC had inserted a paragraph to this effect, in its 40-page order, on the issue: "The government found that particular part flawed. As per the Constitutional procedure a decision on President's rule is taken by the Cabinet and then ratified by Parliament. In this case the EC seems to be directing all of them that there will be constitutional breakdown after 6 October because the EC did not think that elections could be held there. The issue has a wider implication which not only relates to Gujarat but also for various other situations that may arise in the future."

The Centre has thus exercised the best possible option seeking the opinion of the Supreme Court on the issue through a Presidential Reference without confronting the EC, Mr Advani said.

Turn to page 6

(Continued from page 1)

The BJP today appeared reconciled to whatever advice the Supreme Court gives although it has allowed the Gujarat unit to challenge the Election Commission's order on holding the polls after October. The state unit is yet to take a decision.

The BJP general-secretary in charge of Gujarat, Mr Arun Jaitley, appreciated the merit of the Presidential reference but argued before the BJP leadership that the state unit must be allowed to challenge the decision. The state unit plans to take an aggressive posture against the EC to try and consolidate voters and score brownie points, a senior BJP leader said. The opinion of Gujarat Governor Mr SS Bhandari that the situation is congenial for polls has strengthened the BJP's argument.

Gaurav Yatra: The BJP Gujarat unit today held a meeting to finalise a new schedule for a revived Gaurav Yatra, which was aborted last month following opposition from some political parties over its objectives.

Rajkot situation: Curfew was relaxed for thirteen hours today in Dhoraji town of Rajkot, police said, adds PTI. Curfew was imposed there after clashes between two communities on Saturday that left eight persons injured in the Nadibazaar area. A four-member team of the state BJP has left for Dhoraji on a fact-finding mission.

20 AUG 2002

1000 Rajeev Bhatt (more pictures)

Shekhawat sworn in Vice-President *of President*

HO-1
20/8

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, AUG. 19. Bhairon Singh Shekhawat was today sworn in the 12th Vice-President. The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, administered the oath of office to Mr. Shekhawat at the Ashoka Hall of the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The 79-year-old senior leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party took oath in Hindi at a brief ceremony attended by the former President, K. R. Narayanan, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, the former Prime Ministers, I. K. Gujral, Chandra Shekhar and P.V. Narasimha Rao, dignitaries and a contingent of guests from Rajasthan, Mr. Shekhawat's home State.

Among the others who attended the swearing-in were the Chief Ministers of Tamil Nadu, Jayalalithaa, Farooq Abdullah of Jammu and Kashmir and Ashok Gehlot of Rajasthan. Ms. Jayalalithaa

was invited personally by Mr. Shekhawat. She had taken strong exception at not being invited for the swearing-in ceremony of Dr. Kalam.

The Trinamool Congress chief, Mamata Banerjee, who had refused to vote for the NDA candidate protesting against the Eastern Railway bifurcation issue, was conspicuous by her presence. After his victory, Mr. Shekhawat had talked to Ms. Banerjee on telephone and she had called on him last Saturday.

Mr. Shekhawat, elected to the office on August 12, succeeds Krishan Kant, who died in office on July 27, nearly three weeks before his tenure was to end. Mr. Shekhawat defeated the joint Opposition candidate, Sushil Kumar Shinde, by a huge margin. Mr. Shinde was present at the ceremony.

The Vice-President later told mediapersons that he would rise above party lines and ensure that major issues facing the nation were thoroughly debated in the Rajya Sabha, of which he will be the Chairman.

20 AUG 2002

Opp slams motive behind presidential move

Sr k
28/8
Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Aug. 19. — The Opposition today criticised the government for seeking a Presidential reference over the Election Commission's decision on delaying Gujarat polls.

The Congress clarified that it was not questioning the government's right under Article 143 of the Constitution to refer the poll panel's decision to the President and get the Supreme Court's opinion. But it criticised the "motive" of the Centre and that of the Gujarat government in insisting on early polls.

Congress spokesman Mr Anand Sharma said even during the riots, Mr Narendra Modi was busy distributing leaflets to assess if polls at that juncture would benefit the BJP. Mr Modi spoke about snap polls during the BJP's Goa session early this year. He dissolved the Assembly much before schedule. The motive was to reap political dividends out of the communal holocaust, Mr Sharma said.

He said the BJP's political "motive" was apparent as it has been accusing the Chief Election Commissioner of

acting at the behest of the Congress.

In separate statements, the CPI and the CPI-M described the government's decision to seek a Presidential reference on the EC's decision as an affront on the poll panel. "There is no constitutional crisis or problem ... The problem is with the BJP.. It had gambled for early polls in Gujarat, a state devastated by communal violence," the CPI-M said.

The Samajwadi Party criticised the government for its decision to refer the matter to the President.

Venkaiah land: The Congress today asked the Andhra Pradesh chief minister to reclaim the land given to Mr M Venkaiah Naidu under Form D which is meant for SC/ST people. Mr Abhishek Singhvi, Congress spokesman, said that though Mr Naidu has denied having 42 acres of land, the area of the land is immaterial. Even if a single plot of land (according to Mr Naidu it was just 4 acres) has been given to the BJP chief, it should be recovered and legal action should be initiated against him. The land was given to Mr Naidu by the Congress government in 1970. Mr Naidu was a student at that time.

NGOs to rally against BJP in Gujarat

BHOPAL, Aug. 19. — The National Alliance of People's Movements — a group of 150 social organisations and NGOs — will campaign against the BJP in Gujarat before the Assembly elections, Miss Medha Patkar, NBA leader and NAPM national co-ordinator said today. A high-level meeting of the NAPM was held on 18-19 August.

The riots were instigated by communal forces who pose a threat to democracy and human values, Miss Patkar said. The NAPM will campaign to ensure that the "fascist and communal" BJP and the Sangh Parivar are defeated. The NAPM wouldn't field its candidates in Gujarat as it doesn't intend to enter electoral politics, she said. It will also not campaign in favour of any party. Mr Siddha Raj Dhadha of the NAPM said it would urge people to vote for non-BJP candidates. — SNS

20 AUG 2002

'INDIA NEEDS A SECOND VISION'

Eradicate communal, divisive clashes, says President

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, AUG. 14. India needs a "second vision" aimed at alleviating poverty, illiteracy and unemployment to place it in the category of developed nations, but this would not be possible unless communal and other divisive clashes are eradicated to achieve a unity of minds and purpose, the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, said today in his first address to the nation on the eve of the 55th anniversary of Independence Day.

The "first vision" created the 90-year long intensive movement for freedom, led by Mahatma Gandhi, when there was a "unity of minds of our people and unity of purpose in actions". What was needed now was a "second vision" to release the dormant potential of the nation and its people and "will also remove the conflicts arising out of differences and small thinking".

In an address broadcast to the nation, Dr. Kalam asserted that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India, that it was "not an international issue" and that India would be ready for a bilateral dialogue once cross-border terrorism was brought to a complete end. It was "essential" to ensure "the successful completion of the electoral process" and to bring about the "dawn of peace" in the State.

While stressing the need for finding a "permanent solution" to effectively combat terrorism, the President paid equal importance to bringing to an end "communal and other divisive clashes" in "certain parts". He did not shy away from mentioning his



The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, addressing the nation on the eve of Independence Day.

visit to Gujarat and laid stress on the need to "understand others" and "practice tolerance".

Gujarat had given to the nation Mahatma Gandhi, Vallabhbhai Patel and Vikram Sarabhai, and that time had come to put into action the thoughts of these great men. He underlined that non-violence, tolerance and acceptance of all religions and the fearless search for truth were values taught by the Mahatma, and they were the "cornerstones of our civilisational heritage" and therefore of the Indian polity. It was this "pluralistic tradition" and the civilisational heritage of 3,000 years over which a

g. President

"unique fusion" of multiple cultures, religions and ways of life had taken place, and this had become the foundation of Indian life. And as if giving a gentle warning (in the context of Gujarat), Dr. Kalam reminded the country that "any act by anyone anywhere in India that runs counter to these eternal values would pose a threat to the fabric of the free Indian nation..."

The youth needed role models from the present generation (not just from the past when the freedom movement threw up a galaxy of tall men). Members of Parliament and Legislatures could shape the future of children by becoming role models. "Parliament and Legislatures have a crucial role in giving the vision of developed India and value-based polity."

Greeting the countrymen, Dr. Kalam talked of the need to harness technology to go forward in many areas and to find ways to prevent the annual cycle of drought and floods through the networking of rivers. India had made a mark in the international arena in space, defence and nuclear science, pharmaceuticals, information technology and mass media and communication. "If we can rise above our personal hardships and see the problems of others and work for a larger cause, there will be a natural elevation of the mind, while the level of thinking goes down when the opposite happens." "The nation is more important than any individual, party or organisation, and this is the vow that all of us must take on the anniversary of Independence Day," Dr. Kalam said.

THE HINDU

15 AUG 2000

Put twin tragedies behind: Kalam

AHMEDABAD, AUG. 13. Wiping away their tears, President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, today asked the people of Gujarat to unite in the interest of national development, putting the twin tragedies of riots and earthquake behind them.

Rounding off his two-day Gujarat tour, the first State visited by him after taking over as the President, Dr. Kalam said the key to transform India into a great country was in development of core sectors like agriculture, food processing, education, health and information technology. — UNI

Kalam shares 'pain' of riot victims

By Manas Dasgupta

GANDHINAGAR, AUG. 13. The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, has said the nation urgently needed an intensified movement to "eliminate totally communal and other forms of strife and bring about unity of minds and total integration of our vision and goals".

In a statement issued from the Raj Bhavan here yesterday, Dr. Kalam indicated that he was far from happy over the relief and rehabilitation measures. He had met hundreds of people who shared with him their "pain and suffering and sorrows" and "it was a moving experience, and my heart went out to all those who suffered during those tragic incidents".

He was informed about the relief measures taken so far and also those planned by the Chief Minister and other Government officials present, but the 'grievances poured forth by the affected people to me in their presence should merit immediate attention of those concerned and action should be taken with alacrity'.

Snag in IAF plane

Technical snags in the scheduled Indian Air Force plane delayed his departure for Bhuj, district headquarters of the earthquake-ravaged Kutch, by about two hours this morning. Dr. Kalam made use of the time to pay unscheduled visits to Pramukh Swami, head of the Swaminarayan sect, and Jain Muni Mahapragya, and reportedly discussed science and religion with them. Another plane was flown from Delhi to take the presidential party to



A quake victim greets the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, during his visit to her newly-built house at Sukhpur village, west of Ahmedabad, on Tuesday. — AP

Bhuj. Thousands of people and school children greeted Dr. Kalam at the three functions attended by him in Kutch to dedicate houses constructed by voluntary organisations for the earthquake-hit people.

He paid compliments to the "courage and fighting spirit" of the people in rebuilding their lives.

"I had visited the district sev-

eral times after the earthquake but there is a marked improvement in the situation in what I had seen then and what I see now. It is all due to the courage and fighting spirit of the people of Kutch," he said while dedicating to the beneficiaries 100 of the 400 houses at the Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Nagar on the outskirts of Bhuj, constructed by the Technology In-

formation Forecasting and Assessment Council of which he was the former chairman.

He visited the school constructed in the complex in memory of a student, Hitesh Dholakia, who was killed in the earthquake, and interacted with the children, asking them to inculcate a missionary zeal to make the country strong and powerful.

Active space beckons Kalam

9 President 5-6 1418

President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has left no one in doubt that his would be an activist presidency. In doing so, he steps out onto a narrow ledge.

The President in India has no executive powers, and is often seen as performing a mostly symbolic role. Yet, symbols are not bereft of substance. The other role of the head of state, to "listen, counsel and warn" has assumed a new significance over the last decade.

The First Citizen did not mince words on the first leg of his tour of Gujarat. His very choice of the state sent a clear message. Calling for "immediate action" to help those affected by the violence in Gujarat, he asked the administration to act "with alacrity".

The message was clear to all those cared to heed.

His first tour took him amidst the riot-hit people of Ahmedabad and then onto the epicentre of the earthquake that hit Kutch in January 2001.

In Naroda-Patia, his presence virtually forced chief minister Narendra Modi and other senior government functionaries to visit the riot-hit areas.

Kalam assumed office at a significant juncture in the history of the presidency. His predecessor K.R. Narayanan was not alone in playing on the public reach of the office to try and influence the tone and tenor of debate on matters of state.

He single-handedly emerged as sceptic on an issue that was dear to the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government — the revision of the Constitution. Quoting chapter and verse from B.R. Ambedkar and other luminaries, he stressed the fault was not in the Constitution but in the lawmakers themselves. It was their conduct that required revision, not the Constitution.

Even prior to this, he made two governments reconsider their decision to invoke Article 356. The United Front government had to step back in Uttar Pradesh in October 1997. It was the NDA's turn in the case of Bihar. The President was drawing on his power to urge the Cabinet to reconsider its decision. He could not order revocation. But that crucial word, "reconsider", was enough. Public opinion did the rest.

Things were not always like this. The first President locked horns with Jawaharlal Nehru on more than one occasion. When he wanted to send Parliament a

message about the Hindu Code Bill, the Prime Minister put his foot down. Then Attorney-General H.C. Setalvad, an eminent jurist, clarified the issue in a note in September 1951.

The President's position was like that of the British monarch who "reigns but does not rule". He could not evince views on matters of policy or interfere in the process of drafting legislation. President Rajendra Prasad bowed to the dictum: he could counsel the government in private but not speak out in public on the Bill.

In the Indira Gandhi period, the role of the President was reduced to that of a virtual rubber stamp. The institution touched its nadir under Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed. When presented with the Proclamation of Emergency in June 1975, he was told "it was not necessary (for the Cabinet) to endorse the decision in advance. He asked no questions and signed the Proclamation".

A Prime Minister with a clear majority

and a ruling party in control of most states could resist presidential pressure. Despite his vast experience in politics, a newcomer to the political arena outwitted one President. In 1987, Giani Zail Singh had to step back from a conflict with Rajiv Gandhi.

The office was redefined once hung verdicts and coalition governments became the order of the day. The personal beliefs and the philosophy of a President became more crucial than in the past. In Kalam's case, his autobiography, *Wings of Fire*, reveals an absence of any narrow sectarian feeling.

His message to the political class leaves little room for ambiguity. In Ahmedabad, he said: "The nation urgently needs an intensified movement to eliminate totally communal and other forms of strife." A gesture can serve as reminder to elected representatives.

Kalam will now have to carefully pick his way. But how long before he is caught in partisan controversy? It is still early in his innings.

But there is clearly space for an active, if not an intrusive, President. He has to reach out to common citizens and remind the elected leaders of where the ultimate source of legitimacy resides.

The missile man took office among much hope. It is not clear how he plans to reshape the institution. But the visit to Gujarat shows he is on the move.

THE BIG PICTURE MAHESH RANGARAJAN

PRESIDENT ORDERS SPEEDIER RELIEF

Kalam visits riot sites in Gandhi land

Anil Rana in Gandhinagar

Aug. 12. — The President today made a silent journey from the ashram of non-violence to a site of bloodshed where 83 people lost their lives and more than 150 houses were burnt and looted. Mr Narendrā Modi accompanied Dr APJ Abdul Kalam to Sabarmati Ashram and Naroda-Patia in Ahmedabad. This was the chief minister's first visit to the two places since he assumed office.

After late last night's "detention" of Sharif Khan, an organiser of Shah Alam relief camp, by the Crime Branch, it was the turn of Father Cedrik Prakash of the NGO, Prashant, today. Fr Prakash, having a pass for the "inner circle", was prevented from petitioning the President at Naroda-Patia: "I was circled by policemen and kept in virtual detention till the President left ... they said I couldn't meet Dr Kalam since I was not involved in the rebuilding of houses. But I have helped victims in so many ways."

(Mr Khan was released around 8 p.m., PTI reports. About 4,000 inmates of the camp today sat on a hunger strike, demanding his release. Mr Khan said he had been

detained to make sure no "genuine representation" could be made to Dr Kalam.)

The state administration sought to give a festive air to the presidential visit. At Naroda-Patia, hundreds of people waved plastic Tricolours and cheered Dr Kalam. Several people alleged the crowds were hired. The real picture was sought to be masked as policemen took off all "offensive" banners. One banner — put up by the Islamic Relief Committee — that escaped the police's attention read: "Naroda-Patia dukhiyon ka salaam (greetings from the aggrieved of Naroda-Patia)".

The President, who spent more than half an hour at Naroda-Patia, could enter just about 25 feet inside the residential area before he was escorted to a dias, where he listened to petitioners.

The government's gag over the people was firmly in place, preventing the riot victims from communicating with the President. Dr Kalam entered one of the many small lanes where houses are being

repaired and rebuilt; the residents flooded him with their tales of woe. But since almost all of it was said in Hindi and Gujarati, it was lost on him.

And in any case, officials and politicians accompanying him would let him spend hardly five minutes there. He was promptly escorted to an enclosure where he met a 14-year-old hungry (he had not eaten since the morning) orphan, Javed Husain.

Javed told the President in Hindi (the collector translated it to English) how he escaped death at Naroda-Patia by jumping over a wall, even as his mother, sister, and father were murdered. He has been living at Shah Alam camp since. He also said apart from a grant of Rs 2,500, he has not received any compensation.

Another boy, Raju Bunda Bhai, was also lined up to narrate his case, but could not get a hearing due to paucity of time.

Mr Afzal Memon of the Gujarat Sarvajnik Relief Committee submitted a memorandum asking the Chief Executive to safeguard the fundamental rights of minorities. Pointing out that the economic backbone of Ahmedabad's Muslims has been broken by the riots, he sought security for the riot-hit. Dr SM Khan, Dr Kalam's press secretary, said the President had

asked officials to speed up rehabilitation.

Dressed in a blue shirt and light trousers, Dr Kalam waded through the press corps, but refused to take questions. One of the journalists asked him: "Do you have any words of sympathy for the people here." The President didn't reply and was quickly escorted to his car by the chief minister. Later, Dr Kalam visited Haj House in Kalupur and then a home for widows.

At Sabarmati, Mr Amrut Modi, secretary of the Ashram Preservation Memorial Trust, presented Dr Kalam with a Tamil edition of the *Selected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*. The President also spent some time with children. He asked schoolchildren to sing his "Song of Youth". They did, but in faint voices, prompting him to ask: "Haven't you had breakfast?"

Late tonight, incidents of stone-pelting and arson were reported from Parikshital in Ahmedabad. Fire-tenders were sent to douse the flames, police said.

No colonial hangover for Dr Kalam, p 6

A significant Presidential visit

17/8 By K.K. Katyal 110-12

The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's decision to choose Gujarat for his first visit outside the Capital within three weeks of his assuming office has evoked unusual interest in the ruling alliance, among other political parties and elsewhere. For good reasons. True, he took into account his attachment to Mahatma Gandhi's Sabarmati ashram but there were other factors as well.

Gujarat was recently the scene of the worst communal riots after Independence and as such the concern for the victims and their plight could not but have weighed with him. This was evident from the press release issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan to the effect that the President "will use the opportunity to learn personally about the rehabilitation measures undertaken by the Gujarat Government and non-government organisations in the wake of recent disturbances."

Though a constitutional head, the President need not seek the Prime Minister's advice for travels within the country. At times, his visits may convey a political message, which may not be palatable to the government of the day.

It is not known whether before taking the decision the President conveyed his thinking to the Government. He may have mentioned it to the Prime Minister and even if the latter was not happy he could not have given any such indication to Dr. Kalam. That would have sent a wrong signal. In any case, both the Central and the State Governments concerned come in the picture, once the Presidential programme is finalised.

There are clear signs of consternation in the BJP camp, though its leaders put up a brave face, trying hard to hide their unease. The Opposition derived comfort from the President's decision and said so publicly. The BJP spokespersons confined their comments to the formal — that the President has the right to go anywhere in the country and choose his destinations — and blamed the Opposition for seeking to politicise the visit. The discussion, if not the controversy, will continue but what form it will take de-

110-12/8
people in Delhi that Nehru looked upon Prasad as a 'revivalist'. Nehru's rift with Prasad began in mid-30s when he, along with Patel, C.R. (C. Rajagopalachari) and Kriplani, disowned Nehru's creed of socialism. It took a sharp turn when in 1950, Prasad decided to visit Kutch for the ceremonies, connected with the reconstruction of the historic Somnath temple, destroyed and looted in the 10th century by Mahmud of Ghazni, a northern invader from across the Khyber Pass. Nehru opposed the visit on the ground that it was not politic for the head of a secular state to associate himself with "religious revivalism" of this kind. Prasad did not agree and pointed to the significance of Somnath 'as the symbol of national resistance to an invader', adding 'I believe in my religion. I cannot cut myself away from it.' In his anger at Prasad's 'defiance' of his wishes, Nehru told the Information Ministry not to issue the speech of Prasad at the ceremony as an official handout. On another occasion, Nehru resented Prasad's decision to go to Bombay to attend Patel's funeral."

pend on what he observes (assuming that the State authorities do not try to convert it into a conducted tour) and how he reacts.

The Gujarat trip, however, is significant. One, it provides another pointer that Dr. Kalam will be guided by his judgment, especially in the face of the sensitive situation and thus corrects the misperception that having been nominated by the BJP-led combine, he may defer to its leaders, whatever the circumstances. Two, it shifts the focus back to the present-day reality of Gujarat, which was sought to be shoved under the carpet by influential persons in New Delhi and Ahmedabad. Coming as it does in the wake of the eye-opening visit of the Chief Election Commissioner and his colleagues, Dr. Kalam's presence in Gujarat

NEWS ANALYSIS

would help project the true picture of the State, removing the cobwebs of lies, spread by responsible functionaries of the BJP.

There were occasions in the past when presidential trips to sensitive areas were not liked by the Government, the Prime Minister of the day in particular. In the case of the first President, Rajendra Prasad, and the first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, such cases led to friction. To say this is not to suggest that Dr. Kalam's Gujarat trip could lead to strain in his dealings with the Government. Any such conclusion will be erroneous. On the basis of the evidence available so far, Dr. Kalam could be depended upon to be correct in his functioning within the parameters of the Constitution even while maintaining independence of judgment.

Among the many occasions on which the Prasad-Nehru friction came to the fore was the case in 1950 when the President's decision to go to Somnath was opposed by the Prime Minister. Their clash became widely known. An inside account of such episodes was given by a veteran editor, the late Durga Das — known for his deep insight into the political goings-on — in his book, 'Curzen to Nehru and After'. Here is one sample: "It was not a secret to knowledgeable

people in Delhi that Nehru looked upon Prasad as a 'revivalist'. Nehru's rift with Prasad began in mid-30s when he, along with Patel, C.R. (C. Rajagopalachari) and Kriplani, disowned Nehru's creed of socialism. It took a sharp turn when in 1950, Prasad decided to visit Kutch for the ceremonies, connected with the reconstruction of the historic Somnath temple, destroyed and looted in the 10th century by Mahmud of Ghazni, a northern invader from across the Khyber Pass. Nehru opposed the visit on the ground that it was not politic for the head of a secular state to associate himself with "religious revivalism" of this kind. Prasad did not agree and pointed to the significance of Somnath 'as the symbol of national resistance to an invader', adding 'I believe in my religion. I cannot cut myself away from it.' In his anger at Prasad's 'defiance' of his wishes, Nehru told the Information Ministry not to issue the speech of Prasad at the ceremony as an official handout. On another occasion, Nehru resented Prasad's decision to go to Bombay to attend Patel's funeral."

In the eighties too, the President's travel became the subject of disagreement with the Prime Minister. On June 8, 1984, a day after the Operation Blue Star, the President, Zail Singh, wanted to visit Amritsar to see the condition of the Golden Temple. The then Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, did not like the idea — she sought to assure him that the damage was not extensive. The President, however, insisted but, because of the short notice, travelled by an Indian Airlines flight.

Three weeks later, he again went there in his plane along with a media party. It was through his intervention that the Army was withdrawn from the temple, which was restored to the SGPC. The Government was unhappy over the press reports that the President has apologised to the head priest.

That, of course, was not correct. As I quoted Zail Singh then in a despatch, he had put it thus: "I said to myself 'Hey *prabhu*, all this had to happen when I was *pradhan* (President). I seek your forgiveness.'" The controversy ended but not the reverberations.

Don't politicise President's move: Opp

BJP wary of Kalam's Gujarat visit

11/8 (sr) J. President
STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, Aug. 10. — The BJP is wary of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam's visit to Gujarat on Monday despite senior leaders' attempts to present a calm front.

The jitters in the BJP were evident when the party's "intellectual cell" raised the matter at a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister. Also, some fringe elements of the Sangh Parivar have questioned the visit.

A senior BJP leader said the government should ensure that the President gets the picture of both the sides instead of just visiting the relief camps, where Muslims have taken refuge. Mr LK Advani said Dr Kalam was a balanced man and "will do justice". The President is the country's constitutional head and free to visit any place he wants to.

Mr Arun Jaitley, BJP spokesman, corroborated Mr Advani.

Some leaders said that if Dr Kalam spoke on the Assembly polls or about the condition of riot-victims in camps he would give a handle to the Opposition against the BJP. It would "set a bad precedent".

The Opposition said the President's visit to Gujarat should not be politicised. Samajwadi Party general secretary Mr Amar Singh said the visit should be seen from a human perspective. Mr Priya Ranjan Das Munshi (Congress) said Dr Kalam's visit should not be dragged into a contro-

versy. Mr Nilotpal Basu, CPI-M MP, said the visit would help him "sift the chaff from the grain".

Mr Justice AM Ahmadi, former Supreme Court chief justice, said Dr Kalam was not a "prisoner of Rashtrapati Bhavan" and his first official visit was "significant". Dr Kalam had chosen to visit a state where communal violence was carried out "systematically".

"This (Dr Kalam's proposed visit) is significant in the context of what happened in Gujarat a few months back and the proposed Assembly polls," Mr Justice Ahmadi told reporters in Bangalore.

Talking to reporters in June after filing his nomination papers for the presidential polls, Dr Kalam had said: "What happened in Gujarat is painful... We should try to see whether religion can graduate into spiritualism... managers can graduate into leaders and political leaders can turn into political leaders with compassion." He had parried

questions on Mr Narendra Modi and the demand for imposition of President's rule on the state.

Normally, when a President receives an invitation to attend a programme, the visit is approved by Rashtrapati Bhavan after clearance from security agencies. There have been occasions when the President has declined an invitation on the advice of security agencies.

■ Another report on page 10



Kerala chief minister Mr AK Antony meets Dr APJ Abdul Kalam on Saturday. — PTI

BJP pins Gujarat poll hopes on Kalam

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam has chosen riot-torn Gujarat as the destination for his first visit outside the capital after assuming office. The planned day-long visit on August 12 will come just two days before his 1-day speech.

His visit is significant since during the run-up to the presidential poll, he was persistently grilled about his position on the communal violence that had engulfed that BJP-ruled state. His trip is also important as it comes at a time when the BJP is pressing for early elections in Gujarat while the opposition says conditions are not conducive for polls.

BJP sources feel Mr Kalam's vis-

it will strengthen their case for an early election, as it will "indicate that things have returned to normalcy" in the state, especially as the visit will follow the visit of Chief Election Commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh and his team. In his interactions with the press in Gujarat, the President is bound to be asked about his impressions about the current situation there and the BJP is hoping he will reply in a positive fashion.



A.P.J. Kalam

Indeed, when Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi visited the capital on July 30, he had paid a courtesy call on Mr Kalam and in-

vited him to visit the state. On that occasion, the President had spoken nostalgically of the time in the 1960s when he had worked in the state, and said that he had received a great deal of inspiration from the Sabarmati Ashram and Porbandar, Gandhi's birthplace.

However, any situation where Mr Kalam is brought face to face with emotionally distressed riot victims—of the kind who met Mr Lyngdoh at the Shah Alam camp in Ahmedabad on Friday, for example—could equally reinforce the impression that normalcy has not been restored. And it would be odd for Mr Kalam to stay away from the camps when one of the stated reasons for his visiting Gujarat is to examine the state of rehabilitation.

Farewell to Krishan Kant



The last post for Vice-President Krishan Kant. At Nigambodh Ghat in New Delhi on Sunday. — AFP

LAST JOURNEY WITH VEDIC HYMNS AND DIGNITARIES

Press Trust of India

NEW DELHI, July 28. — A grief-stricken nation bid a tearful farewell to Krishan Kant who was cremated amidst the chanting of Vedic hymns at the Nigambodh Ghat this evening.

Rajputana Rifles jawans fired thrice in the air, reversed their arms and sounded the last post as the late leader's eldest son, Rashmikant, lit the funeral pyre at 5.25 p.m. Some relatives and friends broke down and even some VVIPs found it difficult to control their emotions as the pyre was lit.

Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, Mr LK Advani, Lok Sabha Speaker Mr Manohar Joshi, former President Mr R Venkataraman, former Prime Ministers Mr IK Gujral and Mr HD Deve Gowda, Rajya Sabha Deputy Chairperson Ms Najma Heptulla, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, NDA Vice-Presidential nominee Mr BS Shekawat and several chief ministers and Governors placed wreaths on Kant's body. Several members of the diplomatic corps were among the dignitaries present to pay their last respects to the late Vice-President.

Kant's 97-year-old mother Satyawati, wife

Suman, son Sukant, daughter Divya Handa and grandchildren were present at the funeral.

Earlier, Kant's body, draped in the Tricolour, was brought from his Maulana Azad Road residence to the Nigambodh Ghat in a gun carriage escorted by personnel of the three Armed Forces. There was tight security at the crematorium in view of the presence of large number of VVIPs.

The National Flag flew at half-mast as the country observed a three day state mourning as a mark of respect to the veteran freedom fighter and Gandhian who was to demit office on 13 August.

49-1
A SHOCKED NATION PAYS TRIBUTE

Indian President
28/7
Krishan Kant passes away

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 27. The Vice-President, Krishan Kant, died here this morning after suffering a massive heart-attack. He was 75 and his term as Vice-President was to have lasted 24 more days.

The family members called in a doctor when Mr. Kant did not wake up till 7 a.m. and he was rushed to the All-India Institute of Medical Sciences.

Despite the best efforts by a team of doctors, he could not be saved and was declared dead at 8.45 a.m. Mr. Kant is survived by his wife Suman, two sons, a daughter and his 97-year-old mother.

Mr. Kant is said to have died in sleep some time around 3 a.m. though this was not detected till 7 a.m.

According to an AIIMS spokesman, all measures of cardio-pulmonary resuscitation,



Krishan Kant's mother and others beside the Vice-President's body at his residence in New Delhi on Saturday. — Photo: S. Subramaniam

including internal and external pace-makers, were ineffective as there was complete dissociation of electrico-mechanical activity.

As the news of the death spread, there was a stream of VVIP visitors to the hospital as well as to his residence at Maulana Azad Marg.

A shocked nation was trying to come to terms with the sudden death of Mr. Kant, the first Vice-President to have died in office.

The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, the RJD leader, Laloo Prasad Yadav, the Information and Broadcasting Minister, Sushma Swaraj, and the former Prime Minister, I.K. Gujral, visited the hospital and offered their condolences to the family members.

Later, Mr. Vajpayee chaired an extraordinary Cabinet meeting at his residence and a resolution was passed recording the deep appreciation of Mr. Kant's services to the nation.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Ms. Sushma Swaraj said a state funeral would be accorded to the departed leader at Nigambodh Ghat cremation ground at 4 p.m. on Sunday. The Government has declared a three-day state mourning till Monday.

During this period, the national flag will fly at half-mast and there will be no official entertainment. All Central Government offices were closed today.

"In his passing away, the nation has lost a great patriot who made an outstanding contribution to public life. He imbibed the spirit of patriotism very early in life, having been imprisoned by the British when he was only 15 for his active participa-

tion in the Quit India Movement.

He imparted the same zeal to his many socio-political activities after Independence," the Cabinet resolution said.

In his condolence message, the President, Dr. Kalam said that in the passing away of Mr. Kant the nation had suffered an irreparable loss and "is deprived of a man of great eminence and scholarly persuasion and, above all, an excellent human being."

"Holding important positions in public life, he not only made splendid contributions to strengthen secularism and parliamentary democracy but also exerted himself to uphold ethics and values in the mainstream of our body polity," the President said.

The Prime Minister said the untimely demise of Mr. Kant has left the entire nation in a state of shock.

"It is the end of an era. He fought Britishers first and later fought for democracy during emergency. Till yesterday, he was with us and today we are condoling his death," Mr. Vajpayee said.

The Leader of the Opposition and Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, said that Mr. Kant presided over the Rajya Sabha with "engaging tolerance, goodwill and high distinction."

He "never deviated in his commitment to serve the people of India with exceptional devotion. He leaves a void in our national life which would be difficult to fill."

More reports, photos on Page 9

Krishan Kant is first vice president to die in office

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Krishan Kant, who might have become the President but for the failure of the country's political parties to reach a consensus, and who would have gracefully ended his vice presidency next month, died in harness 24 days before his term was to conclude.

Predictably, there was conjecture in political circles here about whether or not his sudden end—due to a massive heart attack early Saturday morning—was the result of this personal setback, more so because the 75-year-old VP did not have a history of cardiac ailments and was active until Friday evening.

Mr Kant is India's first vice president to die in office. He is also one of four vice presidents so far who failed to make it to the presidency. His term was to have ended on August 26.

Before the National Democratic Alliance zeroed in on A.P.J. Abdul Kalam for President, Krishan Kant was one of the front-runners for the post along with former Maharashtra governor P.C. Alexander. At one point, his name had been almost finalised, with Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee sounding out the opposition, including the Congress and the Left Front, and the latter virtually congratulating Mr Kant. Telugu Desam chief N.



L.K. Advani consoles 97-year-old Sathyawati Kant, mother of Krishan Kant in New Delhi on Saturday

Chandrababu Naidu, who had originally supported his candidature for vice president in 1997, was known to have pushed his case this time as well. But the BJP flip-flop forced the Prime Minister to back down on Mr Kant.

It is not clear whether there will be a successor for a short period since the election process for the vice president's post is already under way. Deputy chairperson Najma Heptulla will conduct the Rajya Sabha proceedings until the election due on August 12.

An emergency meeting of the Union cabinet, which condoled the death, announced a three-day mourning and a state funeral.

It is an insult: Jayalalithaa

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, JULY 26. Making it clear that the AIADMK's support to the ruling National Democratic Alliance at the Centre could not be taken for granted, the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Jayalalithaa, today took strong objection to the Centre not sending her an invitation for the swearing-in ceremony of the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

In a strongly-worded four-page statement, she said her enquiries made through the Resident Commissioner of Tamil Nadu in New Delhi had received a "curt reply" from the Union Home Ministry that Chief Ministers were not going to be invited for the occasion.

Pointing out that she had cooperated with the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, in selecting the candidates for the President and the



Vice-President, she said: "It is surprising to note that despite my support, which is considerable, I have been slighted and humiliated by the NDA Government at the Centre... In fact, I take it as a deliberate slight to Tamil Nadu, especially when

the new President hails from Tamil Nadu. It is not only an insult to me, but also a deliberate humiliation heaped on the people of Tamil Nadu."

(Later in the evening, Ms. Jayalalithaa said the AIADMK's support for the NDA's Vice-Presidential candidate, Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, would continue. "I do not go back on my word. I've already pledged my support for the Vice-Presidential nominee.")

On the Chief Ministers of Andhra Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, and Rajasthan alone being given invitations for the swearing-in ceremony, she asked: "What is the NDA Government trying to achieve by this act of discrimination? Is it trying to create a caste system among the State Chief Ministers by extending special treatment to a select few and shabby treatment to the other Chief Ministers?"

Describing the decision to omit her from the list of invitees as a "churlish, ham-handed" attempt to "derail democratic values" and an assault on the spirit of "federalism itself," she said the Centre could have invited the Chief Ministers of all the States and the Union Territories. "It would appear that when the Government of India needs support, the State Chief Ministers are invited to propose the nominations of the Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates, but when it comes to a prestigious function like the swearing-in ceremony, the Central Government finds it convenient to dispose of the Chief Ministers without even the courtesy of an invitation," she said.

Adding insult to injury was the fact that the Ambani brothers had been invited. "A valid question arises in the minds of the people as in what way the State Chief Ministers are less important than the Ambani brothers."

27 JUL 2002

THE HINDU

Speech Marks A Departure From Tradition

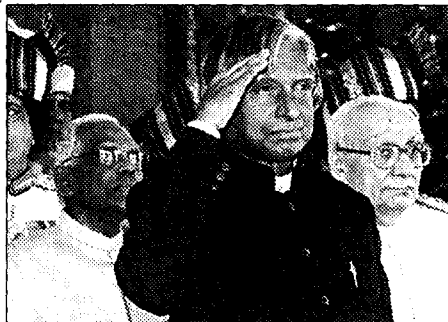
Kalam begins his presidential innings

Our Political Bureau
NEW DELHI 25 JULY

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam on Thursday began his presidential innings stressing that security should have the same place as elimination of poverty and unemployment in the country's "to do" list.

Delivering his acceptance speech at a stately ceremony in Parliament's Central Hall, the noted scientist, hailed by many as the inspiration behind country's missile development programme, said: "Along with speedy development aimed at elimination of poverty and unemployment, national security has to be recognised by every Indian as a national priority." Elaborating on the theme, the President further said: "Indeed, making India strong and self-reliant—economically, socially and militarily—is our foremost duty to our motherland and to ourselves and future generations."

Though of ceremonial importance only, the emphasis on military might marks a departure from the dominant liberal discourse that considered development and defence preparedness to be mutually exclusive objectives. By the same token, Mr Kalam's views will situate him close to the rightists and realists who lament what they call Left-inspired marginalisation of defence in nation's scheme of priorities. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons why Left went to unusual lengths to oppose Mr Kalam



A NEW DAWN: President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam inspecting a guard of honour at the Rashtrapati Bhavan on Thursday. — PTI

was its fear that he could use the presidency pulpit to popularise/legitimise the rival ideology.

Mr Kalam also underscored India's commitment to seek friendly ties with all. In his inauguration speech laced with Thiagarajaswamigal's Keerthana, Bhakti saint Kabir as well as Mr Kalam's own Song of Youth, he stressed his commitment to communal harmony. "I wish to emphasise my commitment to the principle of secularism, which is the cornerstone of our nationhood," he said, promising: "I will like to work for bringing about unity of minds among the divergent traditions of our country."

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'LET US BRING ABOUT A UNITY OF MINDS'

Kalam pledges unflinching commitment to secularism

India - President

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, JULY 25. The new President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, today spelt out his vision of a resurgent India which was possible through respect for and upholding of constitutional processes, an unflinching commitment to secularism, national security as a priority, and speedy development aimed at elimination of poverty and unemployment.

It is this alone which can make India strong and self-reliant — economically, socially and militarily — Dr. Kalam said, delivering his first Presidential address minutes after he was administered the oath of office by the Chief Justice of India, B.N. Kirpal, at a brief but impressive ceremony in the Central Hall of Parliament.

Dr. Kalam, who was installed as the eleventh President, said the Government alone could not transform India. What was needed was a "movement" and it was time "to ignite the minds of the people" for achieving his vision of transforming this ancient land into a developed nation powered by economic strength and a value system. His message to the one billion strong Indian population was that they should "work and sweat" to realise the vision. And "speed" was the essence, Dr. Kalam stressed, quoting poet Kabir who in his wisdom had advised: nothing should be put off till tomorrow (*Jo kaal kare so aaj kar, jo aaj kare so ab*).

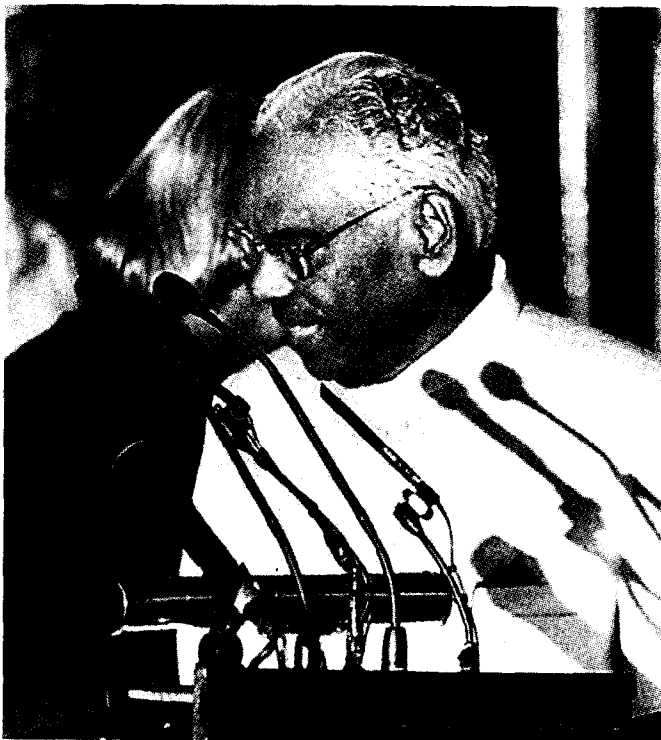
He also underlined the fact that India was a union of States based on cooperative federalism, within which States needed to develop their competitive strengths to excel at the national and global levels.

Quoting from the Tamil classic, Thirukkural, he said that "the important elements that constitute a nation are: being disease free; wealth; high productivity; harmonious living and strong defence." His view was that it was empowerment of the child at various phases of growth that makes him develop into a responsible citizen, a teacher empowered with knowledge and experience gives his students value systems, and when people, especially women, are empowered the nation can grow and become stable. "When political leaders empower the people with visionary policies, prosperity of the nation is certain," Dr. Kalam asserted.

Several times during his 10-minute address, there was thunderous applause, but noticeably when he talked about his "unflinching commitment



The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, on the ceremonial chariot, in New Delhi on Thursday. — Photo: V.V. Krishnan



CHANGE OF GUARD: The President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, and the outgoing President, K.R. Narayanan, exchanging their seats after the swearing-in ceremony. — PTI

to secularism which is the cornerstone of our nationhood and which is the key to our civilisational strength", the decibel sound from the applause was lower. He also mentioned "internal conflicts" as one of the challenges facing the nation together with "cross-border ter-

rorism" and in both these instances, the events in Gujarat seem to have been on his mind, although there was no direct reference to the carnage in the State earlier this year. His speech emphasised the need for bringing about a "unity of minds" among the "divergent

traditions" of our country.

About 100 school children witnessed the installation of the new President as his special guests. Dr. Kalam's relatives and distinguished friends watched as after taking the oath of office, he changed seats with his predecessor, K.R. Narayanan, and a 21-gun salute boomed in the background and reverberated in the Central Hall.

The Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister, Farooq Abdullah, and the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu, were among the guests, as were the former Prime Ministers, I. K. Gujral and Deve Gowda, and the former President, R. Venkataraman. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament were present.

The Lok Sabha Speaker, Manohar Joshi, and the Rajya Sabha Chairman, Krishan Kant, had earlier welcomed Mr. Narayanan and Dr. Kalam as they entered Parliament House and escorted them to the dais in a procession to the accompaniment of fanfare. After the ceremony, they went back in a procession and the President's Bodyguards presented a national salute, before they drove to the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Mr. Narayanan then left for his new home on Prithviraj Road, escorted by Dr. Kalam.

The President's powers

By Subhash C. Kashyap

There are some grey areas where the President may have to use his own judgment and wisdom.

HD-10
25/7

THE NEW President assumes office today amid many wild expectations and some false fears. Many expect that he will cleanse the system of corruption, that he will inspire austerity and simple living, that he will help end cross-border terrorism, that he will instil a scientific temper in governance, that he will make India a super power, that he will bring about a national renaissance and regeneration rooted in India's spiritual quest and so on. On the other hand, some say that not being bred in politics, he may have difficulties.

The country is passing through very critical times. The challenges are multifarious but each is also an opportunity. To steer the ship of the state, cutting edge technological and engineering skills may be a tremendous advantage. Not being a professional politician may actually help. Confident of his political objectivity, the new President will be able to effectively advise, guide and assert. But, what can the President do, or is supposed to do, under the Constitution?

We have a written Constitution wherein the functions and responsibilities of each constitutional office are clearly defined and delimited. We are a republic with an elected President as the head of the state. But, we are also a parliamentary democracy with ministerial responsibility to the representatives of the people in the Lok Sabha. This unique mix needs analysis.

The Constitution says there shall be a President of India. The position, in the scheme of our Constitution, is one of highest honour, dignity and prestige. He is the head of the state and it would be very wrong to say that he is only a nominal or titular head. As Nehru said in the Constituent Assembly, it was not intended to make the President of India a mere figurehead. All executive power of the Union is vested in him. All executive action of the Government of India is taken in his name. The Supreme Command of the defence forces is vested in him.

The President appoints the Prime Minister and on his advice other Ministers. All the Ministers hold office during the pleasure of the President. The President is an integral part of Parliament. When during the Ninth Lok Sabha an amendment proposing pension to MPs after only a year's service was allowed to be introduced and passed without the President's recommendation, R. Venkitaraman did not give his assent to the Bill.

When both Houses of Parliament are not in session and the President is satisfied about the need for immediate action, he can promulgate ordinances which have the same force and effect as laws passed by Parliament. The Supreme Court has upheld the legitimacy and validity of the President's power to issue ordinances. All the high functionaries of the state including the judges of the Supreme Court and of the High Courts, the Attorney-General of India, the Comptroller and Auditor-General of India, the Governors etc. are appointed by the President. Under Article 352, the President may proclaim a state of emergency in the whole or part of India. Article 360 empowers the President to declare a financial emergency.

Despite this array of impressive powers, it has to be remembered that the Constitution makes it clear that the executive power of the Union has to be exercised by the President "in accordance with the Constitution" and the exercise of the powers as the supreme commander of the armed forces has to be "regulated by law". Also, the President takes an oath "to preserve, protect and defend the Constitution and the law".

Article 74(1) requires the President to act only with the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers in the discharge of all his functions. The Supreme Court through various decisions has upheld the position

that the President is a constitutional head who must act on the advice of the Council of Ministers and that the real executive power in our system vests in the Council of Ministers. But, there are some grey areas where the President may have to use his own judgment and wisdom. These are: (1) appointment of the Prime Minister in a situation where no single party or alliance commands clear majority support in the Lok Sabha (Obviously, the President cannot appoint the new Prime Minister on the advice of the outgoing Prime Minister who may have lost the election or the support of the House); (2) appointment of a Prime Minister in case of sudden death where the ruling legislature party is unable to meet immediately to elect a leader, there is no settled seniority among Cabinet Ministers and a name from outside the Cabinet is suggested; (3) dissolution of the Lok Sabha on the advice of a Council of Ministers that may have lost majority support or against whom a vote of no-confidence may have been passed; and (4) dismissal of Ministers in case the Council of Ministers loses the confidence of the House but refuses to resign.

In some such situations, the role of the President may become most crucial and decisive. This happened, for instance, when Charan Singh, Rajiv Gandhi and Chandra Shekhar came to be appointed Prime Minister. To get over some of these difficulties and keep the Presidency above all politically controversial matters, the National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution has suggested election of the Prime Minister by the Lok Sabha and his removal only by a constructive vote of no-confidence by the House. It requires no constitutional amendment.

While the President is the constitutional head of the state, the Council of Ministers constitutes the real or the political executive. Technically

they are his Government, his Ministers on whose advice he has to act. In other words, in constitutional theory, all powers are actually vested in the President-in-the-Council-of-Ministers; i.e. the President acting on the advice of the Council of Ministers. The President can exert substantial influence in many ways. The Prime Minister and other Ministers are by convention expected to meet him fairly regularly. The Prime Minister is specifically required to keep him informed of all decisions relating to the administration of the affairs of the Union and proposals for legislation and to furnish the information asked for by the President in that regard. While there should never be any occasion of the President speaking to the media or in public against the policies or acts of his own Ministers, he has every right "to encourage, caution and warn" his Ministers where necessary.

The Constitution envisages a fully cooperative and harmonious relationship between the President and his Council of Ministers. That is why it also lays down in Article 74(2) that "the question whether any, and if so what, advice was tendered by Ministers to the President shall not be enquired into in any court of law". It is a very salutary provision and is based on the principle that the President and his Ministers are never to be perceived as separate centres of power. The centre of power is one: the President-in-Council-of-Ministers.

It is true that in Kartar Singh's case, the Supreme Court has held that the Court is within its rights to look into the basis of the advice tendered by the Council of Ministers to the President. But, given the very clear words of Article 74(2), this view may need review. Under the Proviso to Article 74 inserted in 1978 by the 44th Amendment, the President may require the Council of Ministers to reconsider their advice. He shall, of course, act on the reconsidered advice. But, ideally, all this should also remain confidential between the President and the Ministers and not leaked to the media.

CAUTIONS AGAINST POISON OF COMMUNALISM

Uphold tradition of tolerance, says Narayanan

By Harish Khare

NEW DELHI, JULY 24. The President, K.R. Narayanan, today cautioned the citizens against "the poison of communalism" and warned that unless we discovered our tradition of tolerance we would be jeopardising "the coherence of this vast country as a united nation."

Without mentioning 'Hindutava' or the recent communal violence in Gujarat, the President, in his farewell address to the nation, clearly sought to advise the country against the policies and practices of a section of the ruling establishment. He juxtaposed the citizens' inherent goodness with the politicians' preference for communal idiom.

Referring to his own term as a Lok Sabha member from Ottapalam (Kerala), Mr. Narayanan appreciated "the essential goodness of our people, their capacity to forget all communal, religious and social divisions of our society, when an occasion was presented to them."

And, as the President sees it, it was the responsibility of "our social and political leaders to present the people with such occasions, especially today when the poison of communalism has caused so much violence and hatred in some parts of our country. We need the Hindus, who form the majority, to speak out in the traditional spirit of the Hindu religion."

Mr. Narayanan quoted Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru to make the point that tolerance towards the minorities was as much a part of our cultural tradition as it was a political necessity.

He cautioned that "we can ignore these words of wisdom at our risk. It is important for us today to introspect and realise that what makes India's unity and democracy credible and enduring is this precious tradi-



The President K.R. Narayanan, the President-elect, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the Vice-President, Krishan Kant, Suman Krishan Kant, and the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, at a party hosted by the President at the Rashtrapati Bhawan in New Delhi on Wednesday. — Photo: S. Arneja

tion of tolerance."

The President wanted to impress upon the citizens that tolerance and harmony — rather than hatred and divisiveness being practised by a section of the Sangh Parivar — are the defining features of the Indian civilization.

He ended with an exhortation to the citizens to stand up for these values and traditions of tolerance: "My parting appeal to you, dear citizens of this proud and tolerant Republic of India, is to guard our tradition of tolerance, for, that is the soul of our culture and civilization, that is the spirit of our Constitution, and that is also the secret of the successful working of our democracy and the secret of the coherence of this vast country as a united nation."

Apart from this reminder of the need for tolerance, Mr. Narayanan also referred to his oth-

er favourite theme: the need for egalitarian sensitivity.

He noted that while it was a matter of satisfaction that there was this "200-odd million people who are educated and belong to the entrepreneurial and the more well-off classes", he reminded the citizens that there were other less well-off who "are poor, ill-fed and illiterate".

He cautioned that "the economic reforms through liberalisation and globalisation should not ignore this weaker majority — the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, the women who toil day and night and make life worth living in our homes." As he had done for the last five years, Mr. Narayanan refused to be swept off his feet by the razzle-dazzle of the "market magic".

He argued that "the provisions we have already made in our social and economic poli-

cies and programmes, must be strengthened, expanded and implemented with sincerity in order to deal successfully with the condition of all the marginalised sections of our society."

The President noted with satisfaction that not only are we a vibrant democracy, we are also "an economic and technological power of significance, and above all, as a country of one billion people that has achieved self-sufficiency in food for the first time in its modern history."

He admitted that perhaps "the older generation has failed to set an example and role models to our youth for social action in the service of the nation."

But he was optimistic about the future: "If only we could release and set in motion the bottled up potential and energy of our youth we can change India, if not change the world."

Cleanse public life: Narayanan

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 22. In his last address to Parliament, two days and some hours before he relinquishes office on Thursday, the President, K.R. Narayanan, today made out a strong case for cleansing public life to fortify people's faith in the Parliamentary institution and urged members to expedite the passage of the controversial Women's Reservation Bill.

Taking the cue from the farewell address of the MPs — read out by the Lok Sabha Speaker, Manohar Joshi — wherein it was said that his "words of wisdom and sane counsel would... inform our perception of the role of an ideal Parliamentarian in the service of people," the President donned the role of counsel.

Advocating the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, Mr. Narayanan linked it to the need for a clean public life. Stating that a clean public life and representation of women in legislatures were part of the vision that Gandhi had for India, the President said that, "cleansing of public life and representation of women in legislatures go hand-in-hand."

Though of the view that Parliament had refuted the British belief that a Parliamentary system would not work in In-



The Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, the Union Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Sonia Gandhi, the Congress leader, Manmohan Singh, the First Lady, Usha Narayanan, and other Parliamentarians greeting the President, K.R. Narayanan, at a farewell function in the Parliament House on Monday. — Photo: Rajeev Bhatt

dia, Mr. Narayanan's contention was that there was no room for complacency. "Every member of Parliament is a representative of this great institution and the great people embodying the aspirations and expectations of our people... Thus a heavy responsibility rests on every Parliamentarian," he said, adding that whatever they do or say has a bearing on the people.

Signing off his address to the members of both the Houses of Parliament in the Central

Hall, the President articulated the hope of interacting with Parliamentarians in a "very normal manner as a normal human being."

Earlier, Parliament had in one voice saluted the President for defending the Constitution under all circumstances, and elevating the Rashtrapati Bhavan to an "abode of a thinking Head of the State."

For the most part, the farewell address, which was later presented to the President as a scroll, traced his rise from the "grass roots of our society" to

the highest office of the country. Punctuated with Mr. Narayanan's own quotes, the farewell address was offered as a "grateful nation's salute".

Wrapped up in half-an-hour, the function was witnessed, among others, by the Vice-President, Krishan Kant, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Sonia Gandhi, and several members of the Union Cabinet besides members of both Houses of Parliament.

THE HINDU

23 JUL 2002

Narayanan bids farewell, says he has no regrets

President denies rift with Cabinet

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

NEW DELHI, July 20. — On the eve of his demitting office, the President, Mr KR Narayanan, has sought to dispel the widespread impression that his relations with the Vajpayee government were often strained.

"From the beginning till the end, we had constant consultations and communication." Mr Narayanan has said if the country really required him he would have served a second term.

There had been no confrontation over the setting up of the Constitution Review Commission, his turning down the Cabinet's recommendation to impose President's rule in Bihar, his asking the government to seek a vote of confidence in the Lok Sabha, or his public appeal for social justice, Mr Narayanan said in an "informal conversation" with a Kerala-based newsmagazine. By convention the President does not grant "interviews" to the media.

While much had been made of his observation that it was neces-

sary to assess "if the Constitution has failed us or it is we who have failed the Constitution" — that too at a special function to commemorate the golden jubilee of the Republic — Mr Narayanan said it was incorrect to suggest he rebutted the Prime Minister's remarks.

He had prepared his speech in advance, the order in which the

President KR Narayanan lays down office with a categorical assertion that he enjoyed the best of terms with the Vajpayee government during his tenure

speakers made their presentation at the programme saw the Prime Minister speak before him — hence the "misconception" that his comment was a direct reply to what Mr Vajpayee had said.

Nor had there been any "tension" over his returning to the Cabinet its proposal to invoke Article 356. When the Prime Minister

next met him he commented that "you have made history", Mr Narayanan recalled, but no objections were raised by Mr Vajpayee.

Mr Narayanan said there were no complaints from the Prime Minister even after the first NDA government fell in 1999. "Even when his government fell by one vote, he had no complaints." Mr Narayanan said that the course he had taken over the question of numbers had been adopted after seeking views from across the political spectrum.

Asked about possible regrets at not getting a second tenure at Rashtrapati Bhavan, he said he had never intended to be a candidate. But when there was a pressure from people to continue, he had said he would keep an open mind provided there was consensus among political parties.

"That did not happen ... several parties approached me, but there was no consensus. If the country really needed me, I would have taken up the responsibility," the President said.

■ See PRESIDENT: page 10

PRESIDENT:

(Continued from page 1)

There had been considerable public reaction but little governmental response, he recalled, after his public plea to bring the disadvantaged sections into the mainstream, and his emphasis that justice must be provided to the poor and discriminated. **Sri M**

"This public reaction, in turn, put pressure on the government, forcing it to take action. But there has been no direct impact on the government. Everyone knows how governments react to advice."

Mr Narayanan cautioned against ad hoc changes, wholesale change or a new approach to the Constitution. Though disorder prevailed in several spheres of the nation, fundamentally democracy was healthy and functioning all right.

The President hosted a tea party for the Press corps of the Capital at Rashtrapati Bhavan today as a parting gesture to journalists.

Mrs Usha Narayanan and went around the gathering of journalists and exchanged pleasantries.

SAHGAL TALLY EXCEEDS LEFT STRENGTH IN LS

Kalam new President

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9. President

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, July 18 — Dr APJ Abdul Kalam (71) was elected President of India defeating Mrs Laxmi Sahgal by 922,884 value votes to 107,366 value votes. He will be sworn in by the Chief Justice of India, Mr Justice BN Kirpal, on 25 July in the Parliament's Central Hall.

Dr Kalam succeeds Mr KR Narayanan, who lays down office on 24 July. Mr Narayanan will host a dinner in honour of the President-elect at Rashtrapati Bhavan tomorrow. Eight of the 10 Presidents took the oath of office in the Central Hall. Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed and Giani Zail Singh were sworn in at Rashtrapati Bhavan's Durbar Hall.

Returning officer Mr RC Tripathi said Dr Kalam, the official candidate of the NDA who was also supported by the Congress and Samajwadi Party, received 89.58 per cent of the total votes polled, against Mrs Sahgal's 10.42 per cent. Mrs Sahgal congratulated Dr Kalam soon after the results were declared.

President Mr Narayanan, Prime Minis-

ter Mr AB Vajpayee, Union home minister Mr LK Advani, Leader of the Opposition Mrs Sonia Gandhi and a host of leaders and ordinary people from across the country have greeted the new President.

Mr Vajpayee conveyed to the President-elect his "happiness" over the result.

Knife scare

NEW DELHI, July 18. — A 32-year-old woman carrying a knife in her handbag was arrested at Gate 8 of Parliament House. The woman, Sunita, was arrested when the counting for the Presidential elections was on. The woman was accompanied by her husband Vishwanath.

Police were questioning her. She didn't know of the ban on weapons inside Parliament. — SNS

That even MPs and MLAs fail to cast their votes properly was evident when 174 votes of the 4,785 MPs and MLAs who voted were found to be "invalid". The President elect will be sworn in at the Central Hall of Parliament the next day.

Significantly, Mrs Sahgal is said to have won 17,000-plus value votes more than the total vote value of members of the Left and JD(S). The Left nominee was expected to get only 90,000 value votes from the parties that had pledged support to her. She bagged a maximum of 29,747 value votes from 197 Left MLAs of West Bengal, the Left bastion, against Dr Kalam's 13,590 value votes from non-Left 90 MLAs from the state.

Editorial: Heads and tails, page 4
Another report on page 6

THE STATESMAN

99 JUL 2002

India will go it alone in war against terror

Advani talks tough on Jammu killings

17/7 TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: Under severe attack from the opposition for the government's failure to prevent cross-border terrorism, deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani said on Tuesday that India would meet the challenge of Pak-propelled terrorism without counting on US support.

Replying to a six-hour debate in the Lok Sabha on the latest terrorist strike in Jammu, Mr Advani said that there was no question of waiting for intervention by others in dealing with terrorist groups. "We will wage war against terrorism on the basis of our own strength," he said. However, he emphasised that diplomatic pressure would be kept up on the world community to expose Pakistan's role in the repeated terrorist attacks on innocent people.

Not satisfied with the government's response, the opposition staged a walk-out. The house rejected the opposition-sponsored adjournment motion by a voice vote. Mr Advani said that by declaring Pakistan a terrorist state, Washington could have played a major role in containing the terror campaign being run from Pakistan. But his reference to the probable US response appeared to be more in the form of a suggestion. However, he asserted, "We will not allow terrorists to claim victory."

Earlier, minister of state for external affairs Omar Abdullah made a strong plea for not "communalising and politicising" such incidents. Initiating the debate, Congress deputy leader Shivraj Patil attacked the government for its "lack of policy, vision and determination to implement any plan of action" in combating terrorism. Simply blaming

Pakistan was not going to solve the problem, he said. Mr Patil also mocked the government's action of rushing to leaders abroad to explain its position.

Somnath Chatterjee of the CPM wanted to know how the passage of Pota had helped check terrorism. On the demand by the RSS for trifurcation of Jammu & Kashmir, he said, "This is a pernicious demand. What is more dangerous is that it is being made by the organisation that controls the BJP."

Intervening in the debate, defence minister George Fernandes said it was not possible to have a dialogue with Pakistan when it continued to aid and abet terrorist organisations. "It is said that we should talk to Pakistan, but on what terms can we do so when Pakistan continues to fund, arm and send terrorists to India?" He said Pakistan had been quick to condemn the acts of terrorism, but it was difficult to believe Islamabad's denials.

While pledging full support to the government in fighting terrorism, Samajwadi Party leader Mulayam Singh Yadav criticised the handling of terrorist activity in J&K by both the state government and the Centre.

The Jammu killings were also raised by the opposition in the Rajya Sabha after question hour. Though chairman Krishan Kant said that there would be a detailed discussion on the issue later, most party leaders expressed their concern, with former Bihar chief minister Laloo Prasad Yadav seeking the resignation and an apology from Mr Advani.

Opposition leader in the house Manmohan Singh raised the issue, asking the government how it would tackle the issue now.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

90 per cent turnout for Presidential poll

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 15. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, his Cabinet colleagues and the leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, today cast their vote in the 12th presidential election in Parliament House, the main polling station. The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, was the first to vote at 10 a.m. followed by Nilotpal Basu (CPI-M).

At the end of the day, 90 per cent of the members of Parliament and the Members of the Legislative Assemblies had cast their vote to elect the 12th President in what is considered an uneven battle between the National Democratic Alliance candidate, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, and the Left-sponsored, Lakshmi Sahgal.

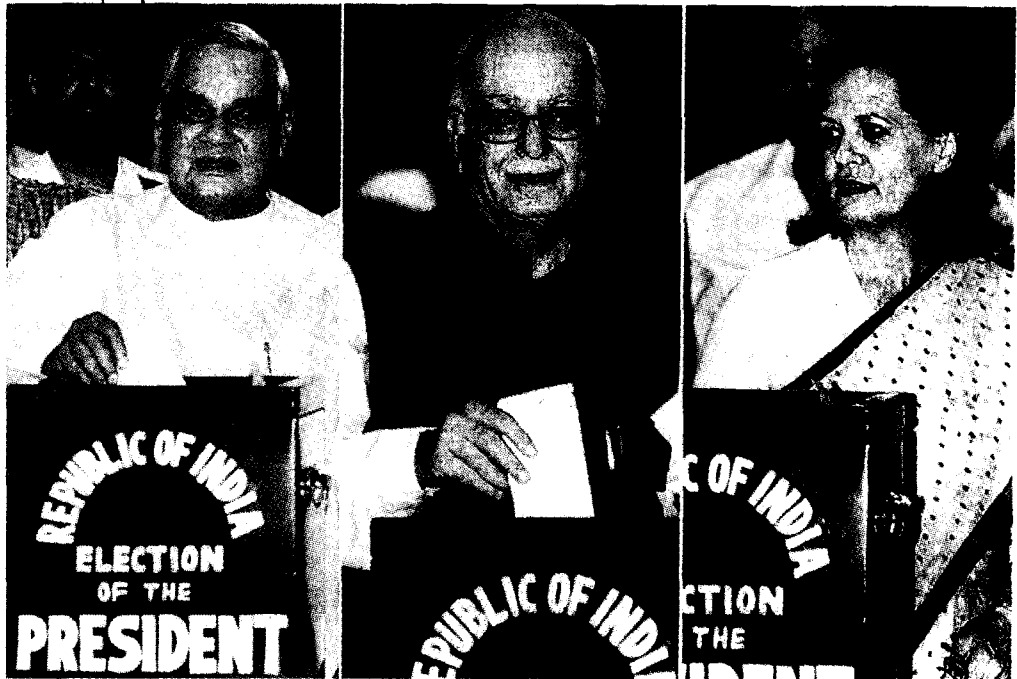
More than 65 per cent votes were cast by 1 p.m. at Parliament House amid bonhomie between the ruling party and the Opposition members.

The ballot boxes were sealed at 5.00 p.m. at the end of voting at Parliament House in the presence of Mr. Mahajan.

Thirteen members of Parliament, including Ram Jethmalani, L.M. Singhvi, Renuka Chowdhury and Rajiv Shulka, did not exercise their franchise. Two members of Parliament — Lakshman Chandra Seth (West Bengal) and Palden Tsering Gyamtso (Sikkim) — who were to vote outside Delhi were later allowed by the Election Commission to cast their vote at Parliament House.

Of a total of 776 electors here, 26 MPs voted in the respective State capitals. Five MLAs were allowed to vote at Parliament House. The MDMK leader, Vaiko, who is under custody, voted in the Tamil Nadu Assembly in Chennai at 2.30 p.m.

"I am feeling fantastic," quipped the National Democratic Alliance candidate, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, to mediapersons as he visited Parliament House polling booth and shook hands with MPs lined up to vote. (Later one of the MPs from Assam, A.F. Golam Osmani, fell unconscious from the strain of queuing up and was rushed to hospital.) Dressed in a blue shirt and grey trousers, Dr. Kalam looked cheerful as he told mediaper-



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, the Deputy Prime Minister and Home Minister, L.K. Advani, and the Leader of the Opposition and Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, casting their vote in the Presidential election in Parliament House in New Delhi on Monday.

sons that he was "contesting an election and looking for victory".

To inevitable queries about his hairstyle, Dr. Kalam said, "I do it every four months. Sometimes it goes up and sometimes it goes down."

After casting his vote, the Prime Minister, accompanied

by the Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, shook hands with Dr. Kalam. Capt. Sahgal did not make an appearance at the polling booth.

Later briefing mediapersons, the Returning Officer and Secretary-General of the Rajya Sabha, R.C. Tripathi, said the ballot boxes from States are expected

to reach Parliament House latest by July 17.

Counting will begin on Thursday at 11 a.m. and results will be announced the same day.

A total of 776 MPs and 4,120 MLAs comprise the electoral college for the presidential poll.

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THE HINDU

JULY 16 2002

THE HINDU

MONSOON SESSION OPENS TODAY

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H.D. 1
9 - Parliament

Issues aplenty for Opposition to take on Govt.

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, JULY 14. The Opposition parties will not have to work too hard to find issues to embarrass the Government during the monsoon session of Parliament beginning tomorrow. In fact, they may find it hard to find adequate time during the four-week session to raise all the matters of concern.

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh's pronouncements on the trifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir, the renegeing on its earlier assurance to abide by the judicial verdict in the Ayodhya case by the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, and now the ghastly massacre in Jammu are all subjects on which it will be difficult for the Government to find credible explanations.

Besides, the much-flaunted Prevention of Terrorist Act has now been used against an NDA ally, the MDMK, and all that it has been able to say is that the State Government has the jurisdiction and that the law will take its own course. Then the Government's discomfort on the contrariness of its allies on the railway zonal headquarters bifurcation plans, which again is a problem created by the Government.

The Congress' Political Affairs Committee will meet at 10 a.m. tomorrow to draw up its strategy, according to the Lok Sabha MP, Satyavrat Chaturvedi. The CPI(M) leaders also met today. And both parties expect to coordinate their strategies to make the maximum impact. The detailed strategy is expected to be worked out on a daily basis as the session progresses.

For most of the issues, the Government was itself to blame and for some others it was the spiritual mentor of the Bharatiya Janata Party, the RSS, and its offspring, the VHP, Mr. Chaturvedi said today. "The issue of national security and the skewed foreign policy which shows the Government's desperation to fall into the laps of Americans without caring for national interest is there for all to see," he added. "There has been troop mobilisation for months and what has the country gained," he asked. "Our foreign policy

has been reduced to desperately trying to fall in the lap of the Americans," he added.

There is also the view in the Congress — underlined by the recent letter written by the party president, Sonia Gandhi, to the Prime Minister — that the work on relief and rehabilitation of those affected by the Gujarat carnage has been painfully slow and inadequate. "The Gujarat issue will have to be taken up strongly," party leaders said.

The CPI(M) leader, S. Ramachandran Pillai, said: "The RSS pronouncements on trifurcation of the State of Jammu and Kashmir are dangerous as they threaten the integrity of India." There were also several economic issues the party would like to take up — conditions being put on States' share of Central revenue, usurping the right of States to work out their plans by placing conditions and reduction of interest rates on small deposits.

The Left party is also concerned about foreign direct investment in the print media. Besides, the fact that it is vehemently against this, it also sees in this move an attack on the parliamentary system of standing committees — the FDI proposal had been rejected by the standing committee, and yet the Government went ahead.

The Congress also wants to take up the disinvestment issue — the feeling is that many public sector units have been sold for a song — and the question of labour reforms. The view is that while the party has been in favour of reforms, India has its own special problems and cannot and should not blindly follow the Western pattern.

From the Government side, the most urgent legislation will be on electoral reforms against the background of the Supreme Court order and the subsequent follow-up action by the Election Commission. Across the political spectrum, parties are united on the issue of not allowing any institution to encroach on Parliament's right to legislate.

Many other important bills are pending — the Lok Pal Bill and the bill to give women 33 per cent reservation in Parliament — but those seem shelved indefinitely.

THE HINDU

15 JUL 2002

Alexander puts in papers over presidency row

TIMES NEWS NETWORK
& AGENCIES

New Delhi: Maharashtra governor P.C. Alexander resigned on Tuesday, almost a year before his tenure comes to an end. He handed over his resignation to President K.R. Narayanan before paying courtesy calls on Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and deputy Prime Minister L.K. Advani, government sources said.

Sources close to the governor said he had requested the President to make his resignation effective from July 13.

Mr Alexander reportedly decided to call it a day as he was upset at being dragged into the controversy surrounding the presidential race. He had hit the headlines as the National Democratic Alliance's nominee for the President's post and was backed strongly by political leaders across the political spectrum in Maharashtra, but a last-minute compromise within the NDA saw him making way for missile technologist A.P.J. Abdul Kalam.

Although Mr Alexander declined to give reasons for his sudden decision, he made it clear that he was not in the race for the vice presidency.

When asked whether his decision was linked to his being dumped by the NDA in the presidential election, he said, "It is your speculation and I am not subscribing to it."

Mr Alexander said that he did not have the freedom to reveal why he had stepped down as his resignation was still to be accepted. To another question, he said, "It is my decision, my own decision."

Asked repeatedly whether his decision was aimed at bargaining for another post, he said, "I have crossed that stage. I have never asked for anything and posts have come to me."

However, government sources ruled out the possibility of a plum overseas assignment or a high-profile na-

tional job for the governor after his resignation. "He is 83, was principal secretary to the PM a long time ago. He was high commissioner to the UK. He was governor for two terms. The government is under no obligation to give him anything now," they said.

Mr Alexander first became governor during the tenure



P.C. Alexander

of the Narasimha Rao government in the mid-1990s. Subsequently, he was given another term by the NDA government after he established a good working relationship with the then Shiv Sena-BJP government in Maharashtra.

A former civil servant who had served as principal secretary to Prime Ministers Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi, Mr Alexander was opposed by the Congress and many other opposition parties when the NDA proposed his name as a presidential nominee. He had quit as principal secretary to Rajiv Gandhi when a spy scandal broke out in the 1980s, involving certain officials in the PMO and Rashtrapati Bhavan.

The resignation of Mr Alexander, who had established a good rapport both with the ruling Congress-NCP coalition as also the opposition Shiv Sena-BJP combine, comes more than a fortnight before the monsoon session of the state legislature, which is expected to be crucial for the Deshmukh ministry.

● Shock waves in city, Page 3

THE TIMES OF INDIA

1 10 2002

NORTHEASTNOTEBOOK

Life Beyond the Prison Bars

THEY have found a new meaning to life, behind the prison bars. Eminent artist Noni Borpuzari has been roped in to teach painting to inmates in Guwahati Jail — the Indira Gandhi National Open University has even set up a centre inside the jail. In Nagaon district jail, expenses have been cut down with the prisoners growing all the vegetables themselves, while in Jorhat, which has the only open jail in the Northeast, inmates have earned a name for themselves for producing some of the best cane furniture in the country. Not to be left behind, Tripura is giving computer lessons to its prisoners in Agartala Jail.

Efforts to Save Hornbill Take Flight

THE Great Indian Hornbill, which was once a common sight in Arunachal, has finally been listed as an endangered species. Although the Northeast still has the highest number of this species in the country, it is fast disappearing due to various ethnic groups using its beak and feathers for their headgear. Urging the government to immediately launch an action plan to save the bird from total extinction, the Arunachal Wildlife and Nature Foundation has suggested the introduction of artificial replicas of the hornbill's beak and feathers for the tribals. Meanwhile, the Village Forest Development Council, set up by the Pakke Wildlife Sanctuary, has resolved to impose a fine of Rs 5,000 on anyone found killing or trading in wildlife.

Addicted to Opium, not Assam Tea

THE Singphos, a little-known tribe which is reported to have introduced Assam tea to the world, may have got everyone addicted to the beverage but they themselves are hooked on to a different addiction — opium. Now, with literacy and awareness increasing, the tribe's womenfolk have formed a Mahila Mandal Society to launch a door-to-door campaign against opium addiction. They have also asked the government to enact a law to eradicate the illegal cultivation of poppy, especially in the remote Arunachal mountains.

Celebrating Peace in Mizoram

LAST week, Mizoram celebrated the 16th anniversary of the Mizo Accord which ensured that not a single militant was left in the jungle and every illegal weapon was surrendered to the government. Lasting peace in the state has brought a bonus in the way of the Rs 50-crore aid from the Centre last year. The Mizo peace process has now inspired a peace initiative in Nagaland, with Chief Minister Zoramthanga himself taking an active part in settling the Naga issue. Zoramthanga, a former rebel, has witnessed the Mizo peace process from close quarters as he was the most trusted deputy of Mizo National Front boss Laldenga.

— SAMUDRA GUPTA KASHYAP

SUNANDA MEHTA
PUNE

IF you are between 30 and 45 years old, have a family business worth more than Rs 5 crores, are a successor to the family business where you have worked for at least seven years and have some overseas experience, you can apply for membership. No, this is not an elite club for chilling out in style, but a well-researched and thoughtfully put together Family Business Forum created by the scions of the times.

Even as family businesses all over the country seem to be under a bit of a cloud, seven second and third generations business scions from Pune are treading a path that may well be regarded as the proverbial silver lining. Launched in Pune last week, the Family Business Forum is aimed at maintaining and strengthening all aspects of family businesses.

With the core group comprising some of the most well-known names in business circles — Dr Naushad Forbes, director, Forbes Marshall Group; Ajay Mehta, director, Deepak Fertilisers; Harshad Talera, director, Talera Hotels; Rajan Navani, director, Jetline Group; Meher Pudumjee, director, Thermax Ltd; Rohit Gera, director, Gera; and Adit Rathi, managing director, Ploybond India Pvt Ltd. — the idea behind the forum is to enable the members to discuss issues pertaining to businesses run by the family and to preserve and perpetuate the concept.

Despite over 80 per cent of the world's business houses being owned by families, only seven per cent survive beyond three generations. "But those that cross this threshold go on to become strong business contenders and conglomerates," says Ajay Mehta adding, "hence it is important that family businesses are sustained and cherished."

According to Talera,

Now, a Club to Save Family Businesses

Launched by scions of Pune's corporate world, the forum will provide a platform to discuss and solve problems related to running family businesses



(From left): Ajay Mehta, Harshad Talera, Adit Rathi, Naushad Forbes, Meher Pudumjee, Rajan Navani and Rohit Gera

"Family businesses succeed due to commitment, knowledge, flexibility in work, time and money, risk-taking ability, stable culture, speedy decision-making, reliability and trust. And they fail when rigidity sets in, when they are unable to segregate people from issues, set priorities based on emotional issues and are unable to handle transitions and problems related to siblings, succession, leadership and legitimacy."

"The idea is to be able to discuss and seek counsel, advise and be advised on such issues amongst a small group where there is faith, trust and a high comfort level. We have all been friends for a long time, now we have extended this relation to help us at a professional level too," says Pudumjee, explaining the concept behind the forum.

The group emphasises that the idea evolved over a long period of research and not as a fallout of the current

scene of family businesses in the country. "It has nothing to do with news of the Bajaj family split," maintains Gera. "In fact, it's not even as though we have got together to ensure that there are no splits. The business will take its natural course of evolution and even if it heads for a split, we should be able to ensure that it is well-planned with the family stocks safe and everyone gaining out of the deal," adds Navani.

The forum is just as firm about the fact that the forum is not a social club. "We are not here for leisure activities

nor is this a place where people can come in the hope of doing some business networking. It's a place where we will learn from each others' experiences in running family businesses, get support from experts who will be called to address the forum and where both the aspirations and the learning needs of the members will be catered to," says Navani. The forum intends to operate through smaller units called cells. "These cells will serve as cohesive fora for members to discuss specifics. Confidentiality is

of paramount importance — nothing that is discussed within a cell goes outside it, maybe not even to the spouses," says Mehta. With the forum's projected membership being in the range of 35 to 40, the group is keen on retaining its Pune base. "We look forward to other places picking up the idea and forming similar bodies of their own, rather than expanding this group to all parts of the country," states Rathi. "Family businesses, in fact, are on the rise, not just in industry but even in pro-

fessions like medicine, accounts and films. In the West, it is such an accepted concept that some universities have special MBAs in family businesses. In India, family businesses become a little more complex because of the emotions involved, the lack of professionalism and also maybe due to the sheer size of the family," says Talera. "The basic idea is to learn from each other and let's face it, it's lonely at the top," sums up Pudumjee. Not anymore perhaps, at least for these head honchos.

Cashing in on the World Heritage Site status given to Mahabodhi Temple, the Bihar Govt plans to make the Barabar Caves — which inspired E.M. Forster's Marabar Caves — a part of the Bodh Gaya tourist circuit



The entrance to the Barabar Caves in Jehanabad

However, the tourism secretary maintains that the government is ready to tackle the situation. "We have chalked out a comprehensive plan to provide security to tourists. A tourism police force will be raised and Jehanabad is one area where they will be stationed," he says. The forest and tourism departments have already agreed to upgrade the two link roads as well as build tourist accommodation and provide generators — all at an estimated cost of Rs 3 crores. A plan to provide a bus service from the Patna-Gaya main road to the caves is also in the pipeline. The proposal has gone to the Centre for financial backing.

Bihar's Passage to the World

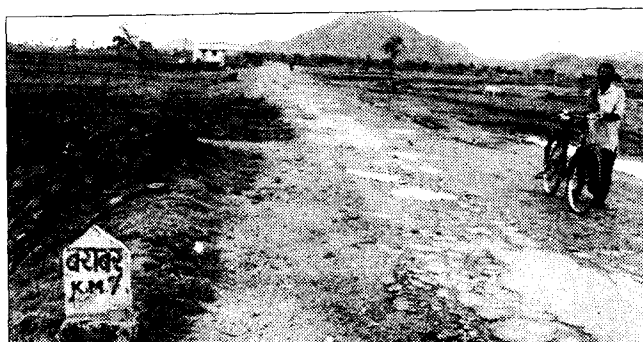
NIRMALA GANAPATHY
JEHANABAD

A CENTURY ago, the air of mystery surrounding the Barabar Caves inspired author E.M. Forster to create the Marabar Caves in the book *A Passage To India*. Today, the Bihar Government hopes to cash in on this image and sell the caves to the tourists. With the Mahabodhi Temple at Bodh Gaya being recognised as a World Heritage Site recently, renovation work is now on to make the Barabar Caves in Jehanabad a part of the Bodh Gaya tourist circuit, which attracts 1 lakh domestic and 4,000 foreign tourists every year. The other places on the circuit include Rajgir, Vaishali and the Kakola waterfalls. Located about 41 km from Bodh Gaya, the Barabar Caves are the earliest Buddhist rock-cut caves excavated by Asoka, dating back to 252 BC. The four

artificial and unadorned caves, used for prayers by Buddhist monks, are carved out of one huge granite slab. There is a rectangular outer hall and an inner circular chamber, the inner walls of which are finely polished. Enveloped in complete darkness with the silence creating a resounding echo, an aura of mystery and foreboding still clings to the caves. In Forster's book, the visitor returns from the cave, "uncertain whether he has had an interesting experience, a dull one, or even an experience at all." Forster describes the caves as similar to each other, with nothing marking them out for greatness. "The beauty of the caves then was that they were difficult to access and mysterious. At the time of Forster's visit, there were a lot of stories about tantrik sadhus and spirits haunting the caves," says State Tourism Secretary N.K. Singh. "Even now there is an air of mystery and the

caves are popular because of *A Passage to India*. But the aura of mystery and the fear-invoking myths and awe-inspiring tales of the past have had a negative spin-off, giving birth to dacoits and Left ultras. "The area around the cave is known for bandits and is definitely not safe after dark. It is a good idea not to take any valuables with you when visiting the caves," advises one travel book. "The government is very dis-

organised and the place is overrun by dacoits. Even the police don't go to the Barabar Caves," said a monk in Bodh Gaya, on condition of anonymity. At Gaya, which is about 20 km from the caves, officials advise against travelling to the Barabar Caves, warning that nobody goes there after 4 pm. One official even insists that any visitor to the cave should request for armed escorts from the nearest police station.



WAY TO THE FUTURE: The pot-holed roads leading to the caves may finally get a much-needed facelift

Indian Smallpox as a Bioweapon

Long before the Anthrax scare, Soviets tested India-1967 strain on its civilians, killing three and infecting 10, reports *Science*

PALLAVA BAGLA
NEW DELHI

IN a stunning revelation, American bioweapon experts have uncovered that the former Soviet Union not only weaponised an Indian strain of smallpox but also tested it on a hapless civilian population in the town of Aralsk (now in Kazakhstan) on the northern shore of the Aral Sea. The alleged secret bioweapons experiment, using what is called the India-1967 strain of the highly infectious smallpox virus, was carried out way back in 1971. Ten people were reportedly infected while three died. Smallpox was eradicated from the world in 1979. But two laboratories — one in Russia and the other in America — are still custodians of the last surviving stocks of the dreaded virus, which in the sixties used to kill up to two million people every year. According to official records, India has no stocks of the smallpox virus. Former Health Minister C.P. Thakur has asserted repeatedly that India had willingly destroyed all its smallpox virus as soon as the disease was eradicated in 1975. Talking to the prestigious American magazine *Science*, Alan Zelicoff, a physician and smallpox expert at the Sandia National Laboratories in Albuquerque, New Mexico, US, said the 1971 Kazakh outbreak shows that an aerosol attack with smallpox could kill people.

According to the recent revelation, the news of this outbreak didn't reach the West until a classified official account, written in the 1970s, was sent to America by a local Kazakh scientist. The official Soviet report claimed the outbreak had a natural origin. But after scrutinising the document and interviewing two of the surviving victims, the Americans reached a different conclusion. At a meeting of the Institute of Medicine, Washington DC, Zelicoff said that he had never seen anything quite so disturbing and worried that existing smallpox vaccines may not offer adequate protection against the strain. He added that the strain was unusually infectious, because three of the 25 people who were vaccinated against smallpox and were in close proximity with a vaccinated patient got infected. This is an unusually high percentage of infection. In an interview to *Science*, Kenneth Alibek, a former top manager at the Soviet bioweapons programme who defected to the US in 1992, is reported to have corroborated most of the claims made by the American experts from Sandia Labs. But Alibek does not believe that the test involved a hitherto unknown strain but was India-1967 (also known as India-1), a strain that the Soviets have long been suspected of using in their bioweapons programme and whose DNA was also sequenced a decade back by the Russians.

The Shoes That Kalam has to Fill

Is the President more than just a ceremonial head? From the self-effacing Rajendra Prasad to the activist-in-office K.R. Narayanan, all ten Presidents have had to contend with this question — one which will also confront A.P.J. Abdul Kalam when he gets elected on July 15, says **Coomi Kapoor**

JUDGING by a straw poll conducted by this newspaper it would appear that most people believe that one president is as good or bad as the next. The popular belief is that the president is a ceremonial prop rather like a British monarch even if in deference to our democratic traditions the place where he resides is called a Bhawan, not a palace as it is actually. Most are unmindful that our Constitution bestows enormous discretionary powers on the president. And if several of our past presidents have failed the test of upholding the Constitution it was usually because they took the path of least resistance and avoided a confrontation with the government of the day.

For half-a-century the delicate question of the extent of the powers of the president as opposed to those of the prime minister has never been fully settled. India's first President, Rajendra Prasad, a member of the Constituent Assembly and an eminent lawyer, once dared to broach the ticklish issue. In a speech in 1960 on the Constitution he suggested that it be clarified whether Article 74 meant that the president was bound to act only on the advice of the PM and his council of ministers. Prasad's call for a debate on the subject infuriated the then Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who publicly snubbed Prasad, remarking "the president can be no more



PRAVEEN JAIN

than a titular head and there can be no talk of presidential powers." The mild-mannered, self-effacing Prasad, who had made the remark in the context of his own unhappiness over the Hindu Code Bill, retreated.

Since Prasad, successive prime ministers have opted for presidential nominees who they believed would not adopt a confrontational attitude. Nehru replaced Prasad with Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, an eminent academician

Kalam will step into the shoes of Narayanan, who must be credited with making a conscious effort to restore the constitutional powers of a president, which many of his predecessors had voluntarily relinquished

and philosopher, who was not temperamentally inclined to question the prime minister's authority. Nehru's daughter Indira followed her father's example by picking only men she trusted implicitly. Unfortunately, the calibre of those she chose steadily declined as Indira became increasingly autocratic and personal loyalty to her was considered the most essential attribute for a president.

A cultured scholar like Zakir Hussain was followed by two 'yes men' of mediocre ability. V.V. Giri, a

Congress trade unionist, was completely beholden to Indira for his elevation and he was often described as "her rubber stamp." Giri signed several far-reaching ordinances, such as bank nationalisation, without protest. When the Privy Purses Bill was defeated in the Rajya Sabha, an obliging Giri passed a presidential proclamation clearing it nevertheless. His only squeak of protest was questioning Indira Gandhi when she superseded two Supreme Court judges.

Giri's successor Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, a Congress lawyer, was equally pliant. On the fate-

olating not just the spirit but also the letter of the Constitution which he had sworn to uphold. So obliging was he about ratifying all the emergency's draconian measures that then *Indian Express* cartoonist Abu Abraham depicted Ahmed in a bathtub instructing that if there were any more ordinances to sign they should wait till he was first through with his bath.

Indira's last nominee for president, Zail Singh, demonstrated just how cynical she had become about the dignity of the high constitutional office. The semi-literate Singh who as Union home minister meddled constantly in Punjab politics and kept company with undesirable elements including Bhindranwale, was hardly presidential material. Singh was so overwhelmed by Indira's confidence in him that he announced proudly, "If my leader had asked me to pick up a broom and be a sweeper I would have gladly done so. But she has asked me to be President."

Indira's trust in the Giani proved justified. Within hours of her assassination Singh, who was on board a plane returning from a foreign trip, confided to accompanying newsmen that he would be swearing in Rajiv Gandhi as prime minister the moment he reached Delhi. Singh was not bothered about such legal niceties as the fact that the Congress party had not formally met to ratify the proposal or that Rajiv had no prior experience in government.

But the most loyal soldier of the Gandhi family turned into an intractable foe, after he was repeatedly snubbed and ignored by Indira's son. Singh swore to teach Rajiv Gandhi a lesson. And the Bofors case came in handy. A section of the Opposition and the media opposed to Rajiv hailed Zail's attempted coup of 1987 to dismiss the legally elected prime minister as the legitimate action of an activist president who

felt the PM was riding roughshod over the Constitution.

In retrospect, however, Singh's behaviour appears not that of a far-sighted statesmanship anxious to guide an inexperienced prime minister but of a political intriguer peeved that he was being denied a second term in office. For instance, when journalist Rajinder Puri sought the president's permission to prosecute Rajiv Gandhi for his role in Bofors, Singh was not concerned about the merits of the constitutional position, he was interested only in weighing the political pros and cons. He wanted V.P. Singh to quit Rajiv Gandhi's government and head the Opposition so that he could swear him in as prime minister. But at the same time he was worried whether the army chief might call for his arrest as a consequence. Singh transformed Rashtrapati Bhawan into an alternative power centre where those opposed to the PM congregated and conspired.

In the era of coalition governments, when no single party won an outright majority, the president's discretionary powers in appointing prime ministers automatically increased. Grey areas arose where even constitutional experts were divided on the correct procedure to be followed. Sanjiva Reddy was the first president who had to face such a ticklish situation. Charan Singh walked out of Morarji Desai's government and staked a claim to be made prime minister. Both Charan Singh and Desai submitted lists of their respective supporters to the president, but he swore in Singh as prime minister on the ground that there was duplication in the lists of both contenders and Singh had the support of Indira Gandhi's Congress party. When the Congress backed out of its commitment, Charan Singh, who had not faced the Lok Sabha for a single moment, recommended the dissolution of Parliament. Many believed



that Reddy failed the test of impartiality and displayed his old animus towards Desai, in handling the situation, particularly as he refused to give Jagjivan Ram a chance to prove his majority in Parliament. Charan Singh, then president of the Janata Party dubbed Reddy a "Lilliputian president" and Reddy's conduct became an issue in the subsequent general election.

Conscious of the flak that Reddy received, R

Venkataraman, who swore in three prime ministers — V.P. Singh, Chandra Shekhar and P.V. Narasimha Rao — during his tenure, was anxious to ensure that no one could point a finger at him. The media dubbed him a copybook president, though there were some murmurs when he granted a two-week grace period to Shekhar to prove his majority in Parliament, on the grounds that it was an open invitation to horse trading.

President S. Radhakrishnan swearing in Jawaharlal Nehru's council of ministers in June 1962.

Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, an eminent academician & philosopher, was not inclined to question the PM's authority. Like her father, Indira only picked men she trusted implicitly



PHOTO: RASHTRAPATI BHAWAN ARCHIVES

President's role: You go and take a salute at the parade

It was July 16, 1987. The result of the presidential election was announced in the afternoon. With 4,690 votes against the 1,439 polled by V.R. Krishna Iyer, Congress candidate R. Venkataraman was the clear winner. That evening, Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, P.V. Narasimha Rao and other ministers drove down to felicitate Venkataraman. When the president-elect thanked Rao and his team for the 'efficient campaign' they ran for him, Rao quipped, "We have taken all this trouble to ensure that we are trouble-free for the next five years".

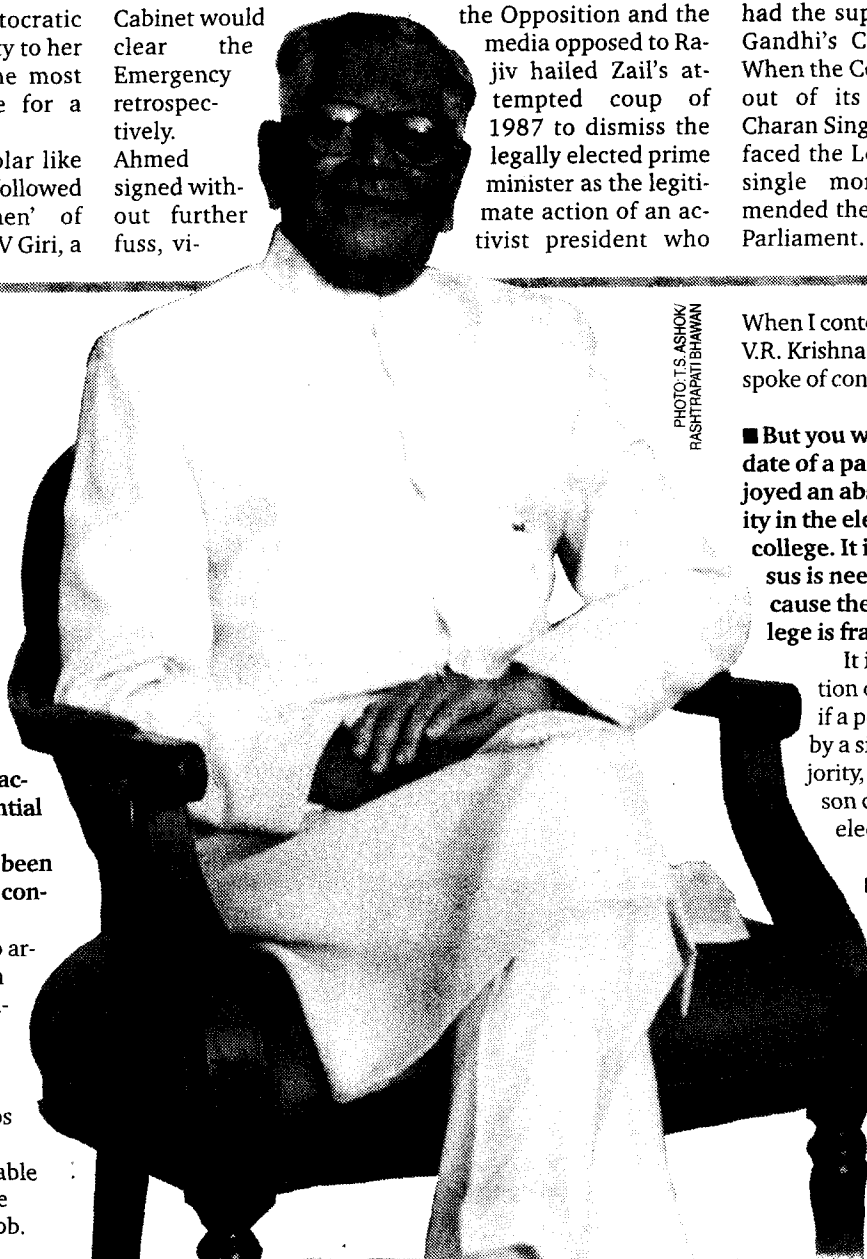
R. Venkataraman re-

counts this episode in his book *My Presidential Years* sans irony. Following the controversial Giani Zail Singh into Rashtrapati Bhawan — Singh had considered dismissing Rajiv Gandhi towards the end of his tenure — Venkataraman prides himself on having been a 'copybook' president. He has famously compared the president of India to an 'emergency lamp' which 'came into operation' when power failed and 'became dormant' when it was restored. He was also the first president to be confronted with a hung Parliament after an election. Excerpts

from an interview with **Vandita Mishra:**

■ We have seen an acrimonious presidential campaign. Should greater effort have been made to arrive at a consensus candidate?

You should try to arrive at consensus on policies. But consensus has no place in elections. Any attempt to arrive at a consensus is perhaps to bring in a person who may be acceptable to all but may not be competent for the job.



PHOTOS: ANSHU RASHTRAPATI BHAWAN

When I contested against V.R. Krishna Iyer, nobody spoke of consensus.

■ But you were the candidate of a party that enjoyed an absolute majority in the electoral college. It is said consensus is needed today because the electoral college is fractured.

It is not a question of margin. Even if a person is elected by a single vote majority, he is the person chosen by the electorate.

■ You went through the political paces before you were elected president — you began as Congress worker, became an MP, then a minister. Is politi-

cal experience necessary for a president?

The functions of the president are completely different from that of the PM. For president, we want a person with dignity, impartiality and a lot of common sense. If I had some other qualifications, they weren't necessary. At the time of crisis, the president has many advisors. Kalam is a very good listener. Being a scientist, he will not jump to conclusions. He has the mental balance necessary for a president.

■ You applied the 'single largest party' criterion after no party won a majority in 1989. Some say you should not have offered the first chance to form government to the Congress, because as the ruling party defeated in the elections it had forfeited its mandate to rule.

I stick to my views. There's a wrong impression that the president must find

a prime minister. No, the president must appoint a prime minister. It is the duty of Parliament to find a PM.

I still think the best procedure is to call the single largest party and allow it to prove a majority. If it is unable to, call the next largest party, then the next. In Britain, in 1923 when the ruling Conservative party lost its majority in the election, but remained the single largest party, the Crown invited its leader, Baldwin, to form government.

■ Stability has been a huge concern after the collapse of Vajpayee's 13-day government. Should the president ask for letters of support, as Narayanan did, to ensure a stable government?

How can the president ensure stability? Stability must be ensured by the House. The president must accept whoever has the majority, not try to find who has it. When Narayanan in-

The outgoing and future Presidents

By Muchkund Dubey

10-10

Like K. R. Narayanan, Abdul Kalam can also be expected to be committed to the cause of the poor.

IN A few days, A. P. J. Abdul Kalam will succeed K. R. Narayanan as President of India. No doubt, Mr. Narayanan has had differences with the BJP-led Government at the Centre. In a democracy, differences are bound to arise even at the highest level. We all know that Rajendra Prasad had major differences with Jawaharlal Nehru though both of them were reared in the same Congress tradition. The real test lies in the restraint and dignity with which the differences are expressed. Mr. Narayanan has expressed his differences with the Government in a measured tone and with utmost dignity. These differences have related mainly to the priority that should be attached to the grave problems facing the nation. The President has repeatedly drawn the attention of the nation to the plight of the Dalits and Adivasis, particularly the women among them. He has suggested that "our three-way fast lane of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation must provide safe pedestrian crossings for the unempowered India..." And recently he expressed anguish over what has happened and is still happening in Gujarat. In expressing his views on the burning issues before the nation, Mr. Narayanan has always acted within the limits of his powers and functions under the Constitution. For example, a large section of the public opinion in the country had expected him to oblige the Government to take effective measures to protect the minorities during and after the Gujarat carnage and restore confidence among them. However, shackled as he was by constitutional constraints, the President could not do anything more than forward various representations and appeals on the issue to the Government for action.

The country's interests would have been best served had Mr. Narayanan been requested by consensus to continue for another term. The argu-

ment that this would have violated the precedent of not giving more than one term to a President is not correct. After all Rajendra Prasad was given two terms at a time when he was one among the several stalwarts of our national movement. The case for Mr. Narayanan's second term is stronger because he is the only tall person among those who dominate the Indian political scene.

The incoming President, Dr. Kalam is a great achiever. His achievements have been duly recognised by the award of Bharat Ratna. Dr. Kalam will be the role model for millions of young men and women in the country fired by the ambition of achieving greater things in life. Apart from this, his humility, simplicity and honesty have impressed us. This is more than what we can expect from any politician today. His humble origins and his practice of austerity even now are bound to bring him close to the common man. Like Mr. Narayanan, he can also be expected to be committed to the cause of the poor and to work for the improvement of their lot. After all, he left a high position in the Government mainly in order to devote himself to this kind of work.

The political parties which are sponsoring Dr. Kalam's candidature are doing so not because of his intrinsic worth but in pursuit of their own political interests. The BJP is doing it to establish its non-existent secular credentials and to refurbish its image tarnished by the Gujarat carnage. The Congress and the other so-called secularist political parties are supporting him in the belief that this would enable them to retain, if not augment, their Muslim vote banks. Thus, we have here the case of the right candidate being nominated for the wrong reasons.

There are strong reasons to believe that once elected Dr. Kalam will not be the President of a particular political party but of the entire nation. He would not allow the fact of his being a Muslim to come in the way of his upholding the secular basis of the Constitution and safeguarding the interests of the minorities at all costs against the likely onslaught of the Sangh Parivar.

One of the objections being raised against Dr. Kalam's candidature is that he lacks political experience and is not well versed in the functioning of the Constitution. Therefore, he would not be able to grapple with the complexity of providing guidance for the formation of multi-party coalition Governments at the Centre. I am sure this apprehension would also prove unfounded. Dr. Kalam will not be an innocent at large in Indian politics. The person who has occupied the highest positions in the Government and has won the highest award in the country, and who has got huge projects sanctioned at the political level and led teams of scientists and technicians to implement them successfully can surely be relied upon to find his way out of the country's political maze and administrative labyrinth. Unlike wily politicians, Dr. Kalam would not get involved in political horse-trading. This will be good for the country. For we have had enough of political wheeler-dealers.

By far the most ill-conceived, ill-informed and self-defeating allegation levelled against Dr. Kalam is that by electing him President we will send a wrong signal to the world, of a militarist India reliant on weapons of mass destruction. This, according to these detractors of Dr. Kalam, would be in accordance with the BJP's belief

in militarist and aggressive nationalism. There cannot be a greater injustice to our incoming President than making this kind of snide remarks. Here one may ask: can India afford to disarm unilaterally? Can we think of an India which can dispense with military force altogether? If not, why this guilt complex about our being a military power?

If we cannot dispense with all military power then where should we draw the line? Should we have stopped short of acquiring nuclear weapons? Even had we done so, on what basis can we take objection to our country acquiring missiles? For, missiles have emerged as the most effective carriers of even conventional weapons. Missiles have been integrated into the traditional armed forces of all significant military powers including not only Pakistan but also Syria, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt etc. What is the justification for prescribing a self-denying ordinance only for India?

And so far as nuclear weapons are concerned, India did not undertake their production years after it acquired the capability to do so. India started assembling nuclear weapons only after Pakistan's acquisition of such weapons became publicly known. Not to have done so would have amounted to taking unwarranted risks with our security.

The fact is that in the context of the present security environment in the region, it has become indispensable for India to acquire both nuclear weapons and their delivery vehicles. This decision has been taken by the country, Parliament and Cabinets of successive Governments, not only of the BJP. Dr. Kalam has not taken this decision. He simply happened to be in a position where he was entrusted with the responsibility of implementing one of its most important components. All Dr. Kalam did was successfully discharge responsibilities.

5 JUL 2002

THE HINDU

'GUJARAT INCIDENTS VERY PAINFUL'

Nuclear weapons helped avert war: Kalam

President

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, JUNE 19. The man all set to become President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, is not quite unfamiliar with politics. At his first press conference here today, he deftly handled questions ranging from the Gujarat carnage to his "pro-nuclear weapons image". And he fielded them all without faltering, effortlessly and he was always politically correct.

Clearly, his own inimitable style was not limited to his hair, he was a man who liked to have "his way", his aim was always high, and his vision large and wide (even if sometimes naïve), and he seemed determined to leave his stamp on the presidency he was about to enter.

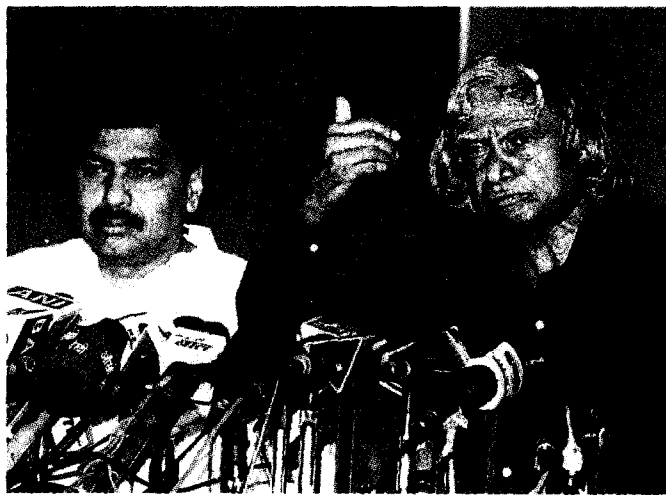
Would his connection with the missile programme send a "wrong signal" as alleged by the Left presidential candidate, Lakshmi Sahgal? How did nuclear India reconcile with the non-violence preached by Mahatma Gandhi? Are India's nuclear weapons "safe"?

"The right signal was the use of technology to develop the nation," he said. He was not simply the bomb man.

He had worked with the space and satellite launch programme for better communications, yes, he had worked on missile technology and, more recently, his ambition was to teach the young.

He wanted people to develop a scientific temper, and he read from the Constitution to prove the point that that would be his constitutional duty as President.

Why a nuclear weapon? For 3000 years India had been in-



The Presidential candidate, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, addressing a press conference in New Delhi on Wednesday. The Communication Minister, Pramod Mahajan, is also seen. — Photo: Anu Pushkarna.

vaded, more lately the English, the French, the Portuguese and even the Dutch were able to set up colonies. "They came with guns, we had only swords, now our neighbours have nuclear bombs, we need a minimum deterrent... no first use, minimum deterrent, no further tests, that is our nuclear policy ... and our safety record is very good, safety standards are in position." Why worry about the few nuclear bombs India may have, why not talk about the 10,000 nuclear warheads across the Atlantic, he asked.

He was diplomatic enough not to be drawn on issues such as the recent Indo-Pak. tension ("very sensitive issue, we should not discuss this", but he did add that "the last war did not take place because we had nuclear weapons" — nuclear

weapons had helped avert a war.)

How would a scientist like him cope with politics and his duties in the Rashtrapati Bhavan? It was not a new thing for him, he had worked with six Prime Ministers and, according to him, "a political system should create responsible leadership, empowered citizens, and lead to policies that develop the nation." He hoped technology would be one of the major tools for India's development and as President he could "work with Parliament and the Cabinet" on this.

As for learning politics, that should be easy: "since last Sunday (June 9) my experience with politics has been that it was like trying to launch a missile which must correctly hit its target," he said, and in the days

to come he would learn it. An RSS journal has praised him as a "model Muslim" but clearly he was not impressed, saying: "first and foremost, one should be a good human being, every other element — Indian, Muslim, Hindu can be part of that."

On the Gujarat carnage Dr. Kalam said: "What has happened is very painful... We should prevent it at all costs. I can only say religion should graduate into spiritual inquiry, managers must become leaders, and political leaders must have compassion." He refused to be drawn into specific questions on the role of the Modi Government.

He talked of the need for 100 per cent literacy, for development and a higher GDP and implied that they would resolve the problem of communalism. But when it was pointed out that Hitler's Germany was literate and highly developed, and that it was naïve to think that fascism could be stopped by development, Dr. Kalam continued to reel off some GDP figures and talked of education, health, agriculture and food processing.

Finally, Dr. Kalam related an anecdote: he was a schoolboy on August 15, 1947, the day's newspaper carried two photographs — Nehru unfurling the national flag and Mahatma Gandhi marching barefoot in Noakhali trying to quell the communal disturbances. It was the photograph of Gandhiji that left a lasting impression on him. "Political leadership with compassion" he emphasised again.

Need for leaders with values: Page 11

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20 JUN 2002

NDA to blame, says Yechuri

By Our Staff Reporter

VIJAYAWADA, JUNE 18. The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) was responsible for "disrupting" the process of finding a Presidential candidate acceptable to all political parties and capable of holding the highest political office, the CPI (M) politburo member, Sitaram Yechuri, said here today.

At a meet-the-press programme, Mr. Yechuri said the Left parties and the Congress had backed the President, K.R. Narayanan, for a second term. The Samajwadi Party chief, Mulayam Singh Yadav, had accompanied them when they met Mr. Narayanan and requested him to contest the election. The NDA was opposed to Mr. Narayanan's candidature and in an "unprecedented and indecent" manner, the Prime Minister had himself conveyed the message to the President. Subsequently, the name of the Vice-President, Krishan Kant, was proposed and the Left was also agreeable to it, as there was a tradition of elevating the Vice-

President. But Mr. Kant was also jettisoned and the name of P.C. Alexander was floated.

"Mr. Alexander's candidature was not acceptable to all, but the ruling combine should explain why Mr. Narayanan was not acceptable to them and why they proposed Mr. Kant, to whom we were also agreeable, and subsequently gave it up. It is not the Left that is adopting an isolationist stance; the ruling BJP-led NDA is imposing its candidate on the rest to pursue its own agenda."

The Left parties did not question A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's stature as a scientist or his contribution in the fields of science and technology, but he lacked any political experience and the country needed a President familiar with the political scenario. "It is an attempt to depoliticise the office of the President."

Mr. Yechuri said the post of President should not be handed over to someone as reward for his work. "Dr. Kalam has already been given the Bharat Ratna, the highest award."

The choice of Dr. Kalam was not innocent or accidental. The Sangh Parivar viewed him as the ideal Muslim and sought to project him as a role model for Muslims to emulate, he alleged. "In effect, the Parivar is conveying a message to the Muslims that they need not give up their religion but fall in line as Dr. Kalam did."

On the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu's reported remark that he did not know who Lakshmi Sahgal was, Mr. Yechuri said it was "political illiteracy" and Mr. Naidu was proudly flaunting it.

By fielding her, the Left parties had only exercised their democratic right and it was not a futile exercise, even though the numbers were not in their favour.

The Left parties were using the Presidential election to highlight the dangerous implications of the policies being pursued by the NDA in Gujarat, Kashmir and elsewhere. "Our stand has triggered a nationwide debate on these issues."

THE HINDU

19 JUN 2002

'NUCLEAR SAFETY STANDARDS IN PLACE'

Gujarat riots painful: Kalam

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, June 19. — The NDA's presidential nominee met the capital's press corps today and handled pointed queries — from Gujarat to nuclear war to his personal credibility — confidently and with aplomb, which included stepping around "difficult" issues.

On Gujarat, Dr Kalam said whatever happened was "very painful". But he parried questions on Mr Narendra Modi and the demand for imposition of President's rule in the state.

On the nuclear issue, he defended Pokhran-II and said nuclear deterrence works, and that it has worked in the sub-continent. Dr Kalam was, however, more diplomatic in answering questions on Indo-Pak relations.

He said it was a "very sensitive" issue and that the Prime Minister had stated that the government was in "full control" of the problem and "I would not like to discuss it further".

On whether India had adequate safety mechanisms in its nuclear programme to ensure that Chernobyl-like disasters did not take place, he said: "Our nuclear record is good and safety standards are in place." "Why are you worried about the coun-

try having a few nuclear weapons? If you are particular, you should worry about the 10,000 nuclear warheads across the Atlantic." When a nuclear threat was growing in the region, "how could the nation go on a *tapasya*?" he asked.

Asked if he felt that the Gujarat violence was a "blot" on the country, Dr Kalam said: "I can

When a nuclear threat is growing in the region, how can the nation go on a *tapasya*?

only say that we should try to see whether religion can graduate into spiritualism, managers can graduate into leaders, political leaders can turn into political leaders with compassion and the education system work towards 100 per cent literacy."

9. president 571 1876
Asked what were the reasons for the Gujarat violence, he narrated an incident which, he said, "changed my life".

He recalled that as a high school student leader, he heard the historic speech of Jawaharlal Nehru on 14 August 1947 in Hindi and English. "I did not understand either of the languages since I had studied in the Tamil medium." The next day, he saw two photographs in newspapers. While one showed Nehru unfurling the tricolour, the other depicted Gandhi walking barefoot in riot-hit Noakhali district.

"The second photograph changed my life," he said, adding "we have to develop leaders with compassion".

Asked how he would deal with constitutional crises after occupying the highest office, he said in any crisis, the President has to analyse and come to the right conclusion. He pointed out that the President will have many constitutional experts as advisors.

Responding to suggestions that he lacked political experience required as President, Dr Kalam said he would learn on the job.

"I have worked with six Prime Ministers in the last 10 years.

Turn to page 6

571 1876
KALAM:

(Continued from page 1)

After the presidential election, the intensity of work with the political system will increase and I will learn," he said. On what was the happiest moment in his life, he said it was neither the nuclear test nor the filing of

20
nominations for President, but the time "when I saw a young, physically-handicapped child run up to her father, which she could do thanks to technological development. A caliper, which earlier weighed around three kg, is now lighter and weighs 300 gm".

THE STATESMAN

18 JUN 2002

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Why a Left candidate?

By Harkishan Singh Surjeet

The BJP-led NDA has adopted the ruse of consensus as a smokescreen to camouflage its real intentions.

India - President

18/6
HND-10

THE ANNOUNCEMENT by the Left parties of fielding Lakshmi Sahgal as their candidate for the post of President is their response to the emerging political situation. It is a scenario in which, on the one hand, the ruling NDA led by the BJP manoeuvred to impose its will, and, on the other hand, the main Opposition party, the Congress, despite initial indications of putting up a fight, abandoned it and fell in line to support the NDA nominee.

With all respect to A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, whose contribution to the development of the country's missile programme is acknowledged and honoured, the fact remains that he is a candidate propped up by the BJP. He was, however, not its first choice either.

While the Congress and the People's Front favoured a second term for K.R. Narayanan, the BJP was not inclined, for obvious reasons. The Prime Minister displayed his contempt by bluntly telling the President that they were not in favour of his continuance in office for another term. Mr. Narayanan, who was yet to make up his mind, rightly opted out, after the discourteous manner in which the ruling combine's opposition to his likely candidature was conveyed.

Faced with stiff opposition from the Congress and the People's Front, the BJP communicated that it was ready to accept the TDP's proposal to make the Vice-President, Krishan Kant, the next President. All major parties had more or less agreed to this proposal. The PMO had actually conveyed to the Congress its decision to elevate the Vice-President. After evolving a consensus on his candidature, the BJP did a volte-face and came up with the name of Dr. Kalam. In this whole process, it has unnecessarily dragged Mr. Narayanan and Mr. Krishan Kant into a controversy. The motivated manner in which it has treated the whole issue has left a bitter taste. During the course of the last four years, the BJP-led NDA has adopted the ruse of consensus as a smokescreen to

camouflage its real intentions.

The Congress finally caved in and decided to back Dr. Kalam. This stance will affect its credibility and its capacity to put up a consistent opposition to the BJP. The Samajwadi Party, which was a constituent of the People's Front, as opposed to the views of the other constituents of the Front, also supported Dr. Kalam's candidature. The SP had as a constituent of the People's Front supported Mr. Narayanan earlier.

It is against this background wherein the ruling party deliberately avoided a consensus and forced its nominee; and the failure of the main non-Left secular parties to carry forward the fight that has compelled the Left parties and other partners of the People's Front to put up their nominee.

In a situation where the Congress has lost its monopoly of power and no single party has got a majority at the Centre and various parties or combination of parties are ruling in the States, the role that the President has to play, despite the limited powers the office holds, assumes importance. In a situation where a rabidly communal party such as the BJP is in power at the Centre and the threat to the very unity of the country and its social fabric is real, as revealed by the events in Gujarat, the significance of the office of President need not be underlined.

In Gujarat, the state-sponsored pogrom against the Muslim minority went on for over four months and its perpetrators refused to stop the genocide despite the condemnation of the entire nation. The BJP refuses to acknowledge the distinct identity of the Kashmiri people and the necessity of Article 370 of the Constitution and the demand for more autonomy. It is a party which is opposed to the very concept of federalism and linguistic States. During the last four years,

there have been repeated attacks on these pillars of the Constitution.

There has also been a basic change in our foreign policy orientation. Until the BJP assumed office, the country had been following a foreign policy of non-alignment, for world peace and complete nuclear disarmament, opposition to imperialism and support to liberation struggles. The BJP-led regime has dismantled this consensual foreign policy and put in place a policy which is pro-imperialist to the core and which has lowered the country's prestige in international fora.

While the Congress and the other secular Opposition parties have been opposing the policies that endanger national unity and promote hatred between different religious communities, they have been more than vocal in their support to the economic policies of liberalisation and privatisation pursued by this Government. It is only the Left which has waged a comprehensive and uncompromising struggle against the whole gamut of policies pursued by the BJP-led NDA.

Capt. Sahgal's candidature has to be seen as a continuation and natural corollary of this struggle against the policies and programmes of this Government which are harmful to the country's interests and people's welfare. It once again exposes to the people the role played by the other Opposition parties in the struggle against this Government.

Dr. Kalam is a renowned scientist-administrator no doubt, but the country is unaware about his political leanings or commitment. The Left and its allies are clear that the person elected to this office has a great political responsibility. He/she is the custodian of the Constitution, protecting and safeguarding the secular democratic character of the Indian Republic. In a situation where the ruling combine seeks to dismiss democratically-elect-

ed Governments or in a situation where the secular principle has to be upheld, a person capable of upholding the tenets of the Constitution should be in office.

There are enough indications from the BJP that proposing Dr. Kalam's name was its response to the criticism over Gujarat. The people do not know about Dr. Kalam's views on Gujarat or for that matter on any other important political question facing the country.

The SP's role has been a disruptive one, though it now seeks to blame the Left for the break-up of the People's Front. The SP had made up its mind even earlier. This was reflected in the way it went ahead with the byelections to the Uttar Pradesh Assembly. It formed another alliance in Uttar Pradesh of which the Kranti Dal of the former Chief Minister, Kalyan Singh, and two other caste-based parties, were part. It was during Mr. Kalyan Singh's tenure as Chief Minister (he was in the BJP then) that the Babri Masjid was demolished. Unfortunately, the SP did not wish to consult the other constituents of the People's Front before adopting such a course. This is an indicator of its commitment to the Front. Without acknowledging this, they are hurling accusations and abuses against us. The SP has adopted a political course contrary to the basic approach of the People's Front. Recently in Parliament, we saw the spectacle of the SP leadership defending the Finance Minister, Yashwant Sinha, when he was charged with improper behaviour in relation to the Flex Industries.

Reviewing the situation after the departure of the Samajwadi Party, the Left parties in consultation with V.P. Singh and H. D. Deve Gowda came to the conclusion that this political fight had to be carried forward and that we should put up our candidate. The proposal of Dr. Sahgal's name was unanimously agreed upon. The entry of the Left into the contest is carrying forward the political struggle against the policies and programmes of the BJP-led NDA.

THE HINDU

18 JUL 2002

Kalam calls on PM, Sonia

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, JUNE 17. The stage is set for A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, the presidential candidate of the ruling National Democratic Alliance and almost all the Opposition parties barring the Left, to file his nomination papers in the Parliament House tomorrow.

Today, after Dr. Kalam arrived here — he was escorted by the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, who had gone to Chennai to accompany him here, and greeted by several Ministers on arrival at the airport — he had a number of engagements, including a lunch hosted for him by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and a call on the President, K.R. Narayanan. During the day he also had separate meetings with the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, and the Samajwadi Party leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav, who was the first to suggest his name for the top post, and who even today appealed to his “friends” in the Left to desist from opposing Dr. Kalam. Perhaps to emphasise that Dr. Kalam was a candidate of not only the ruling NDA but also the main Opposition party, Mr. Vajpayee invited the Congress president and

Manmohan Singh to the lunch he hosted for Dr. Kalam — Dr. Singh attended but Ms. Gandhi could not as she was occupied elsewhere.

It seems that separate sets of nomination papers will be filed for Dr. Kalam by the NDA, the Congress and the Samajwadi Party. Ms. Gandhi is certain to be the main proposer in the form to be submitted on behalf of her party and other senior leaders — Dr. Singh, some Chief Ministers and others — would also sign the papers. Mr. Vajpayee himself will be the main proposer for the NDA.

Even at this late stage, parties such as the PMK have appealed to the Left not to force a contest, and several smaller parties, including the Republican Party of India and the Indian National League, have pledged support for Dr. Kalam.

A wrong signal: Sahgal

And Lakshmi Sahgal, the Left parties' candidate, who is expected to file her nomination papers on June 21, told a press conference that the nomination of the nuclear scientist, Dr. Kalam, had sent a “wrong signal”, especially at a time when Indian and Pakistani armies were standing face to face

on the border, and for her (an old Indian National Army soldier) there would be no running away from the battlefield (even if the outcome was known).

Capt. Sahgal said the carnage in Gujarat would be the focal point of her campaign. “Gujarat is a case (for President's rule) ... may be many lives would have been saved (if this had been done),” she said in response to a question.

At her press conference, Capt. Sahgal was flanked by the CPI(M) general secretary, Harkishan Singh Surjeet, and the CPI(M) politburo members, Prakash Karat and Sitaram Yechury, the CPI general secretary, A.B. Bardhan, the CPI national secretary, D. Raja, Abani Roy of the RSP, and S.C. Gaud of the Forward Bloc.

She said she saw the Presidential contest as a political battle, part of the struggle she had been part of all her life. Today, the four foundational pillars of the Constitution — secular democracy, economic self-reliance, federalism and social justice — were under severe stress. Indians were together in the freedom struggle, and today more than ever the “synergising of our pluralistic society or rich diversity” was needed to safeguard and strengthen the future.

THE HINDU

18 JUN 2002

'Left compelled Lakshmi in joining Presidential race'

51 STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE 16/6

KOLKATA, June 15. — No matter what the Left parties might reason for supporting 87-year-old Mrs Lakshmi Sahgal in her run for the President's chair, a close friend, who has known her for over eight decades, feels she would never have joined the race out of her own spontaneous will.

According to Professor Lefroy M Verghese, a Kolkatan, an astronomer and a retired executive in his late eighties, Mrs Sahgal might well have been "compelled to take the decision under the pressing current political

scenario in the country".

But that could be only after she was convinced by the Left parties to that effect, Prof Verghese added. "Why me", was her first reaction after she was given the proposal, Mr Verghese said, adding "that was very natural on her part as she had always been a very affectionate and pleasing personality although very analytical and dynamic," he said.

"I've known Lakshmi since the late 1920s as her father and mine were friends. We were friends during our study at the Madras University. She used to frequent our home during our stay at Ooty. Her mother, Amma,

was a charming lady and a leading social worker of her times. We lost contact in 1936 when she went off to Singapore to practice medicine and I to London to study Astronomy," Prof Verghese, the second Indian after Prof CV Raman to become the Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society in London, reminisced. "At Singapore she came in contact with Netaji and eventually became the chief of the Rani Jhansi Regiment of the Indian National Army. Evidently, our national leader recognised the leadership qualities within her," he said.

"We met each other after 66 years in 1999 in

Kolkata. She had come to attend Netaji's birthday. *Varru, varru* (come fast, come fast) was all she managed to say after she heard my voice over the telephone barely holding back her tears of joy. She was as affectionate and vivacious as ever" recollected Prof Verghese.

Asked what might have prompted her to come into limelight at this age, a place she had she had managed to stay away for so long, Prof Verghese said, "Lakshmi had always supported the cause of the down trodden. The Left Front could well have cashed on this background of hers and convinced her to file the nomination".

THE STATESMAN

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THE NEXT PRESIDENT

HAVING GAINED THE support of key Opposition parties such as the Congress and the Samajwadi Party, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam is set to become the next President of India. The substantial political consensus that has emerged around the candidature of the eminent scientist is matched by popular approval on the ground. The elevation of Dr. Kalam to the country's highest and most exalted constitutional post conveys many things. Above all, it is a reaffirmation of the essence of Indian democracy. The fact that a person who hails from such a humble background could rise to occupy the most distinguished position in the land is a testimony to prevalence of opportunity and the capacity to overcome odds through merit and endeavour. Dr. Kalam's essential humility and touching simplicity are likely to lend a special character to the majesty of his lofty office.

At another and more immediate level, Dr. Kalam's candidature has facilitated a significant (but by no means total) consensus. Given this, concerns that the presidential election would become a battleground for a fierce and counter-productive political battle have vanished. Of course, with the Left parties having announced Lakshmi Sehgal, a key figure in the Indian National Army, as their candidate for the poll, a contest is inevitable. But with the coming on board of the Congress, the only party with the strength in the electoral college to mobilise the requisite numbers for a keenly fought presidential poll, any contest now is likely to be symbolic rather than real. In the existing circumstances, precipitating a contest cannot provide even a remote hope of victory; however, it may provide an opportunity to record dissatisfaction on matters of principle.

While it is welcome that Dr. Kalam's candidature has evoked substantial political support, it is impossible to ignore that this consensus was achieved in far from ideal circumstances. Having found its original nominee, P.C. Alexander, unacceptable to those both within and outside the Government, the NDA's managers went ahead with announcing the candidature of Dr. Kalam

rather than doing what they ought to have in the first place — engage in a sincere and wide-ranging consultative process to select a person who is acceptable to all. It is this very lack of a candid search for consensus which, from the very beginning, had lent the presidential election the appearance of a political chessboard, a place on which cynical manoeuvres and cunning stratagems were being played out. Finally, it was the Congress' reluctance to oppose Dr. Kalam's candidature which won the day. While there is a justifiable sense of relief that a bitter and fractious presidential election has been averted, the manner in which the consensus was reached wears the unfortunate appearance of one 'enforced' rather than one 'evolved'.

When he moves into Rashtrapathi Bhavan, Dr. Kalam will, in a way, be the first of his kind. Previous occupants have either been politicians or administrators with distinct political links. As a scientist who was entrusted with overseeing the country's missile development programme, Dr. Kalam's candidature is a departure from an established trend. Not surprisingly, there has been some discomfort with the signal conveyed by the selection of Dr. Kalam, seen as the principal architect of India's missile programme, in the wider context of the BJP's pursuit of a militaristic agenda. There is also the question as to whether, given his likely lack of a deep knowledge of the Constitution, he would be able to negotiate the tricky constitutional and political issues that arise. While Dr. Kalam's essentially non-partisan nature is not in question, it seems evident that the BJP's seemingly enthusiastic support for his candidature was a result of wholly extraneous factors — underpinned as it was by an element of tokenism and a desire to deflect attention from the horrific and unpardonable communal carnage in Gujarat. The less than straightforward reasons which settled Dr. Kalam's candidature however are no reflection either on his integrity or on the undeniable popular support he enjoys as he prepares to become India's next President.

THE HINDU

15 JUN 2002

Left works on Prez list, wants Cong to join in

Sumit Sen
Kolkata, June 12

THE LEFT, outsmarted by the Prime Minister and deserted by friend Mulayam Singh Yadav, is on the hunt for a candidate they would pit against APJ Abdul Kalam, the NDA's choice for the President's post.

Among the names doing the rounds are A H Ahmadi, former Supreme Court Chief Justice, and M A Fatima Beevi, who recently quit as Tamil Nadu Governor. But Left leaders insisted these names were in the realm of speculation. "A clear picture will emerge only after we know the Congress's mind. We're waiting for tomorrow's CWC meeting," Somnath Chatterjee, leader of the CPI(M)'s Parliamentary Party, said.

"That we're putting up a nominee is definite," RSP leader Abani Roy said from Delhi. The Left resolved to field a candidate after the People's Front died a sudden death today when Mulayam pledged his support for Kalam and walked out of the formation.

"The Congress stand will be critical. But we have an open mind on the matter," a Left leader said. The party today deferred its decision on a presidential nominee apparently after Kerala Chief Minister A K Antony sounded a discordant note when he declared his support for Kalam.

Signals emerging from Delhi seemed to indicate that some Left leaders were not quite averse to backing PM Sayeed for the top job. The Deputy Speaker's name has been floated by some Congress leaders. "Sayeed is a respectable and seasoned parliamentarian. There's no reason why we shouldn't support him," a Left Front leader said.

In the running

- Names doing the rounds:
Former Tamil Nadu Governor Fatima Beevi and ex-Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, A H Ahmadi
- Some in the Left won't object if Congress puts up Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker P M Sayeed

But what if the Congress decides against fielding a nominee? "Even if it's to be a token fight, we won't back out. But we sincerely hope that Sonia Gandhi will decide in favour of a contest and we along with her party will put up a joint candidate," Roy said.

Senior Left leaders reportedly got in touch with the Congress high command today and requested them to take a quick decision on the nominee ahead of June 15, when submission of nominations begin. Chatterjee, who is leaving for Delhi tomorrow, sounded optimistic. "I'm sure we'll find someone to be our joint candidate."

"Initially, we were agreed on Krishan Kant, when AB Vajpayee suggested his name to Sonia Gandhi. Suddenly, the scenario changed when Mulayam chose to back Kalam. We are not giving up. Kalam... will be better off in the realm of science. We can't support him," he said.

Even after the People's Front died a premature death today, Left leaders sounded positive. "The Front is no more. But something will emerge soon," Harkishan Singh Surjeet said.

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THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

13 JUN 2002

Count me out, says President, saves Cong face

■ **NUMBERS GAME** | Kalam: SP proposes,
Left disposes, Congress plays both sides

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE
NEW DELHI, JUNE 11

IT was finally left to President K R Narayanan to clear the decks for the appointment of his successor. A Rashtrapati Bhavan statement tonight that Narayanan "is not a candidate," made the Congress's job easier at the end of a day which saw a sharp division in the Opposition over the choice of A P J Abdul Kalam.

Although the Congress kept every one on hold pending a meeting tomorrow, it was clear that with the Samajwadi Party supporting Kalam and Narayanan declining to be the Opposition's candidate, the former Scientific Advisor's election is a sure-shot should there be a contest.

A fall-out of today's posturing was the clear isolation of the Left which opposed Kalam saying that he was being foisted upon by the NDA under the "garb of a consensus". And that no one—from the Opposition—had been taken into confidence before the NDA announced its candidate.

This stand split the People's Front right down the middle.

Earlier, Mulayam Singh Yadav, marginalised of late after the change of guard in Lucknow, and his aide Amar Singh walked out of a meeting with the Left. "It was

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

People's Front: Divided



■ Left parties — CPI, CPM, RSP, Forward Bloc — decide not to support Kalam. To meet Janata Dal (S) leader H.D. Deve Gowda again tomorrow

■ We've been saying Kalam is a good candidate and we will support him — SP leader Mulayam Singh Yadav

Congress: Mum's the word

■ CWC meets, authorises Sonia to hold talks with People's Front leaders and take a decision. Says K.R. Narayanan still the party's candidate.

■ CPM leader Harkishan Singh Surjeet meets Sonia

RJD: Supports but

■ Kalam good choice but NDA should instead use him for defence programmes — Laloo Prasad Yadav

TDP: Right choice, right time

■ TDP: Kalam "right choice", will send right signal to the nation and international community "in this hour of turmoil" — Chandrababu Naidu

from the front page 98-2

K R Narayanan helps Congress save face 12/6

Mulayam Singh Yadav who first proposed Kalam's name to the Prime Minister. If the NDA could climb down from their stand of putting up P C Alexander following pressure from the Opposition, we can certainly support Kalam," said Amar Singh.

Right through the day, the Congress continued to play both sides. Until late this evening, party chief Sonia Gandhi held several meetings with her colleagues and key Left leaders.

The immediate aim, confided a senior Congressman, was to generate Opposition's consensus around Narayanan. At the the same time though, the party was only too aware that the numbers game is stacked against it.

The CPI, despite facing heavy odds against putting up a candidate to challenge Kalam, put a brave face when its general secretary A B Bardhan declared the decision by the Left and the Deve Gowda Janata Dal(S) to oppose the NDA candidate.

"We are not supporting Kalam. There will be a contest, but not necessarily between Narayanan and Kalam." Bardhan said.

Party spokesman Jaipal Reddy said they had left it to Sonia to take a final decision after consulting the Opposition parties.

As a last-ditch measure to forge unity within the PF, Sonia sent Manmohan Singh to its meeting but by then the

fissure-ridden Front had already decided to split.

"I have worked with Kalam when I was the Defence Minister in the United Front Government. We proposed his name for Bharat Ratna, so there is no question of not supporting him for the President's post. He is honest, non-political person and an eminent scientist, to top it. Kalam will have our full support." said Mulayam.

The SP also took a stab at the Left Parties and the Congress for not consulting them prior to pushing Narayanan for the second term.

"We were not consulted, but for Opposition unity, we decided to go along them as long as Krishan Kant was to be the consensus candidate. We had already told the self-opinionated Left leaders that by any fluke the Sangh and the NDA decides to back Kalam we will support the move."

The CPI-M spokesperson Sitaram Yechuri said: "In the current situation we are in no position to support the NDA candidate. Kalam is an undoubtedly an eminent scientist and the country has acknowledged his contribution by giving him the Bharat Ratna. He has no political background or term public life to occupy the Rashtrapati Bhavan."

Countering the argument, Amar Singh said: "Radhakrishnan was a philosopher and no political figure, but he was made president by the Congress."

Be our nominee, oppn tells Narayanan

New Delhi: The Congress and the People's Front on Sunday requested President K.R. Narayanan to be their joint nominee for the July 15 presidential poll. They opposed the National Democratic Alliance's (NDA) move to push through the candidature of Maharashtra governor P.C. Alexander as being "unacceptable to the whole country".

A delegation of senior leaders of the opposition parties met Mr Narayanan at Rashtrapati Bhavan and urged him to accept their request. Speaking to reporters later, Samajwadi Party leader Amar Singh said Mr Narayanan had given them a "patient and respectful hearing". Among those who attended the 35-minute meeting were CPM leaders Harkishen Singh Surjeet and Sitaram Yechury and Congressmen Manmohan Singh and K. Natwar

Singh. ^{9. President} ^{10/6} Meanwhile, faced with strong reservations from the opposition against its choice, the NDA on Sunday indefinitely postponed its meeting to finalise its candidate and plans to have further consultations for a consensus. Telugu Desam Party (TDP) chief N. Chandrababu Naidu, who had initially refused to attend the meeting, agreed to come to the capital following requests from senior BJP leaders.

Although Mr Naidu, like all the NDA partners and supporting parties, had authorised Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to take the final decision on the is-



K.R. Narayanan

sue, he is reportedly inclined towards a consensus being reached on sending vice-president Krishan Kant to Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Although Mr Vajpayee himself was in favour of a consensus in view of the current tensions along the border, he was pressurised by some of his cabinet colleagues to clear the candidature of Mr Alexander on the plea that the NDA had the requisite numbers to push through his election.

The NDA on Sunday put off its meeting for the third time in less than 48 hours. Mr Vajpayee discussed the contentious issue with home minister L.K. Advani.

Meanwhile, wary of the NDA's designs, the opposition on Sunday sought to close its ranks. Left party leaders, including Mr Surjeet, A.B. Bardhan and Mr Yechury, held a meeting with

Congress president Sonia Gandhi to hammer out a joint strategy. "We are for a consensus on the election of the President. Although the Prime Minister is also talking about a consensus, he is trying to project candidate after candidate in utter disregard of the spirit of consensus," Mr Surjeet said, adding that the NDA's proposals were "absolutely unacceptable to the whole country".

Endorsing his views, Manmohan Singh said although initially only Ms Gandhi had requested Mr Narayanan to contest, this time the plea had been made jointly by the People's Front, the Congress and the entire opposition.

Echoing Mr Singh's views, Samajwadi Party's Amar Singh said, "There is absolute unanimity among us on the issue. We are speaking in one voice." PTI

Narayanan may not opt for second term *President*

By Harish Khare

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NEW DELHI, JUNE 5. With the return of the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to the capital this evening, the politics of presidential poll is likely to gain momentum. The Election Commission is scheduled to notify the time-table for the presidential poll early next week.

Meanwhile, the President, K. R. Narayanan, is reported to be on the verge of making himself unavailable for a second term, after it became clear that a victory might elude him even if he allowed himself to be persuaded to take the unusual step of entering the electoral fray. The requisite bi-partisan support that an incumbent President should have in a re-election bid has failed to materialise. Apart from the uncertainty, a contest means seeking a mandate against the ruling party. No President has done that, though Zail Singh, R. Venkataraman, and Shanker Dayal Sharma were all keen on a second term. An unlikely success would pit Mr. Narayanan against Mr. Vajpayee, thereby creating a distracting constitutional tension.

The National Democratic Alliance has already informed Mr. Narayanan, through Mr. Vajpayee, that the ruling combine wants to stick to the convention of "no second term" for anyone in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Though Mr. Vajpayee has incurred the charge of gracelessness, at least the ruling party has not left any room for political ambiguity. The thinking within the Congress, too,

is veering around to the view that Mr. Narayanan has left it too late in coming to a decision on whether he would be a candidate for re-election. Even now, there is no definite announcement or indication on whether the "open mind" means "availability."

The thinking within the Congress is that it would be better off cutting its losses and that it should throw its weight behind the Vice-President, Krishna Kant. At least the Congress can insist that if the NDA does not want to depart from the convention that no sitting President should seek a second term, it should follow the other convention of elevating the Vice-President to the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Except G. S. Pathak, B. D. Jatti and Hidayatullah, all the Vice-Presidents have moved up.

Even the Left appears to have lost its ardour for Mr. Narayanan. The Left's enthusiasm for the President can be traced to a die-hard opposition to two probable NDA candidates — P. C. Alexander and Abdul Kalam. But the Left is also aware of the numbers in the presidential electoral college, as also of the unreliability of the Samajwadi Party.

The recent utterances of an SP leader against Mr. Narayanan have not been taken kindly by the President's well-wishers. The dignity and prestige of the Rashtrapati Bhavan cannot be mortgaged to the likes and dislikes of such leaders, many felt. It would be better for Mr. Narayanan to leave on a dignified note rather than seek the support and indulgence of small-time leaders.

RACE FOR PRESIDENT

489 9/6

Consensus Eludes Political Parties

By SAM RAJAPPA

The search for a consensus candidate for the presidential election has proved futile. The ruling National Democratic Alliance has authorised Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to select a candidate in consultation with the opposition. The Congress, in its typical style, has entrusted the task to Sonia Gandhi. The Bharatiya Janata Party, intriguingly, has zeroed in on Mr PC Alexander, Governor of Maharashtra, who has no known links with the Sangh parivar. Sonia Gandhi has decided on a second term for the incumbent President, Mr KR Narayanan.

Why the BJP backs Alexander

Under Article 55(2) of the Constitution, the President is elected by an electoral college comprising both Houses of Parliament and State legislatures. The Lok Sabha has 543 members and the Rajya Sabha 233. The 30 Legislative Assemblies, including the Union Territories, have 4,120 members between them. The value of the vote of an MLAs differ from state to state based on population. For purposes of calculating the value of votes of the MLAs the 1971 census is the cut off date. The value of the vote of an MLA varies from as low as seven for Sikkim to 208 for Uttar Pradesh. The total value of votes of the 4,120 MLAs adds up to 549,474.

The value of an MP's vote is arrived at by dividing the total value of the MLAs votes by the number of MPs of both Houses, i.e. 549,474 divided by 776, which works out to 706. The combined value of votes adds up to 10,98,882. For a candidate to win, he or she should be able to muster 549,441 votes which neither the NDA nor the Congress commands.

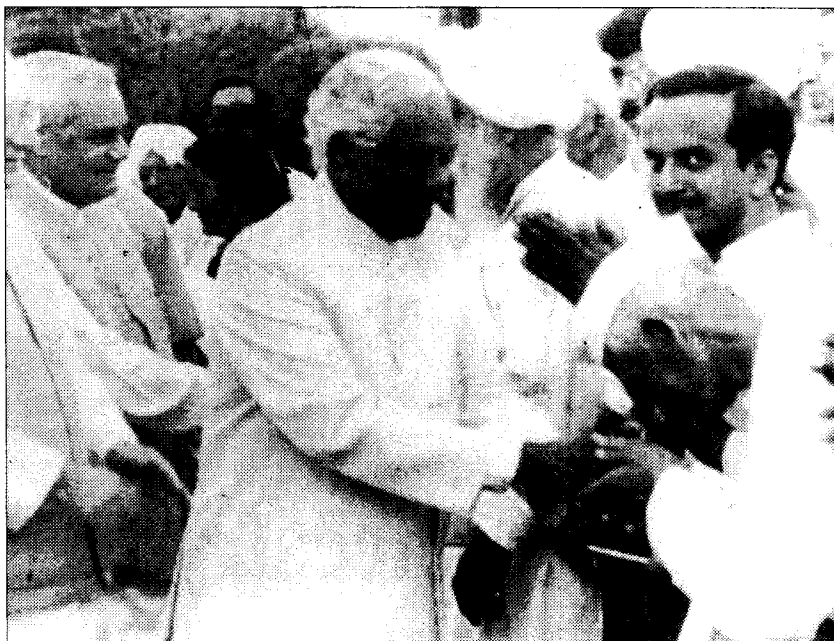
In a clever ploy, the BJP has floated the name of PC Alexander. For one, he is closely associated with three former Congress Prime Ministers — Indira Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi and PV Narasimha Rao. An able administrator with a distinguished record of service, he had been India's high commissioner to the United Kingdom and Governor of Tamil Nadu after the collapse of the short-lived government of Janaki Ramachandran, widow of MG Ramachandran. Though appointed as Governor of Maharashtra by the Congress government, he has been allowed to continue in the post even after completing his full term by the Vajpayee

The author, a veteran journalist who retired from The Statesman, is based in Chennai.

government because of the respect he commands cutting across party loyalties.

By projecting Alexander as the first Christian President of India, the BJP hopes to tell the world in general and the USA in particular that it is not a hard core Hindutva party and that the minority communities are safe under its rule. More importantly, Sonia Gandhi

documentary evidence and gave her a long rope to mobilise a majority and form a government. That she failed miserably is a different story. If the Congress sponsors him for a second term, an honour hitherto extended only to the first President, Rajendra Prasad, he would have the support of the Left and a few smaller parties, putting him on



immensely dislikes Alexander for the crucial role he played in the smooth succession of Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister following the assassination of Indira Gandhi. At that point of time, Sonia did not want Rajiv to take up the job. For some inexplicable reason, she and Alexander never got on well and the stand-off continues to this day. The BJP believes that a section of the Congress MPs and MLAs, at least from Kerala, would vote for Alexander, should the NDA name him as its candidate for President.

Narayanan raring to go

Sonia Gandhi has greater faith in the incumbent president than any other possible contenders with a winning chance. His loyalty to the Congress, which made him a Union Minister, Vice-President and the President, has in no way diminished. After the fall of the Vajpayee government in 1998, Narayanan accepted Sonia's claim of support of 272 members of the Lok Sabha without insisting on

a par with Alexander backed by the BJP. The Dalit MPs also would find it hard to vote against him. On his part, Narayanan has just undergone an ayurvedic rejuvenation course in Uthagamandalam and is fighting fit to enter the race.

The Telugu Desam Party in Andhra Pradesh, which has been extending support to the NDA government from outside, will be one of the crucial players in the presidential election. After the BJP and the Congress, the CPI-M, with 33 Lok Sabha and 13 Rajya Sabha members and a sizeable number of MLAs spread over West Bengal, Kerala and other states, commands the largest bloc of votes but it is not in the presidential race. Next comes the TDP with 29 Lok Sabha and 13 Rajya Sabha members and a two-thirds majority in the 294-member Andhra Pradesh Assembly.

The value of vote of each MLA is 148. The TDP is not a constituent of the NDA but has been extending issue-based support to the Vajpayee government. It

has no compulsion to support the BJP nominee.

Chandrababu Naidu, the TDP leader, has made its position clear to Vajpayee that the NDP should nominate the Vice-President, Mr Krishan Kant, for the post of President. NT Rama Rao, former Chief Minister of Andhra Pradesh and founder of the TDP, had his eyes set on the Delhi throne. Towards that end, he mooted the idea of forming a federation of regional parties to be called the Bharat Desam, with him as its president. In his reckoning, the days of a single party government at the Centre were over and as the largest regional party, the Telugu Desam was best placed to head such a coalition government.

Other probables

A pliable President in Rashtrapathi Bhavan is the first step in achieving the TDP's ultimate goal of capturing power at the Centre. Krishan Kant as Governor of Andhra Pradesh had proved his mettle by installing Naidu as Chief Minister when Rama Rao was still alive and enjoyed majority support in the Assembly, a la Ram Lal. Once in office, it did not take long for Naidu to engineer a majority. For this sleight-of-hand, Naidu lobbied with the NDA leaders and got him the nomination for Vice-President in 1997. If Vajpayee heeds Naidu's request and sponsors Krishan Kant for President, his victory is almost certain, which cannot be said of Alexander. Krishan Kant has already launched his campaign by invoking the blessings of Lord Venkateswara in Tirupati.

Apart from these three probables, there is no dearth of leaders wanting to enter the presidential sweepstake. Ram Jethmalani, former Union minister with no party backing, was the first to throw his hat in the ring, and Ramakrishna Hegde, the evergreen Karnataka politician is the latest to jump in. Jethmalani said in a TV programme: "My self-analysis suggests that I can serve better than others whose names have come up for the post of President." He had already met Vajpayee and the BJP president, Jana Krishnamurthy. If elected, Jethmalani promises to open a badminton court and a bar in Rashtrapathi Bhavan. "One who doesn't enjoy life does not let others enjoy it," says Jethmalani, adding, "Rashtrapathi Bhavan is not a gaushala." The list of mavericks aspiring to become President is long and a dark horse emerging at the last minute cannot be ruled out.

GNLF shaken by resignations

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

DARJEELING, June 1. - Political uncertainty has gripped the Hills once again as the GNLf for the first time since its formation is on the verge of a split.

One of its founding fathers, Mr DK Pradhan, MLA and chairman of the Darjeeling municipality, and 19 councilors today resigned from the primary membership of the party for its alleged failure to meet the aspirations of the people.

Mr Pradhan said they would start a new "democratic agitation for a separate state".

He hinted at forming a new party as the GNLf had lost sight of the goal for which thousands had laid their lives.

"Mr Subash Ghisingh should bless me when our movement starts," he said. Mr Pradhan said "our self-respect and conscience prompted us to resign. Many councilors and GNLf leaders are contacting us".

Mr Pradhan also abolished the post of chairman of the council and removed the vice-chairman, Mrs Manikala Lama. The chairman said he would soon form a new board but added that he may resign from the posts of chairman and MLA any day as he was not lusting for power.

He warned GNLf cadre against attacking his supporters, threatening retaliation if necessary.

In another development, hectic activities were noticed in the GNLf camp today. The Darjeeling Branch Committee called an emergency meeting.

Mr Deepak Gurung, branch committee president, said Mr Pradhan and his supporters must resign from the posts of chairman and ward councillor by 7 June, failing which disciplinary action would be taken.

"Mr Pradhan was holding the two most important posts and on receiving complaints from the people we started an inquiry and asked him to resign two months ago," Mr Gurung said.

0 2 JUN 2002

THE STATESMAN

Mulayam brake on Opp run for Raisina

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE ^{Sr. 10} ^{Mr. Naidu} ^{of} ^{the} ^{BJP} ^{is} ^{not} ⁱⁿ ^{the} ^{front} ^{of} ^{the} ^{BJP} ^{run} ^{for} ^{Raisina}

NEW DELHI, June 1. — Two days after the Prime Minister conveyed to the President his government's decision not to support a second term for him, Samajwadi Party leader Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav today brought to the surface cracks within the Opposition by distancing his party from the campaign in favour of Mr KR Narayanan, and lashing out at the Congress for "hastily announcing" the names of their nominees.

Mr Yadav announced that he would not favour Mr Narayanan in case of a contest, saying that he would prefer a 'consensus candidate' as India was passing through a critical phase. The NDA has already declared that it was not going to agree to a second term for Mr Narayanan. The move has provided the NDA room for manoeuvring amidst its discomfort over the continuing silence from the Rashtrapati Bhavan and var-

ious camps within the NDA canvassing for their respective candidates.

The CPI(M) chief, Mr HKS Surjeet, said the People's Front would meet on 6 June to work out a strategy. Incidentally, Mr Yadav made the announcement of not supporting Mr Narayanan after meeting Mr Surjeet and a telephonic conversation with Mr Vajpayee.

"Mr Vajpayee and the leader of the Opposition, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, should sit together and finalise the name for the top post and we will agree to that," he told reporters.

To a question, Mr Yadav said that he was ready to back Mr P C Alexander, candidate of a section of the BJP, provided the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition agreed. To a question on the possibility of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, he said that his party was not into declaring names. He described it as "wrong news". Mr Amar Singh had earlier supported the candidature of Mr Narayanan.

Mr Yadav, convener of the People's

Front, said there was need for the Front to decide its view on the Presidential poll. He frowned upon a suggestion that his party's stand would help the BJP-led NDA in pushing through its candidate. He said the Samajwadi Party was in the forefront in the fight against the BJP.

The PMO said that any meaningful forward-movement could happen only after Mr Vajpayee returns from his trip on Wednesday and much of it would depend on the attitude of the Opposition. "Since the NDA has authorised the Prime Minister to interact with other parties on the issue of the presidential election, he is likely to initiate some exercise in this regard," source said.

The Maharashtra lobby within the NDA, including Shiv Sena, continued to mop up support for Mr Alexander. Union minister Mr Pramod Mahajan spoke to TDP chief Mr N Chandrababu Naidu yesterday. A BJP leader close to Mr Mahajan said that the

minister was "successful" in convincing Mr Naidu to back Mr Alexander.

Another section in the BJP, however, believed that Vice-President Mr Krishna Kant would be the best candidate, considering his backing from the NDA. Calculations that Mr Kant's candidature would make it difficult for Mr Narayanan to enter the fray are also said to go in his favour.

Sensing the NDA "pressure for Mr Narayanan's exit", the Opposition also stated their own 'psychological warfare'. "Why is the NDA not announcing their candidate even after rejecting Mr Narayanan," asked CPI chief Mr AB Bardhan.

Meanwhile, BJP hardliners want somebody from the Sangh Parivar like Mr BS Shekhawat or UP Governor Mr VK Shastri. In absence of any commitment from the "secular allies", they are, however, losing hope. Another BJP aspirant, Mr LM Singhvi, yesterday met Mr Surjeet, but returned "empty-handed."

President voices riot anguish

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 29: President K.R. Narayanan, who opened the doors of Rashtrapati Bhavan to the riot victims and heard them out in stunned silence on Saturday, tonight voiced his anguish in a message that referred to the "devastation" in Gujarat as a "crisis of our state and society".

In his first official comments that came less than 24 hours before a trial of strength in the Lok Sabha on Gujarat, Narayanan also spoke of the continuing violence in the state, where the body count climbed today in fresh clashes.

"I have been deeply anguished and pained at the violent incidents and killings that have disturbed the peace and

communal harmony in Gujarat and elsewhere," the President said in the message whose tenor was similar to his unprecedented statement that followed the murder of Australian missionary Graham Staines and sons in Orissa.

Pointing out that communal violence has "devastated" Gujarat, Narayanan expressed concern over the "distressing situation" of the victims and the fact that violence continues to occur even after two months.

Three more people were killed, one of them in police firing, and 20 injured in the rioting in the Kalapur area as violence continued unabated in parts of Old Ahmedabad today.

In his message, the President added: "It is the duty of every Indian, political, social and reli-

gious leaders and the common man and woman to strive their best to restore peace so that the foundations of our state and tradition of tolerance are preserved and strengthened in this crisis of our state and society."

The President said many people have sent him representations about the "distressing situation of the victims".

He appealed to all "my fellow citizens to restore communal harmony and do everything to end the communal violence and harness all our resources to provide relief and rehabilitation to all the affected people."

Narayanan's statement and the action of meeting the riot victims stand out in sharp contrast with those of the representatives of the government.

Unlike the President, who

used words like "devastation" and "crisis" to describe the situation in Gujarat, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has referred to the carnage as a "deviation".

Besides, no senior minister has found time to meet the riot victims who are camping in the capital.

Filmmaker Mahesh Bhatt, associated with groups trying to rehabilitate Gujarat refugees, said he had sent word yesterday to home minister L.K. Advani, requesting a meeting. Till this evening, he has not received a reply. (See Page 8)

But when the victims had approached Rashtrapati Bhavan for an appointment with the President, his secretariat had arranged one the next evening.

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THE TELEGRAPH

PM, President show grace under pressure

By Mahendra Ved
Times News Network

NEW DELHI: Two months of communal strife in Gujarat and the reaction to it in and outside parliament and in international circles have caused a piquant situation involving President K.R. Narayanan and Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee.

There is palpable unease on Raisina Hill, which houses their offices. Adding to it is the fact that Mr Narayanan's term ends in July and an election is due this summer. But the two constitutional authorities have conducted themselves correctly in following norms that govern their respective spheres of responsibilities.

The issues involved concern the entire nation and transcend personalities. Hence, recall political observers, there is a clear absence of personal gripe that affected the 1980s relationships between Indira Gandhi and Sanjiva Reddy or between Giani Zail Singh and Rajiv Gandhi.

The delegations that have complained to him about inaction or inadequate actions of the governments at the Centre and in

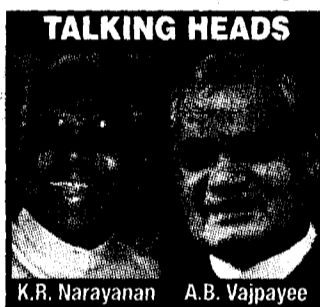
Gujarat have been told by Mr Narayanan that he would function strictly within the provisions of the Constitution and do his "bit". The President's office continues to receive petitions and memoranda. As is the practice, it has forwarded without comment over a hundred of them to the PMO so far.

Mr Vajpayee, on his part, has driven down to Rashtrapati Bhavan twice in response to

Mr Narayanan's public expression of anguish. The first was after his March 9 statement before a delegation of Muslim leaders that he was "ashamed" at the developments in Gujarat.

Mr Narayanan followed this up by announcing that he would not celebrate Holi, the festival of colours. Rather than join issue with him, Mr Vajpayee, too, said he would skip the Holi festivities. Vice-President Krishan Kant and leader of the opposition Sonia Gandhi followed suit.

On his part, Mr Vajpayee had also gone on a fast on January 30, 2000, Mahatma Gandhi's death anniversary, in the wake of incidents of violence against Christians in Orissa, Gujarat and other states.



K.R. Narayanan

A.B. Vajpayee

29 APR 2002

THE TIMES OF INDIA

THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 2002

25/4

A SALUTARY STEP

9 Parliament HD-10

THE RULING OF the Deputy Speaker and Presiding Officer of the Lok Sabha, P. M. Sayeed, on the contentious 'Gujarat' issue — whether it should be discussed under a rule that mandates a vote on the motion or under one that does not — is salutary in two respects. First, it has broken the deadlock that had paralysed the House for six days and enabled it to get on with its pending budgetary and legislative business. What paved the way initially was indeed the 'willingness' of the Government and the Opposition to leave the issue for a decision by Mr. Sayeed, whose word is binding on both sides. Secondly, his ruling — that it be debated on a motion that entailed voting — reflected a remarkable understanding of Gujarat-related concerns in the national perspective and, more importantly, an appreciation of the spirit of the Constitution especially while taking a view on the Centre's powers and responsibility to intervene in the governance of a State.

Clearly, the Deputy Speaker's decision, which in effect upholds the Opposition's contention, is a rebuff to the Vajpayee Government which had been putting forth all kinds of patently specious arguments against a censure motion just to avoid risking a Gujarat-specific vote in view of the open demand of the Telugu Desam Party and quite a few of the coalition partners for the removal of the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi. To portray whatever has happened in Gujarat under the Modi regime since the Godhra carnage — and still happening — as a mere 'law and order' problem that falls in the exclusive domain of the State Government is ridiculous. And to argue, on that basis, that the Centre can do very little about it is irresponsible. While exposing the untenability of such a line of argument by the Government, Mr. Sayeed has drawn support from the findings of high-powered statutory bodies such as the NHRC and the NCM and also of some independent initiatives to establish that 'Gujarat' was not a "simple law and order" issue related only to that

State. Of profound significance is his reference to Article 355, which speaks of the Centre's duty to "protect" every State against "internal disturbances and to ensure that the government of every State is carried on in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution".

Interestingly, the censure motion to be discussed (the one by Ramjilal Suman of the Samajwadi Party), while not being particularly stinging in its condemnation of the Government, has its focus on the minority communities, by seeking to get the House to voice its "grave concern" over the "failure" of the administration in ensuring their security "in various parts of the country", not just in Gujarat. This enlarged scope might be seen as somewhat of a relief to the Vajpayee regime which had been frantically trying to dissipate the focus with a view to making it easy for the anti-Modi NDA partners and friends to rally round the Government at the time of reckoning. Witness its challenge to the Opposition to bring in a 'no confidence' motion if it was serious about voting on the Gujarat issue. But the fact that the thrust is on the security concerns of the minorities in general gives a much wider space for the secular parties — those in the Opposition as well as those who are a part of the ruling coalition or support it — to place Mr. Modi's Gujarat in the larger perspective of the Sangh Parivar's brazenly aggressive hate campaign and the BJP-led Government's unconcealed support and patronage to it. In fact, the recent developments on the Ayodhya front, the BJP's Goa policy line signalling a return to hardcore Hindutva, Mr. Vajpayee's own remarks about Muslims at a rally in Panaji and a whole lot of such pointers impinging on the status and security of the minority community should find a place in any serious debate on the motion. What is ahead for the 'secular' partners in the NDA is indeed a crucial test of their avowed commitment to such basic values as pluralism and the rule of law.

25 APR 2002

THE HINDU

Privilege motion stares at PM

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 24

LOK SABHA Deputy Speaker PM Sayeed today told the Opposition that he was examining a notice of privilege motion against Atal Bihari Vajpayee for the reported remark on his ruling to hold a debate on Gujarat under Rule 184. The Prime Minister allegedly described the decision as "unfortunate" though rules state that the Government is bound to accept the Deputy Speaker's verdict without complaint.

Counselling patience to RJD leader Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, who moved the notice, Sayeed said the established convention is that after the information is verified, the House decides what is to be done. "Please leave it to me."

Raising the matter as soon as the House assembled today, Singh

'No SC judge probe'

LK ADVANI on Wednesday rejected the demand for a probe into the Gujarat violence by a sitting Supreme Court judge. Addressing the Rajya Sabha, the Home Minister made it clear that AB Vajpayee had already asked the Cabinet Secretary to monitor rehabilitation work in the State. He also ruled out a parallel inquiry into the riots. Advani informed that 824 people had been killed in the violence. **HTC, New Delhi**

raised a furore on Vajpayee's statement. He was supported by Congress and Left party members, who wanted the privilege notice to be admitted. Agitated Opposition members said the Chair's ruling could not be criticised. Sayeed asked the

members to resume their seats and allow the Question Hour. "I have seen the report and have also seen the denial. We have to proceed according to rules."

Singh said Vajpayee, being leader of the House, had lowered its dignity by questioning the ruling of the Chair. As soon as Zero Hour began, he was on his feet and sought to know the fate of the notice he submitted.

Hours after news agencies quoted the PM as saying the decision to allow the censure motion was "unfortunate", his office clarified that Vajpayee had described as unfortunate the wording of the Opposition motion on the Gujarat situation.

At a Rashtrapati Bhavan function, he had said law and order was a State subject and it was not the job of Parliament to discuss State issues. The Deputy Speaker's ruling should not be treated as precedent in future.

25 APR 2002

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

ADVANI REJECTS DEMAND FOR PROBE BY S.C. JUDGE

Krishan Kant admits censure motion on Gujarat

By Sandeep Dikshit

NEW DELHI, APRIL 24. The Union Home Minister, L. K. Advani, today rejected the demand for a probe by a sitting judge of the Supreme Court into the massacres in Gujarat, even as the Rajya Sabha Chairman, Krishan Kant, admitted a censure motion on the issue which will be discussed on May 2. The notice of the motion, admitted under Rule 170, entails voting at the end of the discussion in the Opposition-dominated House. The ruling by Mr. Kant restored normality in the Rajya Sabha which has not seen a single sitting of significance since re-assembling on April 15.

The notice of the motion, given by the Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, Manmohan Singh, and others, expressed deep anguish over the incidents in Gujarat and asked the Centre to effectively intervene and provide rehabilitation to those affected by the riots. The six weeks of violence had caused immense damage and loss of lives and the people of Gujarat should be protected by the Centre under Article 355 of the Constitution, it added.

Even though a substantive discussion on the Gujarat violence will take place early next month, Opposition members availed of the opportunity during Question Hour to closely question Mr. Advani on the situation in the State.

Interruptions apart, the Home Minister appeared to be charting a non-controversial course — not committing his Government to any concrete plan of action on Gujarat while professing its commitment to communal harmony — till the noted jurist, Fali S. Nariman, pointed out that Mr. Advani's explanation for rejecting a probe by a Supreme Court judge was based on fallacious reasoning. The Centre should abolish the National Commission of Minorities (NCM) if it continued to remain insensitive to its advice, observed Mr. Nariman. "And if the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) gave a similar opinion, will an apex court judge be promptly appointed," he wanted to know.

The Home Minister began by pointing out that "never in history has a parallel probe been ordered by the Central Government," but abruptly changed direction

when Mr. Nariman sought to correct this assessment. Mr. Advani's defence now was that a parallel probe by the Centre would set a wrong precedent. "Once a precedent is set, it can be applied to any State irrespective of the Government's political complexion," he stated, thus shutting the door on the demand for a Central probe.

The Home Minister later told the CPI (M)'s Nilotpal Basu that the Centre had continuously kept itself abreast with the Gujarat situation. Senior Ministers had visited the State and the Governor's report was being given due recognition. The NHRC's report was being considered from all aspects and "every single recommendation is being given the attention it deserves". The curtain on this improvised discussion was brought down after 40 minutes by Mr. Kant who felt that other aspects of the situation could be discussed on May 2.

Earlier, the Home Minister's assurance of follow-up action was challenged by the senior Congress leader, Arjun Singh, who berated the casual attitude to such a sensitive issue. "We don't expect a serious reply from him," he said.

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Parliament

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RS stalemate continues

10-11 24/4

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23. Proceedings in the Rajya Sabha continued to remain affected for the seventh consecutive day today, with the deadlock between the Opposition and the ruling coalition benches over the Gujarat issue persisting. The House was adjourned within minutes of its assembly today without transacting any business.

The Opposition, which had given a combined notice for discussion under Rule 170 last week entailing voting, stuck to its demand while the ruling coalition preferred a debate under a separate rule. "There is no justification to deny the Opposition a discussion since the

Lok Sabha has already admitted it under Rule 184 (which entails voting)", the CPI (M) Rajya Sabha leader, S. Ramachandran Pillai, said today.

The leader of the Opposition, Manmohan Singh, and others had given notice on April 16 for discussion under Rule 170. However, the Government suggested discussion under Rule 176, which is a short-duration discussion lasting two-and-a-half hours.

As per the rules, once the motion is admitted, the Leader of the House, the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, would have to decide the time for discussion. The Opposition is not willing to give up on its demand and has blamed the Government's attitude for the

continuing stalemate that has resulted in loss of time.

The combined notice reads that the House expresses its deep sense of anguish at the persistence of violence in Gujarat for over six weeks, leading to the loss of lives of a large number of persons, destruction of property worth crores of rupees and inability of the Union Government to intervene effectively under Article 355 of the Constitution to protect the state from the "internal disturbance" as the State Government of Gujarat has utterly failed to discharge its Constitutional responsibility of maintaining public order and enforcing law to protect the lives and properties of its citizens and to provide effective

relief and rehabilitation for the victims of communal violence.

Even as the Government has been resisting a discussion on the notice, a private member's resolution containing a similar text was admitted for discussion this Friday. The resolution was moved by Jibon Roy (CPI-M) as part of a strategy and was admitted under draw of lot which took place on Monday.

However, as the CPI (M)'s Nilotpal Basu put it, the private member's resolution is not a substantive motion and therefore could not be substituted for the motion that the Opposition leaders had filed. Yet, the argument is that once a resolution is admitted in one form, it should not be resisted in another form.

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FOR LINDA

TRINAMOOL WITH GOVT.; WHAT WILL TDP DO?

HPD-1
29/4

Sayeed admits censure motion, voting on April 30

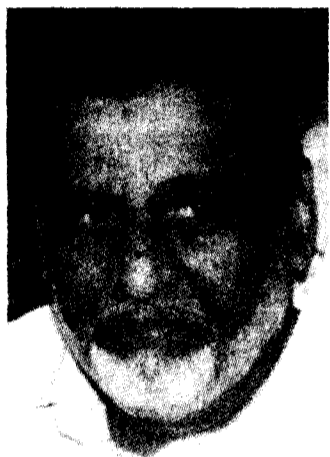
By Neena Vyas and Javed M. Ansari

NEW DELHI, APRIL 23. The Lok Sabha will discuss the Gujarat situation on April 30 under Rule 184 which entails a mandatory vote through a resolution which expresses "grave concern" over the "failure of the administration in ensuring the security of the minority community" and calls upon the Government to initiate "effective steps" to restore their confidence and protect them.

The resolution will be moved by the Samajwadi Party MP, Ramjilal Suman, whose notice for the discussion was one among 86 received by the Chair.

As soon as the House assembled this morning, the Deputy Speaker and presiding officer of the Lok Sabha, P.M.Sayeed, gave his ruling in favour of a discussion under a substantive motion, on which the Opposition parties had been insisting. Later, the Business Advisory Committee of the Lok Sabha met and fixed April 30 as the date for the discussion, after urgent financial business, including the Finance Bill, is dealt with on April 26 and 29.

Thus ended the political impasse in the Lok Sabha, although in the Rajya Sabha, which was again adjourned today, the problem has not yet been resolved. The decision brought cheer to the Opposi-



tion benches but the treasury benches too were not unhappy. Since the BAC had later decided that the Finance Bill would be passed a day earlier, the Government was comfortable that it would be as good as a vote of confidence. And even on Gujarat, the Bharatiya Janata Party is quite sure that it will be able to get past the majority mark in the vote that will follow the discussion.

The Trinamool Congress MP, Nitish Sengupta, said his party would vote with the Government, which is also sure of the Bahujan Samaj Party's 13 votes. The Telugu Desam Party, is keeping its cards close to its chest.

"We will discuss (the issue) in the party and decide (on the vote)," the party leader, K. Yer-

ran Naidu, said, even as the Government indicated that it had "counted the TDP out."

'Not a State problem'

Mr. Sayeed justified his ruling by dismissing the objections raised by the treasury benches. What had happened in Gujarat and was still happening — hundreds killed, thousands in relief camps and crores of rupees worth property damaged — could not be seen as a simple law and order problem related only to the State. He reminded all the MPs that the Centre had a responsibility under Article 355 of the Constitution "to protect the State against internal disturbance and ensure that the government of every State is carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution."

The gravity of the situation was also "self-evident" from the fact that the Army had been called out to help the civil authority. Besides, the National Human Rights Commission, the Minorities Commission and several independent women activists had commented on the grave situation in Gujarat which could not be seen as an ordinary law and order matter.

Implied in his ruling was that in fact the Centre cannot get away from its responsibility for what had happened in Gujarat, and that Parliament is the correct forum to discuss this. This was in response to one of the

several arguments extended by the treasury benches that the Opposition was trying to discuss a "State subject" and "it would set a bad precedent" if discussed under a substantive motion. Mr. Sayeed pointed out that in 1997 an adjournment motion relating to the events in Bihar had been converted into a discussion under Rule 184 in the Lok Sabha. (Although he did not spell this out, it was the BJP which had moved the motion). The other objection by the treasury benches was that Gujarat had already been discussed in this session, but Mr. Sayeed brushed this aside saying: "it is not the position of the Government that the matter should not be discussed again" and "serious incidents of violence" had taken place "subsequent to the earlier discussion."

Political parties had failed to evolve a consensus, six working days of the House had been wasted and it was his duty to take a decision and give a ruling, Mr. Sayeed said.

Even before the House assembled, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, and the Congress whip, Priyaranjan Das Munshi, were asking their MPs not to treat the Chair's ruling as a political victory or defeat but to accept it with all respect. And that is what happened.

The impasse was over and the Lok Sabha went on with its business.

Parliament -

14 APR 2002

THE HINDU

Parliament impasse on Gujarat may end today

Both parties will honour ruling: deputy speaker

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: As parliament remained paralysed for the sixth day on Monday with the opposition insisting on a debate on Gujarat under Rule 184, which entails a vote, and the government stonewalling the demand, Lok Sabha deputy speaker P.M. Sayeed announced that he would give his ruling on the matter on Tuesday.

Mr Sayeed announced this after the two sides told him that they would not back out of their positions but would leave it to him to take a final decision. It now appears that the stalemate is set to end on Tuesday.

"As I was not able to evolve a consensus after meetings with leaders of the various political parties, I have decided I will give a ruling tomorrow," he told presspersons. Mr Sayeed said he would go by the rule book. No formal meeting was convened on Monday, but Mr Sayeed held a series of meetings with leaders of all major political parties, including parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan, Congress chief whip Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi and Trinamul Congress leader Mamata Banerjee. He also had a long discussion with Congress president Sonia Gandhi, with whom CPM leader Somnath Chatterjee later conferred on the opposition strategy.

Mr Sayeed did not indicate whether he would allow a discussion under Rule 184 or Rule 193, which does not entail a vote and which the government prefers. However, Mr Sayeed was confident that whatever his ruling, it would be accepted by both sides. "It is presumed that all parties will honour the speaker's ruling," he added. The indications are that if the government and the opposition agree to a sanitised motion which is not too harsh on the Centre, Mr Sayeed will admit it under Rule 184.

India decries foreign 'interference'

NEW DELHI: Taking exception to the criticism by foreign leaders and visiting dignitaries of the Gujarat situation, India on Monday said it "does not appreciate interference" in its internal affairs by such people in order to "pander to their domestic lobbies". This follows an interview to an Indian daily by Finland's visiting foreign minister stating that the happenings in Gujarat were a matter of great concern and that the pictures of carnage were very disturbing. India has already lodged an official protest with Finland. (PTI)

Violence continues in Ahmedabad, 5 killed

Times News Network

AHMEDABAD: Five more persons were killed as sporadic incidents continued here on Monday, taking the number of people killed in the last two days to 26.

At about 6.15 p.m. on Monday, two persons, including a woman, died when the police fired to disperse a mob in Shahpur. In the afternoon, a 35-year-old man from Vohra Ni Chaali was stoned to death by a riotous mob in the Prem Darwaja area of Madhavpura and two others were stabbed to death in Shahpur and Jamalpur, where violence has escalated since Sunday.

A boy returning from college was stabbed near the IP Mission school in Khamasa in the afternoon.

A number of shanties behind a top hotel in the city's Khanpur area were set on fire as were some hutments in the Shahpur area. Shops on Relief Road and Gandhi Road downed their shutters as curfew was imposed in the Shahpur area in the afternoon.

Monday's violence followed a bloody Sunday when mobs clashed in the suburban areas of the city like Bapunagar, Gomtipur and Rakhial. At least 60 persons have been arrested following the Gomtipur riots.

Meanwhile, miscreants tried to disrupt the peace in Chhota

Udepur town in Vadodara district on Sunday night by setting on fire four kiosks. According to police officials, a mob of tribesmen had come to the town from the surrounding villages in two vehicles. The rioters tried to enter the town in an attempt to target people from the minority community. The town has the only relief camp in rural Vadodara district. Official sources said that over 2,000 riot-affected persons were staying in the relief camp. The police had to use force to quell the mob.

Measles epidemic hits relief camps

By Kalpana Jain
Times News Network

NEW DELHI: Contrary to the claims of the Union health ministry, a measles epidemic is raging in some of Gujarat's riot relief camps. Not only are effective antibiotics unavailable, but diseases are spreading fast as people have been forced to live in cramped and unhygienic conditions.

In an SOS sent out through activists and NGOs, doctors in the state have urged citizens across the country to help by providing antibiotics. Doctors at a Godhra camp housing about 1,500 people told this newspaper that at least 60 children had contracted measles and the only source of most of the medicines was NGOs and some donors.

Last Thursday, Union health minister C.P. Thakur and Gujarat health minister Ashok Bhatt had, amidst much fanfare, sent a truck packed with anti-

otics and other medicines to the riot-torn state. The ministers had claimed that medicines worth Rs 8.26 crore had been sent and the state machinery had rapidly managed to control the possibility of a measles epidemic.

Mr Thakur had also claimed that due to the Modi government's efforts, the number of measles cases in five camps had been limited to only eight.

However, a doctor working in a Godhra camp said that on a single day, there were 25 cases of children with measles. Hinting at the possibility of the numbers increasing rapidly, he said although the infected children had been isolated, the chances of an epidemic remained high. "In any case, smaller children cannot be taken away from their mothers," he said.

Despite repeated telephone calls on Monday, Mr Thakur was not available for comment.

Dy Speaker's ruling today to end House row

HT Correspondent
New Delhi, April 22

29/4

THE WEEKLONG logjam in Parliament over the communal violence in Gujarat looked likely to end today, when Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker PM Sayeed said he would give his ruling tomorrow on whether or not a discussion under a censure motion could be allowed.

"Since I was not able to evolve a consensus after meetings with leaders of political parties, I have decided to give a ruling tomorrow," he said after both Houses adjourned for the sixth day without transacting business.

But Sayeed did not indicate if he would allow a discussion under Rule 184, as sought by the Opposition. Rule 184 entails voting, while Rule 193 allows a short discussion without any vote.

Parliament has been stuck in a logjam ever since it resumed the second phase of the Budget session on April 15, with the Government opposed to a discussion under a censure motion.

The Government has been opposed to a discussion on the ground that the Gujarat violence was a State subject and has already been discussed during the first phase of the session. It has also dared the Opposition to table a no-confidence motion.

Meanwhile, Government sources expressed confidence today that the NDA coalition would win in a trial of strength under Rule 184 even if the TDP and the Trinamool voted against it.

"The Government is prepared for a discussion under any rule as we have sufficient cushion to win

Gujarat toll mounts

AT LEAST five people were killed in police firing and 15 others injured in the Shahpur and Behrampura areas in fresh violence in Ahmedabad on Monday afternoon, placing Shahpur under an indefinite curfew. With the five deaths, and four more people succumbing to injuries, the toll since Sunday night went up to 26.

HTC, Ahmedabad

the motion even without the TDP, the AIADMK and the Trinamool's support," an NDA source said.

The 28-member TDP and the nine-member Trinamool are supporting the Government from outside. Even without the support of these parties, the NDA coalition has the backing of 274 MPs, which is two more than 272, the halfway mark in a House of 542.

The AIADMK, with its 11 members in the Lok Sabha, had initially made pro-BJP noises on the Gujarat issue till Jayalalithaa joined the Opposition chorus demanding Narendra Modi's resignation as Gujarat CM and opposed holding early Assembly polls in the State.

Recalling the Government's "resounding" victory while adopting the Poto legislation in the Lok Sabha, the NDA sources asserted that the 13-member BSP, the BJP's new ally in Uttar Pradesh, would play a crucial role in bailing out the Government in the House even in case of a discussion under Rule 184.

✓
from the front page

PM tells Opposition: Seek a trust vote

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the tradition of parliamentary democracy called for all the sides in the House to work out a compromise. Sayeed is likely to convene another meeting on Monday and if that also fails he may decide the matter himself.

As soon as the meeting began, Somnath Chatterjee took a dig at the Prime Minister for having "gone missing" from Parliament all these days. Sonia also thanked Vajpayee for having attended the meeting.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Pramod Mahajan argued that a censure motion was not possible under the rules of business since Gujarat had already been discussed in the House twice. He also said that the Centre had nothing to do with the Gujarat issue. Mahajan was taking refuge under the conditions laid down for the admissibility of a motion

under Rule 184. According to one of them, a motion under the rule could not be permitted if it sought to "revive discussion of a matter which has been discussed in the same session." Another disabling proviso is that the subject "shall not relate to a matter which is primarily not the concern of the Government of India."

Sources said Sayeed is aware of a precedent set by late Speaker G M C Balayogi who had overturned his own ruling saying that the will of the House is supreme and rules can be waived if it wants it. The TDP and other allies did not insist on a motion under any particular rule but said that they wanted a discussion. Interestingly, the AIADMK representative K Malaisamy also demanded a debate under Rule 184.

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INDIAN EXPRESS

Peace meet ends in continued war

FROM OUR SPECIAL
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, April 19: The all-party meeting convened by Lok Sabha deputy Speaker P.M. Sayeed today to end the standoff between the government and the Opposition over Gujarat failed to throw up a solution even as Parliament was adjourned for the fifth consecutive day.

All that emerged at the meeting, attended by Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Congress president Sonia Gandhi, was an unrelenting Prime Minister daring the Opposition to bring a no-confidence motion.

Sonia stuck to the demand for a discussion under Rule 184, which requires voting, as opposed to a debate under Rule 193, which the government is suggesting and which does not entail a division.

With neither side budging, Sayeed has thrown the ball back into the court of the political leadership to resolve the tangle.

While all parties maintained that it was the prerogative of the presiding officer to decide under which rule the discussion would take place, Sayeed said after the all-party meeting: "Floor management is the responsibility of the respective party leaders and after consultations they should arrive at a solution in the next two-three days."

Sayeed said he was deeply concerned over the loss of days

of the session. He said only 63 hours were left for completing financial and other legislative business, underlining the need for an immediate resolution of the stalemate. The budget session concludes on May 17.

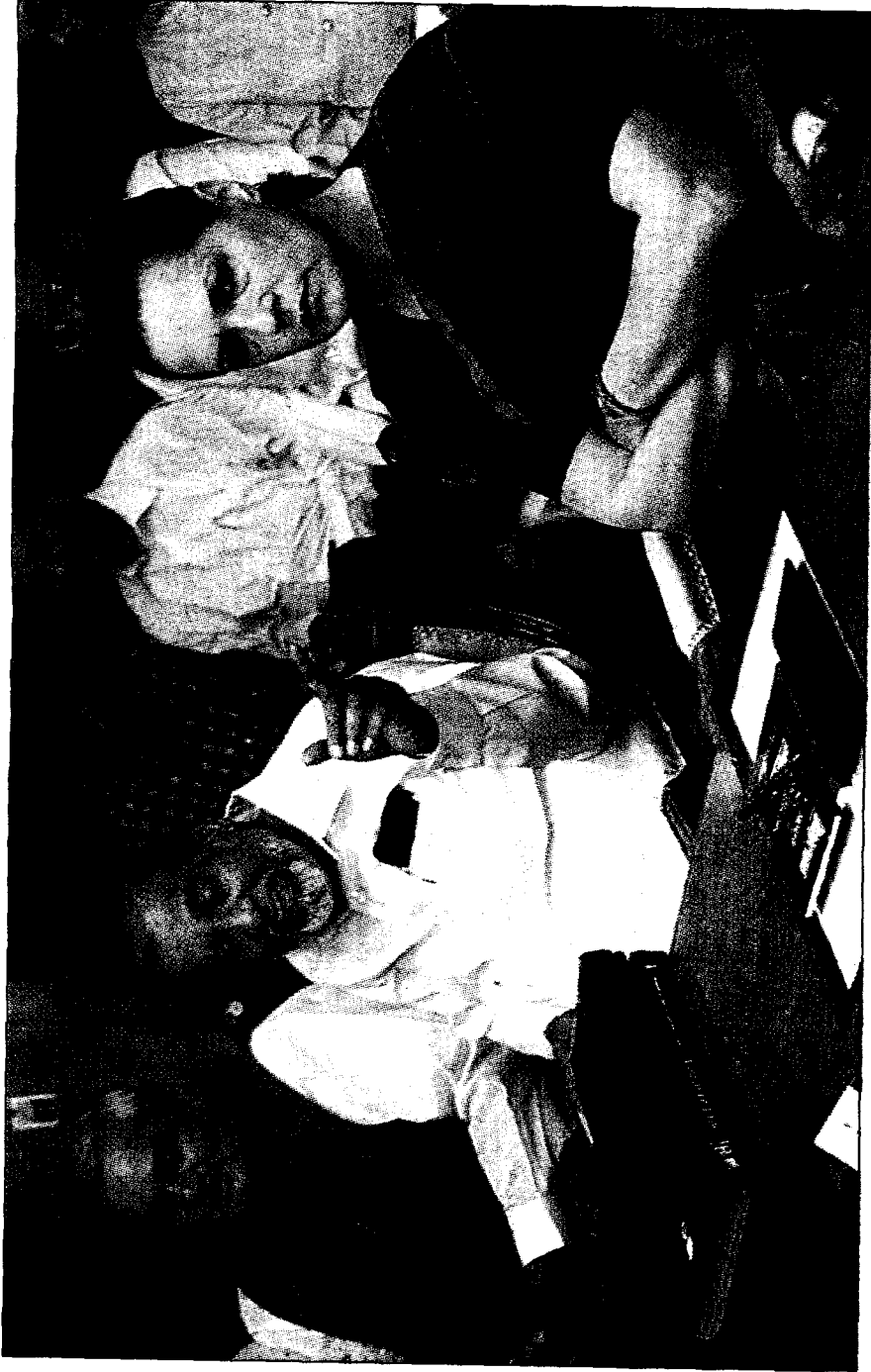
He said: "Though the Chair can take the decision on its own, it has always been the tradition of the House to reach a unanimous solution."

BJP chief whip V.K. Malhotra, who attended the meeting, quoted Sayeed as saying that unfortunate as the Gujarat situation was — and he was willing to hear what the Opposition had to say on this — the discussion could take place under Rule 193 without detracting from the importance of the issue.

Parliamentary affairs minister Pramod Mahajan said there were ways for the Opposition to test if the ruling alliance has a majority. Besides a no-confidence motion, as suggested by the Prime Minister, the Opposition could move a cut motion to defeat the Finance Bill, he said.

Despite the brave front, the government has a lurking doubt if the Telugu Desam will side with it in a division.

Sources said Desam leader N. Chandrababu Naidu has not responded to soundings by government strategists on a written commitment of support. Persistent Desam demands for chief minister Narendra Modi's resignation and Naidu's silence on whether the discussion should



Prime Minister AB Vajpayee, deputy Speaker PM Sayeed and leader of the Opposition Sonia Gandhi at the all-party meet. (AFP)

be held under Rule 184 or 193 have made the floor managers even more nervous.

This is the reason the treasury benches are shying away from a division, though a defeat

would only be moral and not trigger collapse of the government.

The other is the fear that a debate under Rule 184 will be long, giving the Opposition the opportunity to rake up a lot of mud. A

debate under Rule 193 is restricted to two-and-a-half hours.

Government managers are working on a strategy to change the wording of the Opposition notice, which says the Centre fai-

led in its duty towards Gujarat. BJP sources said if the notice is reframed, it may be admitted.

Another suggestion is for the government to table a confidence motion and prove majority.

Minor tussle, major fallout

A government should be prepared to face the test any time

A MINOR dispute between the ruling coalition and the Opposition, about the rule under which Gujarat should be discussed, has stalled all Parliamentary proceedings for the fifth consecutive day on Friday. It is unfortunate that an all-party meeting called by Deputy Speaker P.M. Sayeed has also failed to end the deadlock. Though Sayeed is expected to give his ruling on Monday, it is a matter that should have been resolved between the Treasury and Opposition benches, as he had himself pointed out after the meeting. National Democratic Alliance (NDA) leaders, including Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, have expressed their readiness to debate Gujarat without a vote while the Opposition insists on a vote at least in the Lower House. The government's argument is that Gujarat does not warrant a vote and if the Opposition is keen on a trial of strength, it should move a no-confidence motion. The government forgets that it is the prerogative of the Opposition to move an adjournment motion and seek a vote on it as provided for in the rule-book. If a vote under rule 184 is not admissible, as a spokesman of the government argues, there are legitimate ways in which the move can be defeated. But, in the present situation, the unmistakable impression conveyed is that the government is shying away from a trial of strength.

Needless to say, a party or a coalition's legitimacy to rule is linked directly to the majority support it enjoys in the Lok Sabha. The moment it loses that support, it forgoes its right to hold the

reins of administration. It is nobody's contention that the NDA government has crossed the line of legitimacy. The recent voting on the Prevention of Terrorism Bill showed that the government is in an unassailable position in the Lok Sabha. Nonetheless, the incidents in Gujarat and the shifting stands of some of the parties supporting the government, both within and outside the NDA, have cast some doubts about the kind of support the Vajpayee government enjoys in Parliament. There can be no escaping that it is this uncertainty that has compelled the government to dodge a debate under rule 184. It is common knowledge that there are political parties which will not support a no-confidence motion against the government but will gladly vote for a censure motion on Gujarat. It is because of this realisation that the treasury benches favour a no-confidence motion to an adjournment motion.

As a matter of parliamentary principle, a ruling party or alliance should always be prepared to face any kind of vote in the House. Although it has been argued that in the era of coalitions this may be a tall order to follow, any compromise on this broad principle would not be right. The BJP cannot escape its responsibility to keep the NDA in order by evolving a mechanism to address the concerns of individual parties without rocking the government. Blaming the Opposition for its own inadequacies will not serve any purpose. Having said this, it also needs to be pointed out that an alert Opposition can make its point without resorting to filibustering.

28 APR 2002

INDIAN EXPRESS

All-party meet today

By Javed M. Ansari and
K.V. Prasad

NEW DELHI, APRIL 18. With no signs of an early end to the four-day impasse in Parliament, hopes are now pinned on the all-party meeting summoned by the Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, P. M. Sayeed, tomorrow.

Significantly, the meeting will be attended, among others, by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi.

There was a glimmer of hope this morning following a suggestion from the Congress to consider rewording the resolution to facilitate a discussion on Gujarat. Pranab Mukherjee made the suggestion at a meeting convened by the Rajya Sabha Chairman, Krishan Kant, and a similar suggestion was made by Shivraj Patil at the meeting of the Opposition leaders, convened by Somnath Chatterjee of the CPI (M). But the proposal was shot down by both the Government and the Opposition

parties.

By the end of the day, both sides were back to square one. The Opposition reiterated its demand for a discussion under Rule 184 in the Lok Sabha. "There is absolutely no question of diluting our demand and we are prepared to face the Government's intransigence" Mr. Chatterjee said.

The CPI(M) leader also spoke to Ms. Gandhi earlier in the day to impress upon her not to dilute the stand taken by the rest of the Opposition. Senior Congress leaders were, however, quick to point out that there was no question of the Congress backing out at this stage. "We stick by our demand for a discussion under Rule 184, there is no difference of opinion among the Opposition parties on this," the Congress spokesman, Jaipal Reddy, said.

The Opposition put the onus on the Government for the current deadlock and pointed out that the Prime Minister had not taken any initiative to resolve the deadlock and that he was

continuing with the aggressive posture he adopted at the BJP's Goa national executive.

The Congress also targeted Mr. Vajpayee and referred to his absence from the Lok Sabha on all the four days. "It is deplorable that he has chosen not to face Parliament or initiate steps to help break the stalemate" Mr. Reddy said. The impasse was continuing because the Government did not enjoy the support of the majority on the Gujarat issue, and that was why they were not prepared to discuss it under any rule, he alleged.

The Government too stuck to its guns, and opposed a discussion on Gujarat either through an adjournment motion or under Rule 184. It was, however, prepared for a discussion under Rule 193 which does not entail a vote.

Meanwhile, the All-India Anna DMK Parliamentary Party adopted a resolution demanding the immediate resignation of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi.

RULE 184: GOVT., OPPOSITION STICK TO STAND

Parliament time running out as impasse continues

By Javed M. Ansari

NEW DELHI, APRIL 17. The impasse in Parliament over the Gujarat issue continued for the third consecutive day today, with both the Houses being adjourned without transacting any official business.

The Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha, P.M. Sayeed, has called a meeting tomorrow of the floor leaders of the parties in the House in a bid to hammer out a solution. According to sources, unless an early end to the impasse is worked out, there will be very little time left to transact all the legislative and financial business scheduled for the remainder of the session.

During the current reconvened budget session, the time available to transact business is 120 hours. But Parliament has been unable to transact any business in the last three days and, with about 52 hours gone for question hour and zero hour, the Lok Sabha has only 67 hours left for official business, including for the passage of the Financial Bill and the railway budget.

The Government is not willing for a discussion on Gujarat under a substantive motion which, if adopted, would record Parliament's disapproval of the handling of the Gujarat situation by the Narendra Modi Government. The Opposition

parties, on the other hand, are unrelenting in their demand for a discussion under Rule 184 on the Government's handling of the communal violence.

The Opposition has made it clear that the bottom line for any breakthrough will be a discussion under Rule 184 so that the issue could be debated by the House. "We have already shown the desired flexibility and have scaled down our demand from an adjournment motion to a discussion under Rule 184. The Government must agree to a discussion," said the Deputy Leader of the Congress in the Lok Sabha, Shivraj Patil.

The main reason behind the Government's insistence on

avoiding a discussion and a vote on Gujarat is to avoid the embarrassment of some of its allies, principally the TDP, voting against it. By stalling a discussion, the Government also appeared to be buying time to work on its allies and bring them round. The BJP's managers are reportedly in touch with the JD(U), the Lok Janshakti and some of the disgruntled elements in the Samata Party.

The Government, however, appears to have made little headway as far as the TDP is concerned.

The leader of the TDP parliamentary party in the Lok Sabha, Yerran Naidu, who has been trying in vain for the past three days to raise the Gujarat issue and the question of resignation of Narendra Modi, has written to the Lok Sabha Secretariat demanding a discussion on both the issues.

As soon as the Lok Sabha assembled this morning, agitated Opposition MPs were on their feet demanding a discussion on Gujarat.

They were supported by the TDP MPs who also stood up to support the demand. Mr. Naidu repeatedly tried to draw the attention of the Deputy Speaker, but his voice was drowned in the ensuing bedlam. Several BJP MPs tried to divert attention by raising slogans against Sonia Gandhi. Minutes later, members belonging to the Samajwadi Party raised slogans against the Government, and the Left and the Congress MPs lent vocal support. Sensing the mood of the House, the Deputy Speaker adjourned the House for the day.

In the Rajya Sabha, trouble erupted soon after the former Gujarat Chief Minister, Keshubhai Patel, took the oath. The Opposition MPs raised a din, taunting him about the developments in his home State.

BJP gets tough with allies

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 17. The Bharatiya Janata Party has sent across a tough message to its allies — fall in line or face the consequences.

At a meeting of the parliamentary floor managers of the National Democratic Alliance parties here today, the BJP let it be known that it would not accept a discussion in Gujarat under a substantive motion. Indirectly, it asked its allies to fall in line.

The Telugu Desam Party, which is not in the NDA, naturally did not attend, nor did the leaders of the Trinamool Congress. The TDP leader, Yerran Naidu, later indicated that his party had already taken the stand that it would accept a discussion under "any rule." He said his party was happy to note that no decision had been taken yet on dissolution of the Gujarat Assembly — it was against early elections in the midst of a communally-polarised situation — and insisted that there was no dilution in the TDP demand for the removal of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi.

It was decided that the NDA floor managers would also meet tomorrow before Parliament met to draw up the day's strategy to counter the Opposition onslaught on Gujarat.

Reports suggest that the BJP's parliamentary managers have been individually contacting the

leaders of the NDA allies, especially Mamata Banerjee of the Trinamool Congress, Ram Vilas Paswan (Lok Janshakti Party) and Sharad Yadav (JD-U). Dark hints have been thrown that in the next major Cabinet reshuffle, which could take place after the budget session, Ministers may have to part with their portfolios. After all, the senior BJP leaders, Keshubhai Patel, (removed as Chief Minister, Gujarat) and Rajnath Singh (former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister) may have to be accommodated in the Union Cabinet, the BJP leaders noted. The message conveyed was that if the allies failed to fall in line, they could be shifted to unimportant Ministries.

The BJP leaders said that already their "action" had yielded results — the Samata Party had made a 'U-turn' even before the BJP's Goa executive committee meeting. The Samata spokesperson's demand for the removal of Mr. Modi was virtually withdrawn and Ms. Banerjee had also issued a statement that in a vote her party would vote with the Government (though it would continue to demand Mr. Modi's ouster). The Lok Janshakti Party and the JD (U) are also expected to fall in line. The leaders also pointed out that a State Government's conduct could not be a matter of discussion and put to vote in Parliament. It would set a wrong precedent. The BJP could also insist on motions against the Rajasthan or the West Bengal Government.

'Oust Modi' campaign disrupts Parliament

NEW DELHI, APRIL 16. The "Oust Modi" campaign rocked Parliament for the second day today as NDA partners, including the Telugu Desam Party (TDP), and the Opposition stepped up pressure for the Gujarat Chief Minister's removal but the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, asked coalition MPs to stay together to defeat the "challenge".

Late in the evening, leaders of major non-Congress Opposition parties decided to table a substantive motion for discussion on the issue, which will require voting that may result in a trial of strength for the Government. Asked if they were seeking Congress support, the CPI(M) leader, Somnath Chatterjee, said it was an open appeal.

Adding to the Government's discomfiture, the TDP today wrote to the Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker, P.M. Sayeed, requesting for an immediate discussion under any rule on the Gujarat issue.

Facing a logjam in Parliament, Mr. Vajpayee asked NDA MPs to be united to defeat the Opposition challenge, accusing it of disruption of proceedings in Parliament. Addressing the BJP Parliamentary Party meeting here, he said the Opposition parties were "not interested in a test of strength, but in only creating confusion and vitiating the atmosphere", the party spokesman, V.K. Malhotra, told presspersons. The Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, said everyone should be satisfied at the speed with which the riots had been controlled in Gujarat. Besides holding peaceful panchayat polls and higher secondary exams, about 6,000

Haj pilgrims also returned home safely.

The meeting welcomed and endorsed the BJP national executive's resolution on Gujarat, including the continuance of Mr. Modi, Mr. Malhotra said. It opposed any adjournment motion on the Gujarat issue or any move to discuss it under Rule 184, which provided for voting, saying law and order was a "State subject".

The Parliamentary Party passed a resolution demanding a public apology from the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, for her statement that Mr. Vajpayee had lost his mental balance. It also asked the Congress to take action against the Jam-

mu and Kashmir Pradesh Congress Committee president, Ghulam Nabi Azad, for demanding Mr. Vajpayee's arrest under POTA. The party president, Jana Krishnamurthy, also attended the meeting.

Opposition members forced adjournment of both the Houses of Parliament for the second day in succession today without transacting business. While the Rajya Sabha was adjourned for the day amidst uproarious scenes, the situation was not so different in the Lok Sabha.

The lower House could not take up the question hour due to slogan-shouting by both the Opposition and ruling party members and had to be adjourned for some time. Members of the Samajwadi Party squatted in the well of the House demanding an adjournment motion on the issue.

TDP members joined the Opposition in both Houses demanding the ouster of Mr. Modi.

The TDP Parliamentary Party leader, K. Yerran Naidu, attempted to raise the issue in the lower House but could not do so due to the din.

The Opposition and the ruling party are locked over the type of discussions Parliament should take up on the Gujarat violence. While the Opposition is pressing for an adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha under Rule 184, the Government is keen on a discussion under Rule 193, which does not need voting.

The Opposition is keen on an opportunity to witness the secular allies of the NDA voting against the Government on the Gujarat issue. — PTI, UNI

NCM postpones Gujarat visit

NEW DELHI, APRIL 16. The scheduled visit of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) to the riot-hit areas of Gujarat from tomorrow has been postponed in view of the curfew imposed in some parts of the State.

"The NCM, which was to pay a second visit to the State, wants to meet members of both Hindu and Muslim communities. In view of the curfew imposed in some parts, we were informed that the common people do not feel safe leaving their places. Therefore, we have postponed our visit," the NCM vice-chairman, Tarlochan Singh, said. — PTI

New RS members take oath

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 15. The BJP president, Jana Krishnamurthi, the Congress leader, K. Natwar Singh, the Rashtriya Janata Dal chief, Laloo Prasad Yadav, the Tamil Maanila Congress president, G.K. Vasan, and industrialists, R.N. Dhoot and Vijaya Mallaya, today took oath as members of the Rajya Sabha.

Among the Congress members who took oath in the Council of States were Moti Lal Vora, T. Subbarami Reddy, Karnendu Bhattacharjee, D.N. Sharma, Prema Cariappa, Janardhan

Poojary, M.V. Rajashekharan, Maulana Obaidullah Khan Azmi, Prabha Thakur and Abrar Ahmed. In his last term, Mr. Azmi had represented the Janata Dal (Secular).

The BJP members included the party general secretary, Maya Singh, Jayantilal Barot, Ajay Maroo and Shatrughan Sinha.

The Samata Party's Vashist Narain Singh, the DMK's R. Shunmugasundaram, the CPI (M)'s Khabiruddin Ahmed and Prasanta Chatterjee and the Trinamool Congress' Dinesh Trivedi were the others who took

oath. Thirteen members had taken oath as members last month.

A lighter moment

PTI reports:

Rajya Sabha members today burst into laughter when the re-elected MP and film star, Shatrughan Sinha, while taking oath, described himself as "Shatrughan Prasad Yadav" pointing at the Rashtriya Janata Dal chief, Laloo Prasad Yadav.

Mr. Yadav, seated in the front row, smiled and waved at Mr. Sinha appreciating his gesture. The film star then pro-

nounced his name correctly and said he, as "Shatrughan Prasad Sinha", was taking oath as a member of the House, evoking laughter from the members.

Mr. Yadav had taken oath as a Rajya Sabha member a short while ago. Before the House assembled after a three-week recess, several members were seen greeting and congratulating Mr. Yadav on his election to the Rajya Sabha.

While the Congress member, Suresh Pachauri, took oath in Sanskrit, the BJP member, S.S. Ahluwalia, in a lighter vein, blessed him saying "aayush-maan bhava (live long)".

TDP ADDS TO GOVT.'S EMBARRASSMENT

Gujarat issue rocks both Houses of Parliament

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, APRIL 15. The Gujarat issue rocked Parliament today, with both the Houses adjourning for the day without transacting any official business. Earlier, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha resumed the Budget session after a three-week recess.

Adding to the Vajpayee Government's embarrassment was the sight of its allies, mainly the Telugu Desam Party, joining the Opposition demand for an immediate discussion on the Gujarat situation and the removal of the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi.

The issue is likely to dominate the proceedings in the next few of days with the Opposition having decided to continue with its demand for an adjournment motion in the Lok Sabha, and a similar motion under rule 170 in the Rajya Sabha, which entails a vote after the discussions. At the end of the day, the Opposition parties made it clear that unless the Government allowed a proper discussion on the Gujarat violence, it could not expect their cooperation on important Government business slated for the session.

In the Lok Sabha, the Opposition MPs have filed 56 notices for an adjournment motion, the majority of them by Congress MPs. The tension that had been building up between the Government and the Opposition over the Gujarat violence and the demand for Mr. Modi's resignation boiled

over to Parliament. Both sides came prepared for a battle. The Government stuck to its post-Goa stand, and refused to agree to a proposal that the Chair make a reference to the violence that took place at the Sabarmati Ashram.

In the Lok Sabha, trouble erupted as soon as the House assembled with the Opposition MPs insisting on an adjournment motion moved by them being taken up before the official business. Predictably, the Government balked, leading to the standoff between the two sides.

No sooner had the Deputy Speaker, P. M. Sayeed, completed welcoming a Parliamentary delegation from Ghana, than the Opposition MPs were on their feet pressing for the admission of their motion. Much to the Government's embarrassment, Yerran Naidu of the TDP also stood up to make the same demand. In the midst of the ensuing din, Mr. Naidu said that "the issue is of national importance and it must be discussed on the floor of Parliament". Several BJP MPs stood up and began shouting in an apparent bid to drown out Mr. Naidu's voice. The Opposition MPs who had maintained a discreet silence while Mr. Naidu was speaking began clamouring for the adjournment motion to be taken up.

Mr Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi of the Congress urged the Deputy Speaker to accept the Opposition motion as the issue was of paramount importance and concerned the whole nation. He was supported by MPs from the Left parties, the SP, the RJD and

the IUML. The BJP MPs sought to counter the demand by rising slogans in favour of Narendra Modi and soon the Opposition MPs came to the well of the House to press their demand at which stage the Deputy Speaker adjourned the House till lunch.

Similar scenes were repeated when the House met after lunch and the Opposition MPs once again trooped into the well of the House, which was countered by sloganeering from the Treasury benches. With both sides unwilling to relent, the House was adjourned for the day.

In the Rajya Sabha, the Opposition members raised the issue soon after the newly-elected MPs took oath. In fact, the RJD leader, Laloo Prasad Yadav, who also took the oath today, joined the action straightway. However, it was the TDP Rajya Sabha leader, Alladi Rajkumar's voice that lent an edge to the proceedings.

In fact, the senior BJP MP, S.P. Gautam's attempt to pacify Mr. Kumar resulted in the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, ticking him off. Soon after, the Chairman, Krishan Kant, adjourned the House for 10 minutes. The second adjournment came after the reassembly. Mr. Kant made a reference expressing the shock and anguish of the House at the violence that took place on April 7 within the sacred precincts of the Sabarmati Ashram. The Opposition MPs were on their feet again with some raising slogans. The Chair adjourned the House for the day after asking the members not to raise slogans in the House.

APR 15 2002

THE HINDU

Oppn stalls house with sack Modi call

Times News Network and Agencies

NEW DELHI: The Gujarat issue on Monday rocked both houses of parliament as a united opposition demanded the dismissal of chief minister Narendra Modi.

The BJP, on the other hand, announced that the Gujarat cabinet would decide on Wednesday whether or not to dissolve the house and hold fresh elections. Mr Modi had been entrusted with the task of taking the appropriate decision, the party said.

The closing of the opposition ranks in parliament was a significant feature of the otherwise predictable protest over the situation in Gujarat. Creating discomfiture for the NDA leadership, the Telugu Desam Party also joined the opposition groups in both houses in demanding a discussion on Gujarat.

On the opening day of parliament after the mid-session recess, members from the Congress, Left and Samajwadi Party benches got up in the Lok Sabha and demanded that question hour be suspended to discuss the Gujarat situation. Some opposition members rushed to the well, raising slogans against Mr Modi. "Modi is guilty. He must be punished," they shouted and pressed for an immediate discussion on Gujarat.

Congress chief whip P.R. Das Munshi said that priority should be given to the adjournment motion for which 56 members had given notice. The notice accused the Centre of failing to contain the communal carnage in Gujarat.

TDP leader Yerran Naidu was heard pleading with the chair to allow him to make a statement on Gujarat. "It is in the interest of the nation that we should discuss Gujarat," he said. With the TDP taking a critical stand on the continuing riots in Gujarat and some other BJP allies not supporting the

beleaguered government, the BJP appeared to stand alone in the house.

In the Rajya Sabha, TDP members joined the other opposition members soon after the new members took their oaths. The demand for Mr Modi's ouster was vociferously raised by the entire opposition during question hour.

Meanwhile, TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu vowed in Hyderabad to continue his fight for removal of Mr Modi. He, however, remained non-committal on the question of his party withdrawing support to the NDA

government on the issue, saying, "We are watching the situation from time to time. We will let you know." To persistent queries by reporters on the options before his party in the wake of the BJP's blunt rejection of the demand for a change of guard in Gujarat, Mr Naidu said, "We have taken a principled stand. There is no change in it. We will continue to raise them in the parliament."

Some other allies of the BJP also said they would persist on the demand for Mr Modi's removal and oppose immediate elections in the state. But they were evasive on whether they would support a censure motion on the Gujarat issue in parliament. The allies are likely to meet on Tuesday to hold consultations on their floor strategy on the issue.

On the other hand, BJP spokesman V.K. Malhotra charged the opposition with setting a "wrong precedent" and "murdering democracy" by demanding the resignation of a state chief minister and opposing elections to the state assembly. "It is for the people to decide who should govern them. It is not for the opposition parties to decide as to who will be the chief minister of a state. The opposition does not have that right. It is against the spirit of federalism," Mr Malhotra said.

Sonia meets Mulayam

NEW DELHI: Congress president Sonia Gandhi and Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav got together for the first time on Monday, after the leader of the opposition walked up to Mr Yadav and invited him for a meeting to chalk out the opposition's strategy on the Gujarat issue.

The meeting took place at short notice after the Lok Sabha was adjourned for three hours following an uproar on the Gujarat issue. (PTI)



Sonia Gandhi

Mulayam Singh

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Parliament will recommence on Monday — this time under the long shadow of Gujarat. Ideally, the developments in Gujarat, in particular their national and international implications, the collapse of law and order, and remedial measures to ensure against a repetition of the tragedies, should form the subject matter for a reasoned debate. In a mature democracy, the proceedings of the two Houses would start with paying homage to the innocent victims of both Godhra and the riots that followed. There would be a comprehensive statement on the developments by the prime minister, followed by an introspective analysis of the underlying causes that led to this shameful event. To be sure, there would be some inevitable finger-pointing and perhaps even scoring of political points. But the debate would focus on rehabilitation of riot victims, restoring the confidence of citizens, especially the minorities, and the steps necessary to depoliticise the law and order enforcement machinery, so that in future the magistracy and the police are able to deal with law and order autonomously. It might also be expected that the political parties will together outline steps to promote secularism, indeed admit that secularism is vital for this country's unity and integrity. That, in turn, might lead to further introspection on communal and casteist votebank politics. Should that happen here, despite the Gujarat tragedy, it would be possible to claim that India is determined to get over this chapter of shame and reclaim the basic values of the republic.

Past experience, however, tells us that this is a less likely scenario than the familiar one of members raising an uproar as soon as the proceedings start and rushing into the well of the Houses, forcing helpless presiding officers to adjourn the Houses. The excuse for this misbehaviour will be the same as that used in Gujarat: That the police officers could not handle large, emotionally-charged crowds. The justification of the MPs for their bad conduct is invariably that they are reacting to an outrage. That the Gujarat riots are an unspeakable outrage is undeniable. Nonetheless, this is the same excuse as the one advanced by the apologists for Gujarat riots: That the mobs were reacting emotionally to the Godhra outrage. Our MPs must know that by not exercising self-control, observing the rules of the House and subjecting themselves to the discipline of the presiding officers, they are only setting themselves as examples to those communal and criminal elements that led the mobs in the streets of Gujarat in an orgy of murderous violence. The disorderly behaviour, lack of restraint, and defiance of presiding officers at the sanctum sanctorum of democracy, resonate and get magnified a million-fold on the streets. The sessions of the two Houses are a litmus test for the commitment of the members of Parliament to true democracy whose fundamental functions are orderly governance and secularism. If they truly care for these values, the country will witness high quality, reasoned debates leading to the formulation of long-term guidelines. Anarchy in the two Houses can only act as tacit endorsement of mob behaviour and provide the justification for bureaucratic inability to control the violators of the rule of law.

APR 2000

THE TIMES OF INDIA

In the running for President

CL Manoj, Mohan Sahay and RM Singh in New Delhi

5/1 11/4
 April 10 — The margins are narrow in case of a contest for the country's next President. The politics is as broad, although perhaps not broad-minded, as India can offer.

President Mr KR Narayanan demits office on 24 July. Elections will have to be held or a choice will have to be made by the end of June or early July.

The A-list includes an ex-royal, Dr Karan Singh, the Maharashtra Governor, Dr PC Alexander and the current incumbent, Mr Narayanan, whose supporters insist his health will permit another term.

Mr Ram Jethmalani, who has publicly declared he wants the job, and has written an article in a national newspaper arguing he is the best man for the job, is, so far, not on the A-list.

Dr Karan Singh has reportedly requested the Congress to support his candidature. The main Opposition party is, however, "undecided" on the issue, partly because it is not sure whether the Left and the Samajwadi Party will vote for Dr Singh. These two par-

Advantage Opposition

The President's electoral college comprises two Houses of Parliament and all state Assemblies. The NDA has a majority in the Houses; each MP's value vote is 708. But in the states, NDA rules only 7 out of 27; MLAs' vote value differs from state to state, depending on the state's population.

Opposition rules high in vote value in states like West Bengal (vote value: 151), Bihar (174) Maharashtra (175), Punjab (116), Rajasthan (129), Karnataka (131) and Madhya Pradesh (130). Even if the BSP in UP (208) and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu (176) vote with NDA, the calculation favours the Opposition.

Former EC officials say the Opposition, if it votes together, "enjoys a slight edge". Out of a total value vote of 10,98,919, the combined Opposition may end up with 5,69,000, a thin majority of less than 40,000.

ties want "someone acceptable to the People's Front" as the presidential nominee.

Sources said the Left and SP "are comfortable with Mr Narayanan". The President himself is said to be willing — but only if he is a consensus candidate.

A-list



Mr KR Narayanan



Dr Karan Singh



Dr PC Alexander

The Congress appears to be undecided on the current President. In fact, it is in much more of a quandary over the BJP moves to support Dr Alexander. Mr Bal Thackeray has reportedly been roped in by the BJP to campaign for Dr Alexander. As have been NCP leaders Mr Sharad Pawar and Mr PA Sangma.

Dr Alexander served as principal secretary to both Indira Gandhi and Rajiv Gandhi. Leaders in Delhi say he is "still close to 10 Janpath". If he gets the backing of the BJP and the NDA, "it'll be difficult for the Congress to reject him".

BJP sources also said the party is "keen to be seen as backing a minority candidate".

The Congress, party leaders say, is suspicious of this move because the BJP "may be creating a roadblock against Mrs Sonia Gandhi in the future".

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Jobs for gun-toting boys?

9 President
President's speech disappoints 51-4

Presidential addresses need not toe the government's line but they usually reflect national concerns, especially when times are unusual. Thus, while KR Narayanan's Republic Day speech — the head of state pointedly departed, in form and substance, from current official concerns on security and Pakistan — is blameless in the light of constitutional theory, in the arena of public interest it stands accused of not fully lending the weight of his office to the Indian state's current and critical confrontation with terror. That charge cannot be countered by saying that terrorism did find place in His Excellency's speech. In fact, the presidential thesis on terrorism makes his critics' point even more forcefully. That poverty breeds resentment, including against institutional exemplars of the status quo, and resentment breeds violence is an argument as old as the hills, and one that politicians make when they want to sound broad-minded but they go no further. The President, however, used this chestnut to draw attention to another one, reservations. To say that a more proactive reservation policy is among the key weapons against fighting the causes of terrorism, is to beg several questions.

First, it can be reasonably argued that the problem with India's policy on positive discrimination is precisely that it is too proactive. Fifty years of reservations in government jobs and at some educational levels have done little to remove "casteism" from society. Neither has it done anything for the millions of disadvantaged Indians whose family names do not qualify them for quotas. So, even if one accepts that the roots of terrorism lie in India's social inequality, more reservations is certainly not a policy prescription. Second, the dominant form of terrorism — Islamic militancy — that challenges the state was not bred by Muslim poverty and anger. That Indian Muslims have a large, frustrated underclass and the community needs to produce a modernist middle class are indisputable propositions. Also Indian Muslim resentment did not produce Kashmiri militancy. Young Muslim men from UP, Bihar, AP and West Bengal did not go up to Kashmir and start a violent movement. Some young Kashmiris did and they still do. But theirs is special resentment, against a specific perceived wrong done by the Indian state, not a rebellion against general welfare policy failure that concerned the President. Perhaps the President wants reservations to be extended to all Muslims — a preposterous notion advocated by some politicians. Even if this were done, how would it help tackle militancy? Third, and most important, outside encouragement, ideologically and materially, has completely changed the character of Kashmiri militancy. After nearly 10 years of India being in the cross hairs of radical Islam, to hear the head of state in effect ignoring that problem was disappointing, to say the least.

More disappointing is that we are forced to conclude that the President's well-known bias for indiscriminate positive discrimination — Rashtrapati Bhavan had once wanted quotas to apply for appointing judges to the Supreme Court — and also by his equally well-known dislike for this government, which is probably why he stayed away from re-emphasising security, a plank on which the BJP sits well. In these preferences for the personal and the political, the national slipped through, and the nation was not as well served by its President as it deserved.

THE STRAIGHT

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