

AD-13  
27/12

# President gives assent to six Bills

J. Parthasarathy

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, DEC. 26.** A number of important legislative Bills passed recently by Parliament have become Acts with the President, A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, giving assent to them.

According to official information, the President has given his assent to the Unit Trust of India (Transfer of Undertaking and Repeal) Bill 2002, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Amendment) Bill, 2002, the Delhi Metro Railway (Operation and Maintenance) Bill, 2002, the Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Orders (Second Amendment) Bill, 2002, the Consumer Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2002 and the Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Bill, 2002.

The Unit Trust of India (Transfer of Undertaking and Repeal) Act replaces the ordinance promulgated in October to provide for the transfer and vest the undertaking, excluding the specified undertaking of the UTI, to the specified company to be formed and registered under the Companies Act, 1956.

This Act also seeks to transfer and vest the specified undertaking of the UTI in the Administrator besides repealing the Unit Trust of India Act, 1963 in order to corporatise the UTI and let it compete in the free market economy.

Similarly, the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Amendment) Act replaces the ordinance promulgated in October to amend the SEBI Act of 1992 by enlarging its Board of Directors, besides conferring power of search and seizure with the approval of court and enhancing the fine for a better and hassle-free regulation of the capital market and avoid recurrence of scams and other malpractices in the capital market by building confidence of investors.

The Delhi Metro Act provides a legal frame and mechanism for regulation of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) under the joint control of

the Central Government through the Ministry of Urban Development and the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, on the pattern of the Indian Railways Act, 1989.

The Act also provides for a mechanism for operation and maintenance of the DMRC and its security.

The Constitution (Schedule Castes) Orders (Second Amendment) Act seeks to amend the Constitution (Schedule Castes) (Union Territories) Orders, 1951, the Constitution (Jammu and Kashmir) Schedule Castes Orders, 1956, the Constitution (Dadra and Nagar Haveli) Schedule Castes Orders, 1964 to include, exclude and expand the list of Schedule Castes in States and Union Territories.

The Consumer Protection (Amendment) Act amends the Consumer Protection Act of 1986 to enable State Governments to set up District Consumer Council on their own, make the compliance of the orders of the National Consumer Council, State Consumer Council and District Consumer Council meaningful and effective.

The Act also provides for attachment of the assets of persons not complying with the orders of the Consumer Councils, courts and Commissions besides streamlining the provisions of the 1986 Act.

The amended Act will be enforced from a date to be notified by the Government.

The Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Act amends the earlier 1958 Act and the Major Port Trusts Act, 1963 to streamline their provisions in order to enable them to meet the challenges of globalised economy in the form of quality of services and competition besides streamlining corporatisation of major ports, their expansion and services.

The amended Act will come into effect from the date to be notified by the Government.

27 DEC 2002

THE HINDU

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 21, 2002

*J. Parthasarathy*

## A BLUEPRINT FOR REFORM *40-10 2/12*

THE INITIAL REACTIONS to the recent JPC report have been muted in comparison to those that accompanied the publication of the earlier JPC's findings. Both the parliamentary committees were given similar points of reference, with the alleged stock market shenanigans perpetuated by a few brokers, aided and abetted by various acts of omission and commission by mainline institutions and financial sector regulators, being the central point. Therefore, notwithstanding the fact that almost a decade separates the two periods under investigation — the earlier JPC looked into the securities transactions of 1991-92 — the findings of both the committees are similar to a great extent. On the definition of the recent scam, the JPC says that it was a manipulation of the capital market for the benefit of market operators, brokers, corporate entities and their promoters and managements. That, barring a slight change in vocabulary, is almost identical to the earlier JPC's findings of a deep-rooted nexus between bankers, brokers and companies in diverting funds for speculative gain. The other striking similarity is in the identification of a principal culprit — the late Harshad Mehta for the irregularities of 1992 and Ketan Parekh now. Both incidentally belong to the broking fraternity, a class of intermediaries whose less than satisfactory profile had significantly changed for the better over the past decade. The implementation of the recommendations — many key ones were in fact put in place — of the earlier JPC report ought to have helped in sprucing up the image of the capital market and its participants. Sadly, however, that has not happened. Both the reports have blamed nearly all the regulators and the Government, but it is the capital market structure that seems to be creaking still, despite all the progress made recently in settlements, trading systems, technology upgradation, institution building and imparting of professionalism to the participants.

However, neither the similarities in the diagnosis nor the equally predictable prescriptions for correction undermine the value of the recent JPC's findings. The fact that it did not come out

with any sensational findings or make sweeping recommendations ought to be viewed positively, a tribute to its awareness of the inherent limitations rather than as a negative point. Much of the financial sector including the capital market has been changing at breakneck speed. The world over regulators, central banks and investigative agencies are hard put to even define financial misdemeanour let alone punish the perpetrators. Even in the advanced countries such as the U.S. the technology bubble lulled everyone including the usually sharp regulators into complacency. Nor was it possible to even spot, until it was too late, a monumental fudging of accounts of the type committed by Enron, WorldCom and others. Notwithstanding the significant steps, including legal ones that are promptly taken in the wake of a financial scam, the fact remains that no structure however well crafted can effectively forestall a shenanigan. The solution, then, lies in implementing the existing powers more efficaciously and in strengthening existing institutions engaged in regulation and policing. The JPC's recommendations in that genre are practicable and ought to be followed up for a better environment in the financial sector. Its biggest contribution might well be in influencing policy changes so that in future at least there is greater clarity in the approach to issues such as dealing with cooperative banks.

On UTI, however, the JPC's recommendations tread familiar territory and in one specific area — concerning the constitution of UTI-II — seem counter-productive. The crisis at UTI became part of the JPC's agenda long after it took up its core brief involving the inexplicable crash of the market in March 2001, the payment crisis in the Calcutta Stock Exchange and the Madhavapura Cooperative Bank-led failure that has exposed the chinks in regulation. In all these, the common denominator has been the weakness of the capital market which the JPC once again hopes to address. Unlike the last time, the report has not indicted any major public figure nor named any leading banks or institutions, Indian or foreign. Devoid of sensation though its report is, it can be a blueprint for a better financial sector.

# JPC reveals swindlers' list, fails to name them

By Priya Ranjan Dash  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** The joint parliamentary committee on Thursday generally blamed faceless government regulating agencies, including the finance ministry, but failed to pin down anybody in particular for last year's stock market scam and the UTI fiasco that cost investors thousands of crores of rupees and eroded confidence in India's financial system.

After 20 months of investigation and 360 hours of formal sittings, the JPC tabled a 450-page unanimous report in parliament which, on first reading, did not provide the answer to the question millions of investors asked—who exactly was responsible for the swindling?

The report is ambiguous to such an extent that soon after its publication, it lent itself to various interpretations, breaking down the political unanimity achieved by this JPC. Two Congress members on the JPC, Kapil Sibal and Mani Shankar Aiyar, demanded the resignation of the then finance minister and present foreign minister Yashwant Sinha from the cabinet quoting, often without context, from the report in support of their claim that he had been indicted. Mr Sinha rejected the demand even though he admitted that he had not gone through the report.

"There is no direct reference to Yashwant Sinha on any wrong doing," asserted JPC chairman Prakash Mani Tripathi, who is a BJP member of the Lok Sabha, while briefing reporters on the contents of the report.

To the volley of questions on who was or were responsible, Mr Tripathi said, "In a general way, the JPC holds the regulating agencies—the stock exchange authorities, Sebi, the Reserve Bank of India and the High-Level Coordination Committee—responsible. The department of company affairs and the finance ministry have also been named. They could have been more proactive and vigilant. That is not to say, they were less vigilant."

Mr Tripathi claimed that the demand for Mr Sinha's resignation made by the two opposition members on the JPC did not take away from the legitimacy of the 'unanimous' report. "It is a political statement made by them outside JPC," he added.

The report leaves it to the government to

**In a general way, the JPC holds the regulating agencies—the stock exchange authorities, Sebi, the Reserve Bank of India and the High-Level Coordination Committee—responsible. The department of company affairs and the finance ministry have also been named.**

—JPC chief Prakash Mani Tripathi

act against corporate entities which are found to be involved in the scam after the various investigating agencies complete their ongoing probes. It is, however, more specific about indicting brokers like Ketan Parekh for their dubious role. It holds other broking groups belonging to D.K. Singhania, A.K. Poddar and H.C. Biyani primarily responsible for the payment problem in March 2001 in the Calcutta stock exchange.

Recommending speedy investigation and action against the brokers, promoters and corporate houses which had formed a nexus to fleece banks and investors, the committee said that as financial custodian of the country, the finance ministry was duty-bound to protect the interests of small investors and prevent the free fall of the capital market.

The JPC named the then finance secretary Ajit Kumar for not "acting immediately" on a piece of information about the "impending problems of UTI" and accused him of acting in a "routine and casual manner" not expected of him. The report also came down heavily on IDBI for its negligence in its capacity as the principal contributor to the mutual fund and the concentration of power in the post of chairman without adequate checks and balances to prevent misuse of power. "Regrettably, negligent management by UTI and inadequate monitoring on these fronts contributed in significant measure to the crisis in UTI generally."

**Comment:** A chilling tale of complete institutional failure. But institutions, too, work through individuals. Will the probe lead to any individuals being held accountable?

● Directive on UTI-II sponsors, Page 19

Convict's wife gets 5 years in jail

# House trio on death row

Parliament  
5-1  
19/12

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

New Delhi, Dec. 18: Three persons convicted of plotting the Parliament attack, including a lecturer, have been sentenced to death under the Prevention of Terrorism Act.

The fourth convict, a woman, has been sentenced to five years' rigorous imprisonment for not divulging the plot to the authorities. The ruling comes just over a year after the Parliament attack that left nine dead and brought India and Pakistan close to war.

The defendants — suspected Jaish-e-Mohammad militants Mohammad Afzal and Shaukat Hussain and suspended Delhi University lecturer S.A.R. Geelani — were calm as the sentence was read out in the packed Patiala House courtroom. The three had pleaded innocent.

The special court that handed the sentences described this as the "rarest of rare cases". Judge S.N. Dhingra said he was awarding the death sentence to the three for their logistical support in the attack that India has blamed on Pakistan-based militants.

"The persons who help terrorists enter into India and carry out *fidayeen* attacks are equally liable for the killing of innocent persons as the hardcore terrorists themselves," he said. "They are enemies of

## IRON HAND

### ● MOHAMMAD AFZAL

From Baramullah district, J&K  
Charges: Jaish-e-Mohammad member. Masterminded the attack

VERDICT: DEATH SENTENCE

### ● SHAUKAT HUSSAIN

From Baramullah. Now residing at 1021 Mukherjee Nagar, New Delhi.  
Charges: Jaish member. Roped in by Afzal, his cousin

VERDICT: DEATH SENTENCE

### ● S.A.R. GEELANI

Suspended Delhi University lecturer  
Charges: Co-conspirator, friend of Shaukat and Afzal

VERDICT: DEATH SENTENCE

### ● NAVJOT SANDHU

Wife of Shaukat  
Charge: Aware of conspiracy but kept quiet

VERDICT: FIVE YEARS' RIGOROUS IMPRISONMENT

mankind, they deserve no leniency. The punishment given in such cases must be deterrent."

Navjot Sandhu alias Afsan Guru — the wife of Shaukat — received a milder punishment considering that she was facing a "difficult choice of going against her husband", the judge said in his order. She is mentally disturbed, according to reports from prison.

The three convicts have also been sentenced to life imprison-

ment and rigorous imprisonment for offences committed under various sections of the anti-terror law, the Indian Penal Code, the Arms Act and the Explosive Substances Act.

A defence lawyer said an appeal would be filed in Delhi High Court within a month. Geelani claimed he had been "framed". "By convicting innocent persons, you can't suppress emotions. Peace comes with justice. If there is no justice, there would be no democracy," he said.

"I'm fighting for the liberation of Kashmir," shouted Shaukat as he was being dragged out of the court by securitymen.

Afzal described the verdict as a conspiracy hatched by the police and politicians.

Police in Jammu and Kashmir are on high alert after the judgment. "There is scope for retaliation, especially by the Jaish-e-Mohammad," K. Rajendra, Kashmir range inspector-general of police, said.

The BJP described the verdict as "historic and important" because these were the first sentences handed under the anti-terror law. Shiv Sainiks burst crackers on the court premises.

The judge took state governments to task for refusing to implement the anti-terror law and said "there seems to be no national consensus in respect to the response to terrorism and terrorists and people of their clan". (See Page 6)

# PARLIAMENT STRIKE CONVICT BRAZEN AFTER COURT VERDICT

Unfazed  
& proud  
to be a  
Kashmiri

OUR SPECIAL  
CORRESPONDENT

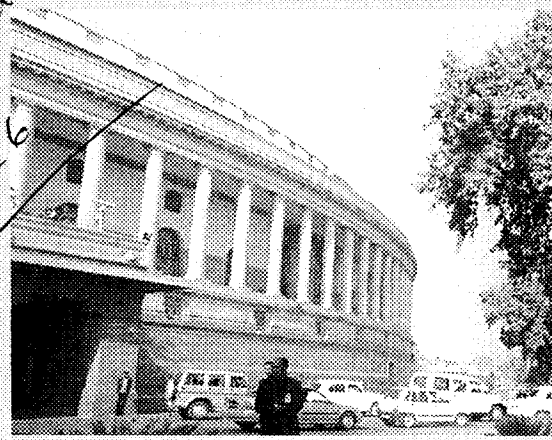
New Delhi, Dec. 16: "Being a Kashmiri and being a Muslim, I'm proud of it," Shaukat Hussain alias Guru said as he was whisked away from the court room this afternoon, minutes after S.N. Dhingra, the special judge for cases related to the Prevention of Terrorism Act, convicted him and three other accused in the December 13 Parliament attack case.

Dressed in a mud-colour pathan suit and a blue cap, Shaukat seemed hardly perturbed by the court verdict. There was no sign of tension on his face.

But his wife, Navjot Sandhu alias Afsan Guru, who is also an accused has been mentally upset for some time now, according to a lawyer fighting her case. As Afsan Guru, escorted by lady constables, arrived in the court room around 2 pm, she started asking the policemen: "What have I been brought here for?"

Afsan Guru was allowed to sit with her child on her lap in the courtroom packed with lawyers and reporters, while the other accused — Shaukat, Mo-

## TWISTS AND TURNS AFTER THE ATTACK



hammad Afzal and suspended Delhi University lecturer S.A.R. Geelani — were standing in the dock.

"I have to ask one question. You did not tell me (when I asked you) in the police station as well," the completely shattered convict muttered in Hindi after Dhingra read his order and left the chair. "What

did you all do to my brother and sister-in-law?" she asked before being taken away by lady constables.

The constables said they would tell her later. Her brother and sister-in-law are staying in Australia.

While Afsan Guru was unable to fathom what was happening, Mohammad Afzal seemed

his usual self, with his quite and intense looks not revealing his emotions.

"I had asked for three lawyers. They did not provide me," he said when asked for his comments on the verdict.

"Geelani has been working in Delhi for 17 years. How come he has suddenly become a terrorist?" was all Afzal could ask

while being taken back to judicial custody after being convicted.

With his face partly covered with a thick black flowing beard and a black-and-white scarf and glasses, Afzal appeared a look-alike of Masood Azhar, the Jaish-e-Mohammad chief who was discharged by a Pakistani court on Saturday.

### Following is the chronology of events in the Parliament attack case:

- Dec. 13, 2001:** Five alleged Pakistani terrorists attack Parliament. Nine security personnel killed, 16 injured
- Dec. 14:** India asks Pakistan to take action against the Lashkar-e-Toiba and the Jaish-e-Mohammad
- Dec. 15:** Police arrest Delhi University lecturer S.A.R. Geelani, Md Afzal, Shaukat Hussain and his wife Navjot Sandhu. A laptop and Rs 10 lakh found from Afzal and Shaukat in Srinagar
- Dec. 16:** Delhi police chief Ajai Raj Sharma says Pakistan supervised the attack. Pakistan calls for a joint investigation
- Dec. 18:** Home minister L.K. Advani blames the ISI for the attack. Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee rejects the call for joint probe
- Dec. 19:** Pakistan rejects Advani's charge, demands evidence
- Dec. 22:** Afzal, Hussain and Geelani confirm their confessional statements recorded by police
- Dec. 24:** The US, the UK and the European Union issue demarche to Pakistan, demand ban on Lashkar and Jaish
- Dec. 25:** Jaish chief Masood Azhar arrested in Pakistan. Lashkar, Tameer-e-Nau bank accounts frozen
- April 1, 2002:** Azhar, Jaish chief commander in Jammu and Kashmir Ghazi Baba and his close aide Tariq Ahmad declared proclaimed offenders by special judge S.N. Dhingra
- May 14:** Chargesheet filed against Aazal, Shaukat, Navjot, Geelani, Azhar, Ghazi Baba and Tariq.
- June 4:** Special court frames charges against Afzal, Shaukat, Navjot and Geelani. All the accused plead not guilty
- July 8:** Trial begins under the new anti-terrorism Act
- July 11:** The special judge rules that telephone intercepts are admissible as evidence
- July 25:** Geelani and Afzal challenge the special court ruling in Delhi High Court
- Oct. 30:** The high court upholds their plea and quashes the trial court order on telephone intercepts
- Nov 25:** The special judge reserves order in the case after completion of final arguments and fixes December 11 for verdict
- Dec. 11:** The court defers the pronouncement till December 16
- Dec. 16:** The court holds all the four accused guilty

# House nod to rape law change

## OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**New Delhi, Dec. 9:** The Lok Sabha today passed an amendment to the Indian Evidence (Amendment) Bill 2002, deleting two controversial clauses seeking to cross-examine a rape victim on her character.

According to the amended Bill, which was passed by a voice vote, the victim will not be subject to cross-examination, by either the prosecution counsel or the defence lawyer, regarding her character.

Members cutting across party lines had objected to the archaic clauses and today several members hailed the deletion of the clauses from

the original Act of 1872.

The government assured the House that it would bring in the next session of Parliament a "comprehensive" legislation to plug loopholes in the existing law and check the increasing incidence of rape. Replying to a discussion on the Bill, Union law minister Jana Krishnamurthi welcomed members' suggestion that the government should adopt a holistic approach on the issue.

The government would hold wide consultations with various political parties and experts and try to bring such a Bill in the next session of Parliament that would curb crime against women and ensure speedy justice to victims. Krishnamurthi said the amendment sought to save vic-

tims from a "second humiliation" and render justice to them.

Congress leader Margaret Alva, who initiated the discussion, said: "We need to review the entire Act to make disposal of rape cases time-bound and punishment more stringent."

CPM leader A.K. Premajam, Samata Party member Beatrice D'Souza, Rashtriya Janata Dal MP Raghuvansh Prasad Singh and Congress member A.C. Jose also urged for more teeth to the law.

Every 54 minutes, a rape takes place in the country and the victim dies every moment of her remaining life, asserted Singh.

When a victim goes to a police station to register a complaint, a "second rape" in the

form of indecent questioning takes place, he claimed. "All kinds of questions are asked. This is another kind of rape. This is a second rape."

Rebel Akali Dal (SAD-M) leader Simranjit Singh Mann wanted molestation and rape committed by paramilitary personnel and army men to be brought under the ambit of the National Human Rights Commission.

Mann criticised the appointment of former Punjab police chief K.P.S. Gill as adviser to the Gujarat government and alleged that "mass-scale" rapes have taken place in Gujarat. The Akali leader charged Gill with molesting IAS officer Rupin Deol Bajaj. "Why was a Dracula made to guard the blood bank?" he asked.

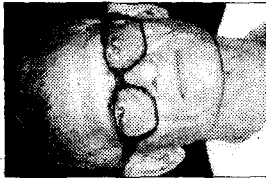
# Advani to Shastri's rescue in LS

**PRADEEP KAUSHAL**

NEW DELHI, NOVEMBER 28

**D**EPUTY Prime Minister L.K. Advani today turned down in the Lok Sabha an Opposition demand for a directive to U.P. Governor Vishnu Kant Shastri to convene the Assembly to test the strength of the Mayawati government. "The Centre is not empowered to issue a directive to a Governor. I have no right to give him a directive," he declared.

The Governor, Advani said while responding to a debate on an adjournment motion by SP leader Mulayam Singh Yadav, had committed "no wrong". He said Shastri "is an excellent man. He has conducted himself as per the best traditions of the Constitution." Dissatisfied with Advani's reply, the SP and Left parties staged a walkout. The Congress showed little interest in the matter — only seven of its members were present. Mulayam did receive some support from CPI(M) members.



**V.K. Shastri**

The insipid proceedings were enlivened with both the sides taking potshots at each another.

Advani caught Priyaranjan Dasmuni unawares when he remarked that a time may come when his party may join hands with the BJP in forming a government. Dasmuni shot back: "We may think of it if the BJP comes out of the influence of VHP."

When Advani asserted that "we have shared power with Marxists," Somnath Chatterjee got up to protest. He, however, reminded him that it was so, in Bihar. Chatterjee clarified: "It was CPI."

Advani cited the Supreme Court



**L.K. Advani**

## UP Cabinet discusses Chief Secretary controversy

**■ LUCKNOW:** The UP BJP on Thursday complained to CM Mayawati against the chief secretary allegedly trying to "encroach on the rights of a senior Cabinet minister". The issue was raised by BJP legislature party leader Lalji Tandon in a Cabinet meeting.

He said chief secretary D.S. Bagga had conducted "surprise inspection" of canals at Barabanki, keeping Irrigation Minister Om Prakash Singh in the dark. Tandon also objected to the reports of the inspection appearing in the press. Meanwhile, the Irrigation Minister said the issue had been resolved.

—*Agencies*

judgment in the S.R. Bommai case to state that the Governor should be left free to deal with the situation as per his best judgement keeping in view the Constitution and conventions of the parliamentary system.

Mulayam interrupted Advani to contend that the Mayawati government was in a minority. Chatterjee asked why the state government was not told to demonstrate its majority on the floor of the House. Advani said a floor test was only one of the considerations which the Governor should keep in mind but his decision depended upon the prevailing situation.

He said: "If the Governor asks for a suggestion from the Centre, then it is different. It is not correct to state that the Centre should give a directive to the Governor just because he belongs to my party," he said.

When Shriprakash Jaiswal of the Congress pointed out that the recent legislative council election had shown that the government was in a minority, Advani said: "How people have voted in Rajya Sabha and council elections in the past is known to all." That was why the Government had mooted a Bill to make voting open in these elections. Mulayam stood up to support it.

WALKOUT IN RAJYA SABHA

# Opposition raises storm over new job for Venkataswami

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 22. Both Houses of Parliament witnessed protests today from members with the Opposition staging a walkout in the Rajya Sabha over the appointment of Justice K. Venkataswami, heading the Tehelka Commission of Inquiry, as Chairman of Authority on Advance Rulings of Excise and Customs.

For the first time in the current session of Parliament which opened this week, the Opposition joined hands to raise serious objections to the Centre's move stating that it had violated all norms of constitutional propriety.

The Government, on its part, maintained that the appoint-



ment was made in May this year, after the Chief Justice of India nominated Justice Venkataswami for the post and the Appointments Committee of Cabinet cleared it.

The Finance Minister, Jaswant Singh, told both the Houses that a letter was written

to the Chief Justice during September, last year to nominate a retired judge of the apex court for the post and in response, Justice Venkataswami's name was recommended.

Soon after Kapil Sibal (Congress) raised the issue in the Rajya Sabha, the Opposition members were on their feet. Mr. Sibal said that by accepting the new position, the inquiry was sought to be compromised and demanded an explanation.

Mr. Jaswant Singh's clarification elicited more questions with the Leader of the Opposition, Manmohan Singh, stating that the country's system of governance rested on a combination of checks and balances. The authority which was investigating the Government was

sought to be given a job by the Government. This, he said, was in violation of all norms applicable for such posts and led a walkout.

The issue was raised in the Lok Sabha during question hour with angry Opposition MPs demanding an explanation from the Government.

Raising the issue, Congress leader, Priyaranjan Dasgupta alleged that the Government was trying to influence the judge by appointing him to an office of profit.

Having allowed the question hour to continue following an assurance from the Speaker, the Congress and the CPI(M) MPs were quick to bring it up soon after question hour. Mr. Dasgupta and Basudeb Acharya (CPI-M) demanded that the Speaker direct the Finance Minister to reply to their pointed queries. Mr. Dasgupta wanted to know whether Justice Venkataswami's name was the only one recommended to the Chief Justice. Mr. Dasgupta wondered what kind of credibility the Commission would have after this.

During his brief intervention in the Lok Sabha, the Finance Minister tried to clarify the issue. He pointed out that he was not the Minister when the appointment was made and was speaking on the basis of whatever information he had for the present.

Angry Opposition MPs sought to pin him down on the issue of whether Justice Venkataswami's name had been recommended by the Government or he was picked by the CJI. They said that the Finance Minister had recommended the name in September, 2001 and the appointment was made this year.

## Govt. put on the defensive

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, NOV. 22. The ruling coalition was put on the defensive today by the strong Opposition reaction to the appointment of Justice Venkataswami, who is heading the Tehelka inquiry, as the Chairman of Authority on Advance Ruling, Central Board of Excise and Customs.

And an almost certain fallout will be that the Opposition "boycott" and "non-recognition" of the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, will continue. The CPI(M) leader, Basudev Acharya, said as much, although yesterday there were indications that the Opposition was willing to find a way out of the impasse. Both the Government and the Bharatiya Janata Party virtually distanced themselves from the appointment which took place in April-May this year, pleading that it was the Chief Justice who had recommended the name, after the Finance Ministry asked him for a recommendation in September 2001.

"It was the recommendation of the then Chief Justice of India which was approved by the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet in April this year," the BJP spokesperson, Vijay Kumar

Malhotra, said. Was it appropriate that a top Government job be given to a person inquiring into allegations against at least one Minister? Mr. Malhotra did not want to go into that, saying that the noise was being made now by political parties when the appointment was made in April-May. And, of course, he insisted that the appointment had nothing to do with trying to influence the outcome of the sensitive Tehelka tapes inquiry for which the Venkataswami Commission was set up — the inquiry is not complete and the report is still awaited.

The Congress spokesperson, Satyavat Chaturvedi, said it was quite wrong for a person heading an inquiry commission to be appointed to an office of profit. The Congress will take this up strongly as it flouts all established norms.

The CPI(M) described this as a "cover-up operation", with Mr. Acharya saying that this had confirmed the worst apprehensions. The denigration of institutions by the Government was continuing. And with the attitude of the Government made plain there was no way the Opposition would drop its "non-recognition" of George Fernandes' stance in Parliament.

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THE HINDU



## CENTRE TRYING TO BLAME STATES: SONIA

#01 2/11 J. Parliament

# Inter-linking of rivers, only solution to drought: PM

By Gargi Parsai

**NEW DELHI, NOV. 20.** The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today said the Centre proposes to take up the scheme for inter-linking of rivers on a "war footing" as a long-term, permanent solution to the recurring problem of drought.

Intervening in a debate in the Lok Sabha on the Congress-sponsored adjournment motion on drought, Mr. Vajpayee said resources and political will would not be lacking for such a massive problem. What was needed was spending the money in a proper manner.

In the end, the Government received an endorsement to its proposal when as an addenda to her speech on the motion, the Opposition leader, Sonia Gandhi, said, "...and I forgot to mention, we welcome the Government's proposal for linking of river waters."

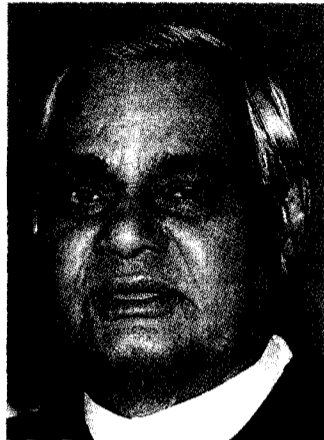
Mjminutes before, Mr. Vajpayee had said he would soon convene an all-party meeting to seek consensus for the scheme.

The Prime Minister asserted that there was no political discrimination in providing drought relief.

He said the Centre would provide Rs.10,000 crores to the drought-hit States under the food-for-work programme, of which Rs. 5000 crores would be a cash component for employment schemes.

Seeking cooperation of the States, he said the situation should not be politicised. "We have inherited a system which has weaknesses."

On the conclusion of the



A. B. Vajpayee

eight-hour debate, the motion was defeated by voice vote with the Opposition not pressing for a division.

Earlier Ms. Gandhi sought a Drought Management Code, loan and interest waiver for the drought-affected States, an all-party meeting to galvanise implementation, a special meeting of the National Development Council to discuss drought, expansion of "Antodaya Anna Yojna" and food-for-work schemes and revamping of the Public Distribution System.

She also sought objectivity and transparency in the disbursement of funds from the National Calamity Contingency Fund.

She said in raising the drought issue her party's intention was not to politicise the situation but to raise the "weaknesses and inadequacies" in the management of the calamity. She said the Government should take their criticism as "constructive criticism."

She had not spoken for the



Sonia Gandhi

Congress-ruled States alone but for all affected by drought.

Ms. Gandhi said, "this debate had placed a major responsibility on the Government. We will play our part but a major responsibility is of the Centre."

She however, continued her defence of the Congress-ruled States of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan from where starvation deaths had been reported and sought to know from the Government how much of the funding provided under the Centrally-sponsored schemes had been in relation to drought.

She charged the Centre with shifting responsibility for mismanagement of drought on the States.

She said the reported starvation deaths in the two Congress-ruled States had been from malnutrition and illness.

In his reply, the Agriculture Minister, Ajit Singh, asserted there was no discrimination in the distribution of drought relief.

He admitted there was pressure from the States for a larger share of relief and funds but the disbursement was in accordance with the norms laid by the 11th Finance Commission with the consent of the State Chief Ministers.

He said contrary to "propaganda," the Special Task Force on drought had met six times since it was constituted in July.

The Task Force had agreed to the recommendation of the Inter-Ministerial Group in toto in releasing Rs. 2000 crores to the drought-affected States.

He urged the States to tone up implementation of central schemes and drought relief as "the Centre has no machinery for implementation which must be done by States."

He said in this context he had suggested formation of a district level committee for implementation and monitoring but not many States had done that.

Earlier, the Food Minister, Sharad Yadav, and the Rural Development Minister, Shanta Kumar, intervened to provide statistics on various Central Government schemes and provision of foodgrains to point out non-utilisation of funds by States and poor lifting by even drought-hit States such as Rajasthan respectively.

The debate saw members take up a lot of regional drought issues and at times the discussion slipped into sparring between members on opposite sides on Cauvery, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh starvation deaths and Andhra Pradesh rice scam.

THE HINDU

2 1 NOV 2002

PLAN TO ENSURE SMOOTH HOUSE FUNCTION

# Govt defeats Gujarat motion

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, Nov. 18. — The government today defeated an adjournment motion on Gujarat in the Lok Sabha on the opening day of Parliament's winter session and left the Opposition disarmed. Under the rules, Gujarat cannot be the subject of discussion in the House during the current session.

The adjournment motion was moved by Mr Subodh Rai of the CPI-M and accepted by Speaker Mr Manohar Joshi after the government agreed to participate in the debate.

The government "scored over the Opposition" by accepting its demand for adjournment motions on Gujarat, starvation and Uttar Pradesh. In the bargain, the treasury benches secured a promise from the Opposition that it would allow transaction of legislative business and would not disrupt the House.

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee had asked the parliamentary affairs minister, Mr Pramod Mahajan, to accommodate the Opposition's demand and ensure that Parliament functioned smoothly. The government was reportedly worried that the Opposition would stall proceedings in Parliament to highlight Gujarat and other issues. They had anticipated a demand for an adjournment motion on disinvestment.

With the defeat of the adjournment motion, the Opposition has lost the opportunity to ques-

tion the Centre's role vis a vis the conduct of Mr Narendra Modi, Acharya Dharmendra and Mr Praveen Togadia during the election process.

The Opposition members' attendance in the House today was thin and they were outnumbered by members on treasury benches. At one point of time, the House lacked quorum. The debate resumed after the quorum bell was sounded.

In his reply, Mr L K Advani skipped the point raised by Mr Rai on the conduct and statements of the VHP leaders in Gujarat. Instead, he assured the House and the nation that India was a secular country and no individual could change India into a theocratic state. "The Indian ethos will never accept a religious state nor it will accept pseudo-secularism," he said.

If one looked at the debate of the Constituent Assembly no member wanted India to be a Hindu nation, he said. Even without adopting the word secular, the fact that the Constitution had guaranteed right to religion and placed all religions at par was proof that India is and would always remain a secular nation, he said.

On Ayodhya, Mr Advani said: "Yes, I did take out the Somnath *rath yatra* and I still believe that Ayodhya was a right movement. But what happened on 6 December 1992 was unfortunate." He assured the House that elections in Gujarat would be free and fair.

On page 4

- PM, deputy will campaign in Gujarat
- Cong adds another caste to list

# Pakistan's aid to N. Korea may hasten N-race in Asia

By Manoj Joshi  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

*11-9/11*

**New Delhi:** For the past three decades, New Delhi has been preaching the world the inequities of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), but it is unlikely to derive any pleasure from the revelation that Pakistan is providing nuclear weapon-making technology to North Korea.

As the country's nuclear tests shook the foundations of the NPT in 1998, India cannot afford to take a moralistic stand on the subject.

Whatever damage had to be done to India's interests had already been accomplished through the first part of the bargain, when the North Korean-supplied No-Dong or Ghauri medium-range ballistic missile brought most of India under the range of Pakistani nuclear weapons.

It is now the turn of countries like Japan and China, and South Korea, to worry about the consequences of Pakistan's irresponsible behaviour: Having helped Pakistan to cross the nuclear threshold and equipped it with M-11 missiles to lob them on India, Beijing is clearly hoist on its own petard. A sinking regime in Pyongyang won't think twice about threatening former friends and neighbours.

Following the Indian tests, Japan took the high road of chastising India. But now, if the North Koreans test their bomb, Japan may feel compelled to cross the threshold. Tokyo has a nuclear establishment that has

everything in place to do so—lots of plutonium, superb machining capability as well as space launch rockets that could double as missiles.

Pakistan has breached the central taboo of the nuclear age: Thou shalt not help other countries to make nuclear weapons. In the 1950s, the US refused to share nuclear technology with its allies like France. Russia broke with China on the issue.

While China cynically aided Pakistan's nuclear and missile quest in the 1980s to humble India, Pakistan and North Korea form a different class of proliferators. Both are bankrupt "failed states" which feel that their dangerous weapons are their only bargaining chips.

What will be the consequences of the world's nuclear regime coming apart? The immediate one will be to enhance the danger of a nuclear war. But it could also kick-start a movement to eliminate nuclear weapons from the face of the world. The biggest opponent of such a course is the most powerful country in the world, the US.

No country or group of countries can even hope to match, leave alone best, the US in the next 50 years in conventional or non-nuclear military capability. Yet the Americans have been the principal opponent of the movement to rid the world of nuclear weapons. But even the US may realise that yesterday's idealistic yearning could be today's common sense.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

19 NOV 2002

# Chandrika proposes panel for ethnic reconciliation

By V.S. Sambandan

**COLOMBO, NOV. 12.** The Sri Lankan President, Chandrika Kumaratunga, today proposed the setting up of a National Commission for Ethnic Reconciliation and Sustainable Peace, with the participation of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to resolve the decades-long ethnic conflict.

The President also wanted the country to move on to a new electoral system, abolish the executive presidency and provide for greater devolution of powers, based on the draft constitution prepared by her administration.

At a function to mark eight years of her Presidency, Ms. Kumaratunga said the objectives of the proposed committee would be to identify the core issues of the conflict and recommend negotiated solutions. In addition, the panel would also make recommendations to ensure the "safety and security of the Muslim and Sinhala communities in the north and the east."

Ms. Kumaratunga wanted minority rights to be "further guaranteed" with "wide devolution of political and administrative powers to the regions on the basis of the Constitutional Drafts of 1997 and 2000."

Outlining her vision for ethnic reconciliation and sustainable peace, Ms. Kumaratunga said "the fact that the LTTE does not appear to insist on the interim council is a good development." The setting up of an interim council, she said, "should only be considered after settlement of the core issues have been negotiated and the LTTE agreed to lay down arms and enter the democratic political mainstream."

On the handling of the peace process by the ruling United National Party (UNP), she said, "I am glad that the new UNP Government has taken action to carry forward through a negotiated settlement, the peace process commenced by me eight years ago." The measures adopted last year "to reduce tension between the antagonists, seem to progress satisfactorily," she said.

Ms. Kumaratunga was also happy that the Government had "taken serious note" of her insistence "on the necessity to engage in a dialogue with the LTTE on the core issues." This, she said, had "resulted in the setting up of a committee to commence discussions on these matters." The President wanted human rights issues to be "placed high on the agenda" of the ongoing talks between the Government and the Tigers.

"It must include the problems of child conscription, extortion, the guarantee of the rights of the Muslim and Sinhala people of the North and East and the guarantee of political plurality," she said. Yet another issue that Ms. Kumaratunga wanted to be taken up was the award of compensation to victims of human rights violations, "whoever may have been the perpetrators of the atrocities." A Presidential Commission of Inquiry has dealt with the victims of the 1983 massacres but we have to now focus our attention on subsequent incidents of violence. The 1983 anti-Tamil riots, Ms. Kumaratunga said, was a "clear failure of the Sri Lankan state to protect its Tamil citizens." Terming it "the watershed event in ethnic relations and a true national tragedy of epic proportions," the President said, "it is a failure, which I deeply regret."

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THE HINDU

# Complicated Bru

Zoramthanga must persevere

The Mizoram government's talks with the militant Bru (Reang) National Liberation Front will serve no purpose unless both sides are prepared to give and take. Little has yielded even after a seventh round of talks. On its part, the BNLF has scaled down its original demand of an autonomous district council for a development council which former chief minister Lalthanhawla was ready to consider. But chief minister Zoramthanga is blunt and refuses to consider any demand of a political nature. Admittedly, the question of autonomy for Reangs does not arise because they do not form a homogeneous block, nor is there any proper census of their number. Besides, any concession would anger the Hmars — they outstrip the Reangs numerically — who, after six years of an armed uprising for autonomy, finally settled for a development council. Some special arrangements will have to be made to meet Reang aspirations.

Their grievances must be judged in the context of the fact that about 40,000 evacuees are in Tripura since 1997 after having fled Mizoram following an ethnic flare up in which 10 were said to have been killed. They cannot continue to languish in makeshift camps, and it is for Aizawl to create a congenial climate for their return; after all, they are its inhabitants. The state government can ill afford to spend its limited resources on tackling Bru militants along Mizoram-Tripura-Bangladesh borders. A hardening of attitude may only force militants to team up with their ilk in Tripura. One expects Zoramthanga, himself a rebel leader once and now involved in contacting Naga leaders in Bangkok as Delhi's peace emissary, to display some understanding before the Reang problem gets out of hand. The peace prevailing after 20 years of rebellion must be preserved.

1 NOV 2002

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 14, 2002

J. Parliament  
7.10.10

## A DISTURBING TREND

19/8

THE TWO HOUSES of Parliament have been adjourned sine die, ahead of schedule, even while a lot of legislative business remains un-addressed. Important legislation pertaining to the Right to Life, the Constitution Amendment to make the right to education a fundamental right and a Bill to enable banning pre-natal diagnosis for sex determination, will now have to wait until December 2002, when the winter session is scheduled to be convened. The same is true of the critical changes to the Representation of the People Act, 1952 (rendered necessary by an apex court ruling and aimed at cleansing the election process of criminal elements), on which the parties had arrived at a consensus and parliamentary approval appeared to be just a formality. All these and some other Bills were not taken up by Parliament because the functioning of both the Houses was stalled by an angry Opposition, incensed by the revelations of wrongdoing in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gases.

The BJP spokesperson, V. K. Malhotra, as is his wont, has put all the blame for this on the Opposition. While those in the Opposition are guilty of stalling the House proceedings every now and then (incidentally the BJP and its allies too were guilty of such tactics when they were on the other side) in the past few years, a closer look at the facts in this case clearly leads to the conclusion that the Government side too is to be blamed. What the Opposition was demanding in the context of the scandalous allotment of petrol pumps and LPG dealerships was that the Petroleum Minister, Ram Naik, quit (owning moral responsibility for the wrongdoing) and a judicial inquiry be ordered on the affair. The Opposition parties could not have insisted upon anything else and they would have been pronounced guilty of having failed in their duty if they did not persist with this demand in the two Houses. Parliament, indeed, is a forum for the Opposition to raise its demand and it is imperative for the Government to clarify its stance. The Executive, after

all, is accountable to Parliament and thereby to the people and has to be responsive to strong feelings in Parliament and among the public. After having come under a cloud, the least that was expected of the political leadership of the ruling NDA was to ensure Mr. Naik's resignation and the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, to order a judicial inquiry. By stonewalling the Opposition's demand (like it was done in the wake of similar scams that came to light during the regime of P. V. Narasimha Rao between 1991 and 1996), the ruling NDA must share a great deal of the blame for having let much of the monsoon session be lost without any legislative business being carried out.

Be that as it may, the Opposition parties too need to do some soul searching. It may be true that they were left with no option other than to persist with their demands in the way they did (at least within Parliament) given the fact that the Government side seemed determined to brazen it out. This indeed has been the attitude of the ruling NDA on every such instance when ministerial improprieties or charges of corruption and malfeasance were brought to light. But then, those leading the Opposition too cannot be absolved of their guilt because their agenda, on all these instances, has been restricted to merely stalling Parliament's functioning. That the parties had hardly done their mite outside Parliament to organise demonstrations and grass roots activity to rouse public opinion in favour of their position does expose them to the charge of acting in a reckless fashion. The harsh truth is that most of those in the Opposition too are guilty of similar wrongs (when they were in power) and hence lack the moral authority to engage themselves in any efforts to mobilise the people for the cause of probity in public life. Given this reality, stalling parliamentary proceedings — all that it requires is for a few members to walk into the well of the House — is indeed an easy way out. This is a cause for deep concern.

# Debate interrupted

The premature adjournment of Parliament speaks of a larger failure

SURELY there's an unhappy message buried in the proximity of these two events: the adjournment of both Houses of Parliament sine die, three days ahead of schedule, comes in the week in which the country celebrates its Independence Day. Parliament is the most visible marker of the health of our democracy, it is home to its best practices and its highest ideals. It has become, today, the most glaring symptom of its decline. Even the dramatic statistics the BJP spokesperson has trotted out on the occasion don't tell the whole story—the loss of 356 hours due to uproar and adjournments in the 13th Lok Sabha has wasted about Rs 100 crore of public money. Statistics sanitise. The sounds of silence that echo under the domed roof after the monsoon session died a premature death speak more eloquently than cold figures ever could.

The unnatural quiet in Parliament speaks of an old breakdown. Ostensibly, it has proved impossible to conduct business in the House this session—except in the most minimal way—because of the uproar over the petrol pump scam. The irony is, the scam wasn't discussed in either House, not in any meaningful manner, not even once. In the name of the

scam, the Opposition staged repeated walkouts while the party in the dock quickly went on the offensive. It became the latest excuse for both sides to reenact an older script of unbridgeable antagonisms leading to unrelenting adjournments. The Budget session earlier this year had witnessed similar scenes over the Gujarat riots, the winter session before that was disrupted over Pota. Each and every one of those issues is a crucial one. But parliamentarians on all sides of the ideological divide have used them only as another provocation to scuttle dialogue by bringing Parliament to a grinding halt.

All sides are culpable here. The Opposition, which thinks that it is not possible to be truly oppositional on any issue without creating 'pandemonium' in Parliament. The treasury benches that instantly close ranks and take intransigent positions, when they don't begin throwing mud all around, hoping it will stick to the opposition as well—it inevitably does. Perhaps it is unfair to expect a newly anointed speaker to tackle these frozen positions. Yet, it is impossible not to wonder also whether Manohar Joshi threw in the towel too early. The chilling silence in Parliament calls for a shared introspection.

# Houses adjourned sine die two days before schedule

SI-6  
Statesman News Service

13/8  
9-Parliament

NEW DELHI, Aug. 12. — Both Houses of Parliament were today adjourned sine die, two days ahead of schedule. Parliament has been paralysed since 5 August as a result of which the country has incurred a loss of Rs 4.80 crore.

The 13th Lok Sabha has earned the dubious distinction of having maximum number of adjournments since its formation in October 1999. Mr VK Malhotra, BJP chief whip in the Lok Sabha, said 356 hours had been wasted in such disruptions. This had cost the nation Rs 100 crore.

Soon after the Lok Sabha assembled this morning, Speaker Mr Manohar Joshi expressed his inability to offer a comment on the Opposition's demand for the resignation of the petroleum minister as a pre-condition to let the House function. "I'm in no position to comment on this," the Speaker told some Opposition members who rushed to the podium protesting against the decision to adjourn the House sine die.

The government apparently didn't respond to the tactical retreat by the Opposition which had sought a statement on the petrol pump scam from the Prime Minister instead of Mr Ram Naik's resignation to let Parliament function for the remaining three days.

Once it was clear that Parliament would not be able to function today, the Speaker came to the House with a prepared statement which is generally read out on the last working day of a session. It was with some difficulty that Mr Joshi pacified the agitating members on the Opposition benches. "Concerned at the national waste caused by adjournment of the House day after day, I was left with only two alternatives. Either, I could have continued with the ritual of meeting for two days up to 14 August and adjourn the House on both these days without transacting any business. Alternatively, I could adjourn the House sine die today to enable the honourable members to at least go back and do some constructive work for their constituencies."

Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee was not present at the House when the Speaker requested the members to restore calm after he finished reading his statement and stand up for the national song, *Vande Mataram*, played at the conclusion of the session. It's customary for the leader of the House and the leader of the Opposition to be present at the concluding hour.

**BJP, Cong trade charges:** The BJP went overboard while criticising the Opposition's role in Parliament. The Congress blamed the government, the Prime Minister in particular, for the abrupt ending of the monsoon session of Parliament.



# Opposition blames PM for stalemate

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 9.** The petrol pump allotment issue continued to dominate the proceedings of Parliament which adjourned for the sixth day today with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party and the Opposition holding on to their well-known positions.

While the Rajya Sabha was adjourned for the day without transacting any business, the Lok Sabha saw the passage of the Railways supplementary demand for grant through a voice vote amid vociferous protests and slogan-shouting by the Opposition inside the well of the House.

The Opposition led by the Congress raised slogans in the Lok Sabha against the Petroleum Minister, Ram Naik, demanding his resignation and even went on to suggest the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, relinquish his post.

Mr. Vajpayee was not present, while Mr. Naik, who was in when the House cleared the Railways demands for grants, preferred not to comment. Soon after it assembled, the Lok Sabha was adjourned till noon, when the House took up the legislative business and rose after its passage in less than 15 minutes.

Both the BJP and the Opposition traded charges over the deadlock that has resulted in repeated adjournments of both Houses without a break since last Friday.

A determined Opposition took the campaign outside, with the CPI(M) insisting on laying the blame at the door of the Prime Minister for not making any attempt to find a solution to the stalemate.

"The Leader of the House, Mr. Vajpayee, has not taken any initiative to call a meeting of the Opposition parties to resolve the situation. Now, even some NDA allies have

started demanding an inquiry," the CPI(M) leader, Rup Chand Pal, said at a press conference. The Opposition demands include resignation of Mr. Naik and a high-level probe into the allotments.

On the other hand, the BJP continued to be on the offensive and released further lists of people who got allotments during the earlier Congress regime. The BJP spokesman, V.K. Malhotra, said the Congress had made 18,000 allotments to relatives of its leaders and challenged the party president, Sonia Gandhi, to 'respond' to the standards set by the Prime Minister by directing her party members to surrender such allotments. Responding to the Opposition demand for a probe, he said, the BJP was willing to concede a Parliamentary approval for the cancellation effected by Mr. Vajpayee provided it included allotments to relatives of all political people made earlier.

ORDINANCE ON POLL REFORMS LIKELY

# Parliament deadlocked over petrol pump scam

By Anita Joshua

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 7.** The impasse in Parliament over the petrol pump scam continued for the fourth consecutive day today with both the Government and the Opposition sticking to their guns, resulting in the two Houses being adjourned within minutes for the day without transacting any business.

With neither side showing any mood of relenting in the coming days, and there being no attempt during the day to break the deadlock, the stalemate is expected to continue.

And, it could well result in a sine die adjournment of the monsoon session a couple of days ahead of schedule if no way is found out of the current imbroglio.

As of now, indications are that the session will continue till Monday to allow the Vice-presidential elections — scheduled for the day — to be conducted. Given the fact that Parliament's approval for the Railways' supplementary demand for grants is needed, the Government is likely to push it through if the Opposition continues to disrupt the proceedings in the days to

come.

While several Bills are pending approval, the Government is now toying with the idea of bringing in an ordinance to put into effect the Electoral Reforms Bill in view of the coming Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections and in anticipation of the Gujarat elections some time in the near future. On this count, the Government is unlikely to find any opposition as this Bill is a "product of political consensus".

Another ordinance is likely to be issued to bring into effect the Cable Television Networks

(Regulation) Amendment Bill 2002, which was passed by the Lok Sabha in the Budget session and was slated for introduction and passage in the Rajya Sabha this session.

Even as both sides are contemplating their moves in the days ahead, the war of words continued today with the BJP spokesman, V. K. Malhotra, accusing the Opposition of "strangling democracy". The Opposition's behaviour was "quite objectionable" as a result of which important legislation and government business were suffering. Besides, no discussion could take place on important issues; many of which had been raised by the Opposition itself.

To counter the Opposition demand for an enquiry into the allotments, a signature campaign of sorts is being carried out amid BJP MPs and those from its allies; urging the Prime Minister to look into and cancel — if need be — all the allotments made since 1983.

Meanwhile, unfazed by the BJP's list listing Congress leaders who had recommended petrol pumps for some of their acquaintances, the Congress spokesman, S. Jaipal Reddy, said: "From day one, we have been demanding a thorough inquiry across the spectrum. Instead of ordering an inquiry, they are indulging in a campaign of insinuations."

## Many Opposition leaders wrote for allotment: BJP

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 7.** Cornered by the petrol pump allotment scandal, the Bharatiya Janata Party today launched a counter-attack. While it has not yet been able to produce the promised list of Congress beneficiaries of the petroleum largesse, it did produce a list of Opposition leaders who had written letters of "recommendation" for allotment.

The BJP spokesperson, Vijay Kumar Malhotra, said the "list" of leaders who had recommended allotment of petrol pumps and gas agencies included Manmohan Singh, Sushil Kumar Shinde, Motilal Vohra, Oscar Fernandes, Santosh Mohan Dev, Begum Noor Bano (all Congress), Basudev

Acharya, P. Mohan (both CPI-M), Nagendra Ojha, Bhan Singh Bhaura, Ajay Chakravarty (all CPI), Ramdas Athavale (RPI) and Raj Babbar (SP).

However, Mr. Malhotra was neither able to say whether the letters of recommendations were for their relatives, nor was he able to say how many of them had got the allotments.

To another query, Mr. Malhotra said he had no knowledge whether the senior BJP leaders, Atal Behari Vajpayee or L.K. Advani as leaders of Opposition or as MPs had ever recommended allotment of petrol pumps or gas agencies to Congress Ministers.

"We are still trying to find out how many Congressmen and their relatives also got allotments in the last two years," he said.

## Petrol pump issue fuels turmoil in house

711 3/18  
9 Parliament  
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Parliament was plunged into turmoil on Friday over reports about the allotment of petrol pumps to BJP functionaries and their relatives. Proceedings in both houses were stalled by opposition members who made a strident demand for the resignation of petroleum minister Ram Naik. In the Lok Sabha, opposition members staged a noisy walkout to protest the government's unsatisfactory response.

The treasury benches said it was the Congress which had misused discretionary quotas. Mr Naik was not present as he was out of Delhi.

The issue was raised by opposition members as soon as the house assembled. They demanded that question hour be suspended to enable a discussion on the matter.

Minister of state for petroleum S. Gangwar said the government would hold an inquiry into the reported allotment of petrol pumps and the guilty would be punished. He said the government had put a stop to the "black marketing" of LPG connections and had streamlined the system. He said the petroleum ministry had done away with the discretionary quota and had instead entrusted this task to special oil selection cells, which were headed by retired judges. The petroleum ministry, he said, had no role in the allotment of petrol pumps.

# Opposition slams disinvestment policies

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 1.** The Opposition today criticised the Government's disinvestment policies in the Lok Sabha on the grounds that it was "mindless" and was meant for the benefit of corporate giants seeking to create monopolies. Seeking a review of these policies, members also attacked the Disinvestment Minister, Arun Shourie for writing a series of articles in which comments were made on functioning of ministers in his own Government.

Taking part in a special discussion on disinvestment of public sector undertakings, the Opposition members felt privatisation was not the right method to tackle serious issues relating to fiscal deficit and shortfall in tax collection.

The CPI-M leader, Somnath Chatterjee sought to know from Mr. Shourie in what capacity he had written newspaper articles on the disinvestment issue, putting himself in the role of a "self-appointed adviser". He said Mr. Shourie himself did not head any PSU while commenting on their functioning.

Describing the policy as dehumanising,

he said earning money through sale of PSUs had become more important than workers' interests for the Government. Mentioning the sick industries in West Bengal which had been referred to BIFR, Mr. Chatterjee said all were in the private sector originally but were taken over because of their sickness and in the interest of workers. He called for a complete reversal of the policy of disinvestments, which he described as "anti-national".

Earlier, initiating the discussion, Prabhodh Panda of the CPI questioned the purpose of disinvestment, classification of PSUs for this exercise and the methodology adopted for offloading the Government's stake in various units. He said disinvestment was benefiting only big corporates. This was evident from the manner in which the Tatas sought to withdraw Rs. 1200 crore soon after the disinvestment of VSNL in which it acquired 26 per cent stake for over Rs. 1400 crores.

In a scathing indictment of the disinvestment process, Jyotiraditya Scindia of the Congress said it had become merely a means to augment the budget and bridge the growing deficit. He questioned the util-

isation of the disinvestment proceeds which were going into the 'black hole' of revenue expenditure. He felt these should be used to restructure some of the loss-making businesses to make them viable or retiring the country's public debt or investing in the social sector.

Mr. Scindia said it was disturbing to read Mr. Shourie's statements about PSUs which speak of their uncompetitive nature. This was a great marketing statement, he said, aimed at securing high bids for companies.

The former Prime Minister, H.D. Deve Gowda said the Government had sold precious assets at a throwaway prices. He cited the deal involving Hotel Ashoka in Karnataka in which the property itself was valued at Rs. eight crore. He demanded an inquiry into this sale as well as the entire disinvestment policy.

Members belonging to the NDA, however, strongly defended the disinvestment policy with Kirit Somaya of the BJP insisting that it would ensure optimum utilisation of national resources.

He said several States including those ruled by the Congress are also undertaking disinvestment.

## LS adjourned over Fernandes issue

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, AUG. 1.** The ongoing boycott of the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, took an ugly turn in the Lok Sabha today and led to three adjournments within an hour when Samata Party members countered the Opposition strategy by casting aspersions on the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi. The issue was resolved only after the charges were withdrawn.

Trouble began towards the end of the question hour when the Opposition sought to drown with loud protests Mr. Fernandes' reply to a question. Though the Speaker, Manohar Joshi, succeeded in calming the members for a while on the plea that the Lok Sabha ought to try and end the stalemate as was being attempted in the Rajya Sabha, all hell broke loose when the Samata Party's Prabhunath Singh made certain allegations against Ms. Gandhi. Within seconds, Congress members were in the well of the House protesting the remarks. Lending them lung power were members of the CPI(M) and the RJD with Raghuvansh Prasad Singh rushing to the well even as some NDA MPs surrounded the Speaker's chair. As cries of 'kafan chor' (coffin thief) and 'moorti chor' (statue thief) rent the air, Mr. Joshi adjourned the House for 15 minutes.

Since neither side yielded when the House met

again, it was adjourned for the second time even as party leaders were meeting in the Speaker's chambers. Though Mr. Singh withdrew his allegations as was decided at the meeting when the House met again, the Congress members insisted on an "unconditional withdrawal and unqualified apology".

With Mr. Singh refusing to give in — insisting on bringing up these charges against Ms. Gandhi tomorrow with proof — Mr. Joshi pacified the Congress benches by stating that he would allow the Samata leader's notice only if convinced that it should be raised in the House.

Even as the House settled down to business with this assurance, members from the NDA benches insisted on reacting to the Opposition boycott of Mr. Fernandes. Lal Muni Choubey of the BJP kicked up a row when, in an apparent reference to Ms. Gandhi, he said that people of foreign origin should not be allowed to occupy high office. This forced the Speaker to adjourn the House again.

While the post-lunch session saw the House proceed without any major disruption after the Speaker announced that Mr. Singh had "unconditionally withdrawn" all objectionable statements against Ms. Gandhi, the entire Opposition walked out when Mr. Fernandes rose to move a Bill to amend the Coast Guard Act, 1978.

# House uproar over ER

9-Parliament 526  
Press Trust of India

## BJP as mediator

NEW DELHI, July 30. — Both Houses of Parliament today witnessed uproarious scenes over yesterday's Cabinet decision to stick to the division of the Eastern Railway with members from West Bengal and Bihar exchanging words in the Rajya Sabha and the Trinamool Congress members walking out of the Lok Sabha protesting against the decision.

Raising the issue during the Zero Hour in the Lok Sabha, Trinamul leader Mr Sudip Bandopadhyay protested against the Centre's decision and said it was against the interests of Bengal. He, along with his party colleagues, left the House in a huff when there was no response from the government.

The Left and Trinamul members tried to stall the Question Hour and wanted the issue to be discussed. Disallowing them from disrupting the question Hour, the Speaker, Mr

37/17  
KOLKATA, July 30. — The BJP today tried to avoid political isolation in West Bengal by offering to mediate with Delhi for retaining the revenue-rich Dhanbad division with Eastern Railway. "If there is a proposal to retain Dhanbad from any quarter, we'll forward it to the Centre," Mr Asim Ghosh, state BJP president, said. It's been reported that Miss Mamata Banerjee had scaled down his demand from abrogation of ER's division to retention of Dhanbad with the zone. — SNS

Manohar Joshi, said they could raise it during the zero hour.

Raising the issue in the Rajya Sabha, CPI-M member Mrs Sarla Maheshwari said the decision was an "assault" on the federal set up. She was joined by her party colleagues and Trinamul member Mr Dinesh Trivedi who said it was a dangerous move as it would not

only disintegrate the railways but also the country. Deputy Chairman Mrs Najma Heptullah took serious objection to Mr Trivedi's remarks saying the country would not be disintegrated.

Members from Bihar, especially Mr Rajiv Ranjan Singh of the Samata Party, Mr Ramdeo Bhandari of the RJD and Mr SS Ahluwalia of the BJP in the Rajya Sabha and RJD leader Mr Raghuvansh Prasad Singh in the Lok Sabha vociferously supported the government's move and said it was in the interest of backward states like Bihar which had always been neglected by the railway.

Trinamul chief Miss Mamata Banerjee attacked Mr Nitish Kumar for fomenting regionalism by the division. "Mr Kumar has done vote politics in Bihar. It is politically motivated and with vindictive attitude by which West Bengal's interest was jeopardised," she said, but declined to elaborate on her comments on Mr Kumar vis-a-vis the Godhra carnage.

# Furore in LS over Advani's 'evasive' reply

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 25. The Opposition in the Lok Sabha today protested against the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani's "evasive" response to many of the queries in the House on Tuesday in his reply to a marathon discussion on relief and rehabilitation measures in riot-affected Gujarat.

The Congress chief whip, Priyaranjan Dasmunshi, raised the issue soon after question hour, saying that Mr. Advani must reply to 14 questions. "He should reply either today, tomorrow or on Monday. We will not keep quiet. He has insulted the House. We are not satisfied with his reply on Gujarat."

As Mr. Dasmunshi raised the pitch, he found support from the Left, the Samajwadi Party and the Rashtriya Janata Dal benches who also gave vent to their lungpower and for the next few minutes the House was drowned in the uproar.

The House was scheduled to have a discussion under Rule 193 on drought and flood situation in the country as the Chair had announced that there would be no zero hour today.

"Mr. Advani is only the Deputy Prime Minister and not the *de facto* Prime Minister. He cannot browbeat the Opposition," Mr. Dasmunshi continued. The Opposition, dissatisfied with Mr. Advani's reply, had staged a last-minute walkout on Tuesday. The Samajwadi Party leader, Mulayam Singh Yadav, wanted the Government to disclose the names of the passengers who died in Godhra when the S-6 compartment of the Sabarmati Express was set ablaze. The Deputy Speaker, P.M. Sayeed, said the debate got over on Tuesday itself.

"You can take it up again in a different form if you are not satisfied," he said, urging the members to maintain order in the House. Still looking dissatisfied, Mr. Dasmunshi said: "We

cannot cooperate with him (Mr. Advani) till all our questions on Gujarat are answered."

The members of the Samata Party, an NDA ally, and the RJD, particularly those hailing from Bihar, were on their feet, trying to shout down the Opposition members and raising the issue of floods in Bihar.

The RJD leader, Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, said Bihar was reeling under the impact of severe floods and accused the Centre of doing nothing by way of assistance. The Samata Party members, Prabhunath Singh and Raghunath Jha, also drew the attention of the Chair towards the grim situation in the State. In his response, the Minister of State for Home, I.D. Swami, said that three helicopters had been sent to Bihar for relief operations and two others were on the standby. Army boats were also being pressed into service to rescue people. A Central team would be sent to make a comprehensive assessment as soon as a proposal was received from the State Government.

THE HINDI

25 JUL 2002

# JPC claims first scalp, UTI Bank chief goes on leave

■ DRAFT | Nayak 'stood to gain' from proposed merger

ENS ECONOMIC BUREAU  
NEW DELHI, JULY 23

THE draft report prepared by the Joint Parliamentary Committee's (JPC) secretariat on the stock market crash claimed its first scalp with UTI Bank chairman and managing director P.J. Nayak going on leave for four weeks in order to clear his name. The report is believed to have said Nayak "stood to gain" from the proposed merger of UTI Bank and Global Trust Bank (GTB).

Speaking to *The Indian Express*, Nayak said: "I've asked the board of the bank

## Cloud over Raia on PM council

NEW DELHI: The shadow of the huge sums owed by top industrialists to public sector banks and financial institutions may finally cast its shadow on the Prime Minister's Trade and Advisory Council. Faced by a barrage of questions from MPs, led by Amar Singh, Finance Minister Jaswant Singh said in the Rajya Sabha that he would "examine" the issue of Essar chief Shashi Ruia continuing on the council, and would get back to Parliament on the matter. 1 PAGE 9

to evaluate events, and I've gone on leave in order to facilitate an impartial enquiry."

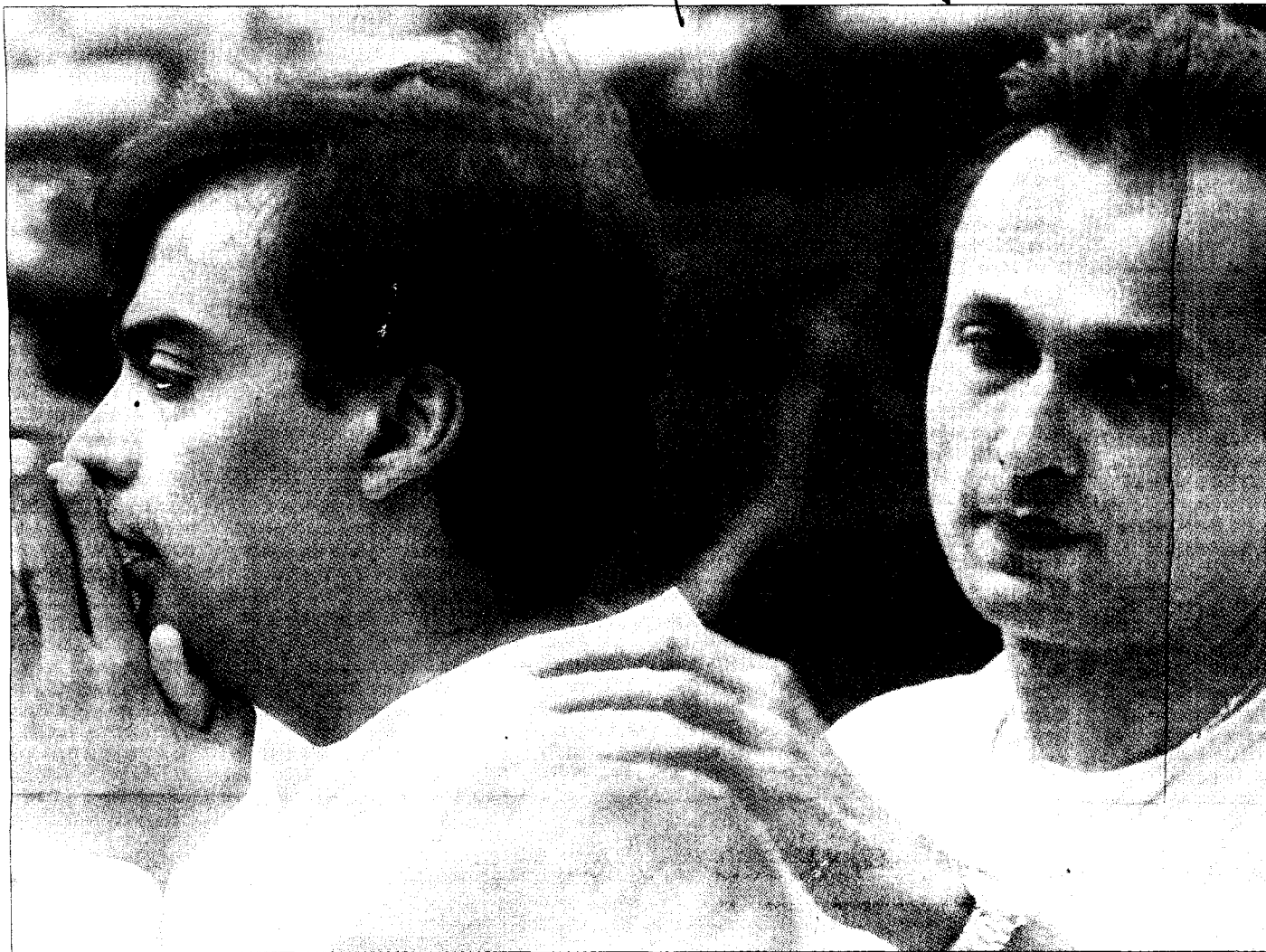
The JPC today held an emergency meeting to deal with the leaks of its draft report, and chairman Prakash Mani Tripathi went at great lengths to state the report was just a draft prepared for circulation amongst members — the actual report, which would include members comments, is still far from ready. Sources say the final report is unlikely to be ready before the end of the year. Tripathi said, till then, all leaks based on the draft

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INDIAN EXPRESS

24 JUL 2002

# King of bourses rules hearts



Anil Ambani consoles brother Mukesh at their father Dhirubhai's funeral in Mumbai on Sunday.

## Thousands throng Dhirubhai funeral

Shashank Mhasawade  
Mumbai, July 7

HE WAS the king of the bourse, they say; but Dhirubhai Ambani, architect of the Rs 65,000-crore Reliance empire, also ruled the hearts of the people.

This was there for all to see at his funeral this evening when all roads in Mumbai led to the Chandanwadi crematorium at Marine Lines where thousands gathered to bid goodbye to the legendary rags-to-riches tycoon.

Dhirubhai was cremated in the electric furnace around 6.30 pm amidst chanting of *mantras*, while people outside shouted *Dhirubhai amar rahe*.

Sons Mukesh and Anil performed the last rites in the presence of family members, VVIP politicians, industrialists and almost all of Bollywood. The rituals continued for over two hours.

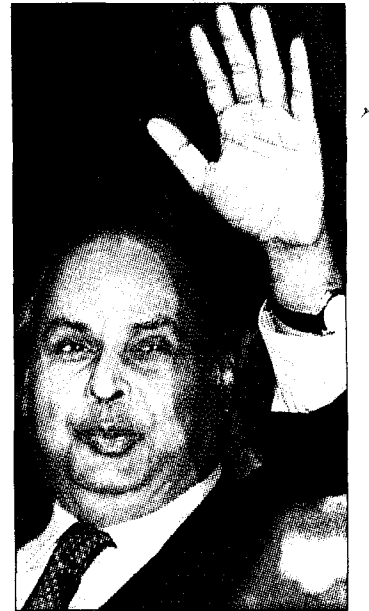
It was an unprecedented scene, for no other industrialist, film star or political leader in Mumbai ever drew such a large crowd in life or in death. Men, women, youngsters and Reliance investors occupied every inch around the crematorium — on railway footbridges, platforms, rooftops, pavements, along the whole stretch of the road leading to the crematorium.

The truck carrying Dhirubhai's body reached Chandanwadi at 5.40 pm. Sons Anil and Mukesh carried the body on their shoulders with help from family members and friends.

Plans to take out a procession from SK Patil Gardens were dropped at the last minute to ensure the security of VVIPs like Narendra Modi and Sharad Pawar. The police hadn't anticipated the size of the turnout and had a tough time controlling the crowd.

Private security guards were deployed in large numbers to help the police. Around 7.30 pm, Anil and Mukesh came out and addressed the crowd. Anil spoke English, but Mukesh stuck to Hindi. "On behalf of the Ambani family and the Reliance group, I thank you for your good wishes and support," Anil said. "I personally apologise to each of you for not being able to accommodate all of you inside. Since the rituals will take another couple of hours, I request you to proceed to your destinations."

But his appeal went unheeded. Mukesh's speech found a tremendous response. "Dhirubhai, the son of a school teacher, had a dream when he arrived in Mumbai in 1959. With only Rs



Dhirubhai Ambani

500 in his pocket, he worked hard to create an empire worth Rs 65,000 crore. It's a world record for a man to create such wealth in his lifetime. He proved that this could happen in India. He always wished that thousands of such Ambanis were born in India. *Dhirubhai amar rahe*," Mukesh said, and returned to complete the rituals.

"While the flames have reduced his body to ashes, no fire will burn the dream he saw and turned into reality," Hansaben Shah, an admirer of Dhirubhai, said with tears in her eyes.

Earlier, Dhirubhai's body came home at 39 Cuffe Parade from Breach Candy Hospital with the departed tycoon's relatives, friends, Reliance employees and thousands of fans flanking the narrow road.

There were at least a dozen portraits of Dhirubhai with his quotes stuck on the pandal's walls. One quote read, "Think big, think fast and think ahead. Ideas are no one's monopoly."

As the day wore on, the list of VVIPs got bigger and bigger: L K Advani, Governor P C Alexander, Chief Minister Vilasrao Deshmukh, Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray, Samajwadi Party chief Mulayam Singh Yadav, industrialists Ratan Tata, Adi Godrej and Ajay Piramal, superstars Amitabh Bachchan and Shabana Azmi.

Those who never knew of Dhirubhai's clout and following got to see it today on his death.

Related reports on Page 12

## What happens to Reliance now

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, July 7

THERE WAS one meeting at Dhirubhai Ambani's fourth-floor office at Maker Chambers IV that would take place every weekday. Unless one or more of the principals were away, at precisely 1.30 pm Dhirubhai Ambani would be joined by his sons Mukesh and Anil for lunch.

The menu, invariably, was low-cholesterol Gujarati fare. But the agenda could probably redefine the phrase "power lunch".

Dhirubhai would often say that extraordinary things were thought through in that room. The subtext is that Mukesh and Anil were doing an equal share of the thinking. Which answers the question: What happens to Reliance after Dhirubhai?

In the lunchroom, the talk would involve the future of a Rs 65,000-crore company, its 35,000 employees and beyond. What was agreed upon in that room

### REMEMBERING AN OUTSTANDING ENTREPRENEUR



His rise is a remarkable example, which needs to be studied in depth to highlight his important role in India's quest for economic growth and regeneration

K R Narayanan



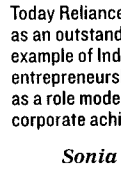
He was an embodiment of initiative and determination and will remain an inspiration for others

L K Advani

He not only built a large and diversified business conglomerate, but also inspired many first-generation entrepreneurs with his success



A B Vajpayee



Today Reliance stands as an outstanding example of Indian entrepreneurship and as a role model for corporate achievement

Sonia Gandhi

was usually acted upon — and always affected the lives of millions of people. Most of what was dreamed up was realised on the ground by Ambani's two sons.

Take the case of the Jamnagar refinery. A global consultancy

major had said that it couldn't be built. Ambani's elder son Mukesh not only felt the opposite, he said he could have it up and running (from scratch) in just 30 months. The project was completed in 26 months, and Mukesh dedicated it to his father.

Over the past 16 years, after their father's first stroke, Mukesh and Anil have taken Reliance into overdrive.

An essentially Old Economy company has diversified, successfully, into New Economy areas like infotech and biotech.

Top-notch consultant Sumantra Ghoshal feels one of Dhirubhai's great contributions is that he has given India two world-class business leaders in Mukesh and Anil: "The two can run any company. They are razor sharp."

Industrialist Kumar Mangalam Birla says that if Dhirubhai was a visionary, his two sons are "pragmatic implementers". Life after Dhirubhai will be made even simpler for Mukesh and Anil by Reliance's crack top-management team (the Navratnas in Reliance jargon).

For the vision though, they will have to — at least for now — hark back to the lunches they had at Maker Chambers.



CONG LEADS DEMAND FOR CENTRAL RULE

# Opp whips up Gujarat storm

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI/ GANDHINAGAR, July 22. — The Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were adjourned today after Opposition members disrupted proceedings with demands for imposition of President's rule in Gujarat. The BJP, however, stuck to its demand for early polls there. At the same time, the Election Commission received the official communication on the dissolution of the Gujarat Assembly, while the Congress in Gujarat announced that it will observe "Quit Modi" Day in the state on the anniversary of "Quit India" on 5 August.

In a rare trial of nerves between the Opposition MPs and the Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr Manohar Joshi refused to yield to noisy protests and sloganeering in the Well of the House demanding suspension of Question Hour. The Opposition wanted to discuss Gujarat and asked the Speaker to summon Mr Modi to the Bar of the Lok Sabha for abusing Constitutional provisions by dissolving the Assembly ahead of schedule. Both the demands were turned down by the Speaker who ran the House for an hour amidst noisy scenes. Mrs Sonia Gandhi was then seen prompting members to intensify the protest as the Congress took the lead in disrupting House proceedings.

Left and Samajwadi MPs soon joined the Opposition chorus. By the time the House was adjourned till 2 p.m., the entire Opposition was on its feet. When the Lok Sabha reassembled, Mr Buta Singh and Miss R Nara were the first to rush to the Well. Mr PM Sayeed, in the Chair, adjourned the House.

In Gandhinagar, the AICC general secretary in charge of Gujarat, Mr Kamal Nath, said 5 August will be observed as "Gujarat bachao, BJP bhagao (Save Gujarat, remove BJP) Day" and the party

would hold rallies in Surat, Ahmedabad and other cities demanding President's rule. He added that the Congress is ready to face elections if the EC was satisfied the atmosphere was conducive to hold hold free and fair polls.

In another significant development, the VHP, showing signs of disenchantment with the BJP, today said it can go to the extent of even supporting the Congress in the Gujarat elections if the party promoted interests of Hindus and toed the Hindutva line: "VHP is not directly supporting any political party but working for Hindu ideology ... any party taking care of Hindu interests will be our first choice. It can be even the Congress," VHP general-secretary Praveen Togadia told reporters in Jaipur, add agencies.

With the Election Commission having received the official communication on dissolution of the Assembly, the BJP presented its case for early polls while the Congress argued in favour of delaying them. Mr Arun Jaitley said the provision of article 174 of the Constitution that elections should be held within six months of the the last sitting of the Assembly would alone apply, instead of any clause making an exception to this under different provisions such as Article 356.

The BJP is mulling "legal options" if the Gujarat elections are delayed due a different interpretation of Article 174. Senior leaders argue that in the absence of President's rule a caretaker chief minister, with no accountability, could not be allowed to continue indefinitely, more so if the Election Commission came to the conclusion that law and order in such a state was not conducive to holding elections.

The Congress fielded Mr Abhishek Singhvi, party deputy spokesman. He argued that given the magnitude of the riots, it should be the priority of the state to focus on relief and rehabilitation rather than try to advance elections".

## Amnesty charge

NEW DELHI, July 22. — Amnesty International today said India had refused permission to its fact-finding team to visit Gujarat to probe rights violations in the state. But the MEA spokesperson said it was not aware of any such request, adding that permission, if required, would come from the home ministry.

Normally, Amnesty would function through its local units, which would not require permission. "People travel to all parts of this country," the spokesperson said. "At best, we facilitate travel arrangements for foreign missions." But Amnesty expressed "regret at the de facto refusal." — SNS

THE STATESMAN

23 JUL 2002

# NCP, BJP, Shiv Sena support Alexander for Rajya Sabha

By Our Special Correspondent

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9 P...  
**NEW DELHI, JULY 15.** Soon after the former Governor of Maharashtra, P.C. Alexander, filed his nomination for the byelections to the Rajya Sabha seat in the State today, the Nationalist Congress Party and the BJP-Shiv Sena combine came out in support for his candidature even as the Congress sought to underplay this closing of ranks between its ally in the Democratic Front Government in the State and the principal Opposition alliance there.

The BJP, too, appeared reluctant to make too much of this development despite the fact that efforts have been going on for a while now in Maharashtra to destabilise the Congress-led Democratic Front Government. The NCP, in the BJP's opinion, had to support Mr. Alexander as a face-saving gesture to ensure that it does not lose the seat and addresses the problem of infighting.

Stating that the party would support Mr. Alexander in a bid to make amends for the way his name was considered and then dropped for the

office of President, a senior BJP leader in the Government said there was no move to accommodate him in the Council of Ministers or the Planning Commission.

For its part, the Congress refused to be drawn into speculating on the impact of this development on the already fragile coalition Government in Maharashtra. According to the spokesman, Anand Sharma, the Congress had anyway no claim to the seat as it had fallen vacant following the death of the sitting member of the NCP, Mukesh Patel.

"As per the understanding at the Maharashtra level, this seat has been left to the NCP," Mr. Sharma said, refusing to comment on the repeated queries on whether the Congress — given its opposition to Mr. Alexander's candidature for President — would issue a whip to its party MLAs in the State to vote against the former Governor. On whether the Congress would support the former Rajya Sabha MP, Suresh Keswani's candidature for the seat, he denied having any information suggesting such a move.

THE HINDU

1992

# No consensus over Raisina

of President  
C L Manoj in New Delhi

55-6 21/5

May 20. — For the second consecutive day today the Prime Minister sent a clear message to the Opposition — this time through the CPI general secretary — that NDA does not favour a consensus on another term for Mr KR Narayanan.

During his meeting with Mr Vajpayee on the J&K situation and candidates for the President's post, Mr AB Bardhan said he favoured a second term for Mr Narayanan and urged Mr Vajpayee to evolve a consensus on that. On Kashmir, he told the Prime Minister to avoid a war and pursue diplomatic and economic measures to pressure Pakistan.

Sources said Mr Vajpayee told Mr Bardhan about the lack of consensus within the NDA on Mr Narayanan's candidature. Mr Vajpayee reportedly clarified that "he had nothing personal against Mr Narayanan" but ducked Mr Bardhan's plea to force a consensus on his candidature. The Prime Minister reportedly remained silent when Mr Bardhan objected to Mr PC Alexander's candidature and urged him not to "bureaucratise the Rashtrapathi Bhavan".

Many interpret this as an indirect message to the President himself who is scheduled to return to Delhi on Wednesday from Ooty, and is faced with making a crucial decision — whether or not to enter what looks like an unpredictably close contest with high stakes for him. The clear "no" from the ruling front has left the Opposition, especially the Congress, in a fix as they are not absolutely sure about Mr Narayanan's decision. Also, they lack a back-up strategy, sources said.

Sources close to the President says he has not yet made up his mind on the matter as "he has not been directly approached by any political party". But "winnability" and attitude of NDA allies like the DMK, BSP and TDP could be crucial to his decision.

The BJP today virtually rejected another term for Mr Narayanan saying there was no such convention. The party indicated that Mr Alexander is their preferred choice. BJP spokesman Mr VK Malhotra ruled out a consensus on Mr Narayanan. "Consensus does not mean it should be for a candidate proposed by the Left," he said.

**Cong disputes reports :** The Congress today sought to dispute reports that it had suggested a second term for Mr KR Narayanan during a meeting between Mrs Sonia Gandhi and Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee yesterday, PTI adds from Delhi. An "informal reference" was made to the Presidential elections in the talks, it said.

THE STATESMAN

7 MAY 2002

# Sonia proposes, PM disposes

57-1 9. President 20/5

**CL Manoj in New Delhi**

May 19. — The race for the presidential election took an important turn today with the Congress president, Mrs Sonia Gandhi, officially telling the Prime Minister that her party would prefer a second term for Mr KR Narayanan, and Mr Vajpayee responding by saying there was "no consensus" within the NDA in this regard.

The issue figured in a more than one hour meeting the Prime Minister, home minister and external affairs minister had this morning with Mrs Gandhi and her colleague Dr Manmohan Singh at 7 Race Course Road.

Interestingly, both Mr Jaswant Singh and the Congress spokesman, Mr Anand Sharma, refused to divulge any information on the discussions regarding presidential elections when

they talked separately to reporters after the meeting. While Mr Singh refused to touch upon the subject, Mr Sharma said Mr Vajpayee had expressed his desire to discuss the issue, but since "Kashmir has become the priority, there could be another meeting later between the Prime Minister and the Congress president".

However, sources confirmed that when Mr Vajpayee referred to the presidential elections, Mrs Gandhi said the Congress would prefer a second term for Mr Narayanan. The Prime Minister told Mrs Gandhi that there were no "consensus on another term for Mr Narayanan".

With today's development, chances for a contest has brightened with Congress sources saying Mrs Gandhi's proposal came after getting "enough feedback" on Mr Narayanan's willingness for another term.

The BJP has already indicated its preference for Mr PC Alexander.

According to sources, Mr Vajpayee is scheduled to meet other Opposition leaders in the coming days. But there is a certain amount of tension in the Opposition camp following reports that Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav and Mr Vajpayee had informally discussed the name of Dr APJ Abdul Kalam as a probable candidate. Even though there are no comments so far from both the sides, given Mr Yadav's antipathy towards the Congress and the fact that a Muslim President would suit his "vote-bank politics", many Opposition leaders are worried over whether the SP leader would be effectively used by the government to break the Opposition unity in view of the "unpredictable electoral collegium".

THE STATESMAN

10/19/97

## HITBACK PLANS:

51-6 1875 (Continued from page 1)

Parliament

it was time for decisive action. The government will consult the three Service chiefs while weighing its options, he said. For the first time in the recent past, he also came out strongly against the USA.

The home minister said he had spoken in a similar vein to the US ambassador at their meeting yesterday, but that did prevent him from being attacked by the Opposition for what was perceived as 'inaction'. Opposition leaders also referred to the frustration and disappointment of the people.

Both Houses of Parliament today adjourned sine die this evening after a three month-long Budget Session.

In Chennai today, Tamil Nadu chief minister Miss J Jayalalitha demanded that the Centre sever diplomatic ties with Pakistan and launch a "fullscale" war against that country: "If the government takes such a timely and bold decision, the entire nation will be solidly behind it." This follows yesterday's call for "strong action" from DMK president Mr M Karunanidhi.

Pak response: A report from Karachi says Pakistan today reviewed security preparedness and put its forces on the highest alert in anticipation of an attack by India across the LoC.

Pakistan information minister Mr Nisser Memon told reporters in Lahore late last night that with tension increasing "anything could happen any time". The daily *The News* also quoted Memon as saying Ms Rocca during her visit did not mention Pakistan's involvement in cross-border terrorism in her talks with officials. Mr Memon also rejected Mr George Fernandes' charge over the Jammu incident.

In Islamabad, Pakistan today sought "a more active role" from the European Union to defuse the tension, with President Musharraf saying it will continue to uphold its "principled" stand on Kashmir and highlight the issue at all fora. Pakistan defence ministry officials briefed ambassadors of the 15-member European Union about Pakistan's security perceptions with reference to India's deployment.

In Washington, the USA urged India and Pakistan to exercise restraint, and added that an end to infiltration into J&K could be one of the steps to lower tension between the two countries.

THE STATESMAN

MAY 2002

■ 'US NOT DOING ENOUGH' ■ PM WILL ADDRESS NATION

5/17  
1975

# Govt weighs hitback plans

*J. Parliament*

Statesman News Service & Agencies

NEW DELHI, May 17. — Armed with a unanimous resolution of Parliament, the government tonight was putting into place the contours of a graded response — both diplomatic and military — to the latest provocation from Pakistan-backed militants in Jammu and Kashmir.

No details of the response, however, were spelt out in Parliament today, and home minister Mr LK Advani asserted though India was capable of acting on its own, it still wanted to offer the international community scope to mount pressure on Pakistan.

The message sent out through Mr Advani's participation in the debates in both Houses of Parliament, and the resolution adopted therein, was clear: The USA had not done enough to rein in Gen. Musharraf and others who perpetrate a proxy war.

Significantly, the Prime Minister did not speak in Parliament today, but it was stated that he would address the nation on television shortly. No specific date was mentioned.

In Parliament today, both Houses resolved to "fight acts of terrorism" and reiterated categorically the nation's "determination to end this menace". Mr Advani expressed anger at Pakistan, adding in the same vein that India was "greatly disappointed" with the USA.

"India would fight its war against terror on its own," Mr Advani warned. India, the Lok Sabha was told, would go step-by-step, and will consider all options, including the military one if need be, to counter the terror groups. The demand that India take tough action and if need be cross the border in hot pursuit and even go in for a "limited war" with Pakistan found chorus in the Lok Sabha. There was pressure on the government to declare its action plan and

inform the nation how the country would deal with Pakistan. Rhetoric alone will not suffice, members said. The government reserved its right to act but refused to yield to the demand of spelling out its plan. "Any action India has in mind cannot be declared on the floor of the House," Mr Advani said.

He assured members that if needed the Prime Minister will consult the Opposition again before any action on the ground. It was also possible that Mr Vajpayee may address the nation on TV about what was being done, Mr Advani added.

## Armitage to follow Rocca

WASHINGTON, May 17. — The US State Department is planning to send deputy Secretary of State Mr Richard Armitage to India and Pakistan within two weeks, an official told *The Washington Post* today. But his itinerary has not been finalised. The trip, he said, has been under consideration even before Tuesday's Jammu terror strike.

Analysts said the visit, close on the heels of that of Ms Christina Rocca, would show the USA was sincere in its fight against global terror.

In Colombo today, Mrs Chandrika Kumaratunga "emphatically denied" having made any statement supporting third-party mediation "to resolve the J&K dispute". — PTI

The mood in the Lok Sabha reflected dismay at the USA's "doublespeak and dual policy" in the war against terror. Leaders from all political parties condemned Washington for ignoring the reality that Pakistan still harboured terrorists. The strongest condemnation came from MoS for external affairs Mr Omar Abdullah, who said: "If that is the nature of your support to us take it back ... we don't want your (US) support".

Mrs Sonia Gandhi said: "The perpetrators of terrorism are regarded by some as their allies in the war against terror. We see through double standards."

In the Rajya Sabha, Mr Advani said "it is no time for words and angry emotional outbursts ... it is the time to take a decision weighing all possible options available before the government. Today's resolve of the members in both Houses would be a great help in taking a tough decision". "The government owes a responsibility to respond to the jawans whose family members were killed by militants while they stood on guard at the borders. It is also our duty to tell them through our actions that we care for them."

Mr Advani also came out in support of Army Chief Gen. S Padmanabhan, who yesterday had said

Turn to page 6

# Parliament to pass all-party resolution today

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, May 16. — Parliament is slated to pass a unanimous resolution tomorrow condemning the Jammu massacre by the Pakistan-backed terrorists. It will be preceded by a discussion under Rule 193 soon after the Question Hour in the Lok Sabha.

Mr LK Advani will reply to the debate before it is taken up for adoption. Prime Minister Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee also may intervene.

The decision that the House discuss the situation in Jammu and pass a unanimous resolution was taken at an all-party meeting convened by the Speaker, Mr Manohar Joshi.

The motion condemning the attack is likely to be moved by the Congress leader, Mr Priya Ranjan Das Munshi. At the end of the six-hour debate, the Speaker is likely to move the same resolution for adoption.

The intention behind the motion is to demonstrate to the world and Paki-

stan that the entire country is united in its fight against terrorism.

This is intended to build up pressure on the USA and other nations that India's plight could not be taken up lightly, one of the leaders, attended the meeting, said.

This is likely to strengthen any move that the government might contemplate to retaliate, he added.

The meeting was attended by parliamentary affairs ministers Mr Pramod Mahajan and Mr Santosh Gangwar, BJP parliamentary spokesperson Mr VK Malhotra, Congress leaders Mr Shivraj Patil and Mr PR Das Munshi, Mr Somnath Chatterjee (CPI-M), Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav of the Samajwadi Party, Mr Yerran Naidu (TDP) and Mr PH Pandiyan (AIADMK).

All the members attending the meeting were unanimous in condemning the killing of more than 30 people near Jammu and they demanded that the government should take effective measures to prevent such incidents in future.

## Hawks for harsh steps

NEW DELHI, May 16. — The BJP hardliners in the government have urged the Prime Minister, Mr Vajpayee, to take some action following Tuesday's fivayeen attack near Jammu. They said there is no point in having troops stationed along the borders and allowing Pakistan to continue sponsoring terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir.

These young leaders in the party said that replying to the attack through rhetoric would not help as opinion inside the country was turning against the government. There is already talk in the government circles that "this government can talk tough, but can't act so," one leader said.

Some important ministers have also met the Prime Minister and the home minister urging them to take tough action. When asked what this tough action would mean, one minister said that the Army can attack terrorist camps in the PoK and calibrate the offensive depending on the response.

This is not the first time that these leaders are speaking about the possibility of a war. After the attack on Parliament, they had raised the issue of attacking terror camps in the PoK. The government responded by talking tough and sending Pakistan a 'list of 20' for repatriation. Some BJP leaders said that the present focus on J&K and the borders would help people forget Gujarat. — SNS

## Sonia wants strategy against terror

NEW DELHI, May 16. — Mrs Sonia Gandhi today asked the Vajpayee government to spell out its long-term strategy to fight terrorism. At the Congress Parliamentary Party meeting today, she said whenever terrorists attacked a place "the leaders of our government routinely indulge in tough talking and sabre-rattling... What's needed is a comprehensive strategy for countering the menace." She also alleged that the NDA government was "surviving on life-support system".

Mrs Gandhi said: "Co-option of the world's primary terrorist state, Pakistan, as a principle ally in the global war on terrorism has left us as vulnerable to terrorism as ever. I believe we had better learn to rely on ourselves to counter this threat."

On the troop mobilisation on the western borders, she said: "We would like the government to take the people into confidence about its long-term strategy. Now full six months after the audacious terrorist attack on our Parliament, our nation hasn't been able to heave a sigh of relief about the threat of terrorism. It was only two days back that Pakistan-trained militants mounted a brutal attack in Jammu." — SNS

# Sinha clears air on Flex in LS

New Delhi, May 15

FINANCE MINISTER Yashwant Sinha today asserted in the Lok Sabha that neither his dignity as MP nor effectiveness as minister "stands compromised" as a result of purchasing some election publicity material from the tainted Flex Industries.

In a statement clarifying his position on the controversy, Sinha ruled out any conflict of interest between his present assignment and investigation by CBI in the bribery case against excise official Someshwar Mishra and Flex chief Ashok Chaturvedi. He also maintained he had no hand in the transfer of any official investigating the case nor had he influenced the CBI.

Sinha admitted he had got some publicity material from a few printers in Delhi for his Lok Sabha campaign in 1999, including Flex Industries, which is also in the business of printing. Flex Industries was one of the printers on which he had placed some

## Nod to pension & insurance Bills

THE LOK Sabha on Wednesday passed by a voice vote a Bill seeking to enhance minimum pension of former MPs from Rs 2500 to Rs 3000 per month. The amendment Bill also envisages a hike between Rs 400 and Rs 600 in the additional pension given to MPs for membership of every year after five years. The new pension structure will be effective from September 14, 2001.

The House also passed a legislation amending the 1938 Insurance Act, which will permit entry of cooperatives, brokers and intermediaries in the insurance sector. The Bill was passed by a voice vote after Finance Minister Yashwant Sinha assured that their entry into the insurance business will not harm the interest of lakhs of agents in the insurance sector.

HTC, New Delhi

printing orders. "The fact that I purchased some election publicity material from a supplier can, by no stretch of imagination, be construed to mean that I have a relationship with him. I cannot be expected to guarantee his good character for ever.

"I would like to state categorically that neither my dignity as a Member of Parliament nor my

effectiveness as Minister of Finance stands compromised as a result of this entirely routine, transparent and above-board transaction," Sinha said.

The minister's statement came in response to a demand made by Congress member Pawan Kumar Bansal on his "so-called" links with Chaturvedi. He said the printed materials were

despatched to him at Hazaribagh by rail. For the supplies received from Flex Industries, as indeed from other printers, regular bills were raised by these firms and full payment made to them.

"My records reveal for the supplies received from Flex Industries, they had submitted five bills amounting to Rs 45,583. This amount was duly incorporated in my statutory return on election expenses filed with the district election officer of Hazaribagh Lok Sabha constituency. These records should be available with the election commission and DEO," he said.

Sinha said raids on the office of the then chief commissioner of excise Someshwar were conducted by the CBI on November 7 last year after which Someshwar and Chaturvedi were taken into custody. He said the investigation into the matter is being conducted by the CBI which did not fall within the area of "my ministerial responsibility".



LOK SABHA TO DISCUSS ISSUE TOMORROW

# We must counter terror attacks, says Vajpayee

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 15. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, told the Lok Sabha today that the nation would have to "counter" the gruesome massacre of innocent civilians and family members of defence personnel in Jammu. His remarks came in response to queries from agitated members and were the subject of some misunderstanding.

The issue of the terrorist attack was raised by members as soon as the House assembled, with the Opposition benches demanding the adjournment of official business to take up the matter. Mr. Vajpayee, who was present in the House, responded immediately.

Since he spoke in Hindi, his remark that what had happened was extremely gruesome and "Hume pratikar karna hoga" (we will have to counter it), was misunderstood by some people,

who felt that he was talking of retaliation. It was later clarified that Mr. Vajpayee spoke of the need to counter the gruesome incident. Mr. Vajpayee said he was ready to call an all-party meeting to discuss the issue. Later, it was decided that the House itself would discuss the matter on the last day of the session.

Requesting the members not to insist on postponing the official business of the House, Mr. Vajpayee said it was not a party issue and the entire political establishment of the country was united in condemning the terrorist attack.

He referred to the fact that both the Defence Minister as well as the Home Minister would be back in Delhi tomorrow and the issue could then be taken up in a substantial manner.

The plan to call an all-party meeting was given up in favour of a discussion in the Lok Sabha

on the last day of the session after the Speaker, Manohar Joshi, called a meeting of some party leaders in his chamber. It was suggested, and immediately accepted, that instead a debate under Rule 193 be held in the Lok Sabha itself on Friday, May 17, immediately after question hour.

Private members' business, normally taken up every Friday afternoon, would be suspended to allow more time for the discussion, it was agreed. A unanimous resolution is expected to be adopted in the Lok Sabha, although the exact words of the resolution are yet to be worked out.

It could be a resolution moved by the chair or identical resolutions moved by the ruling and Opposition parties.

The Speaker's meeting was attended by the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, the Congress deputy leader, Shivraj Patil, the CPI (M) parlia-

mentary party leader, Somnath Chatterji, and the Samajwadi Party president, Mulayam Singh Yadav.

## Sonia's call

By Luv Puri

KALUCHAK (JAMMU), MAY 15. The Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, today asked the Central Government to take effective and concrete steps to contain terrorism and punish those responsible for the Kaluchak suicide attack.

Ms. Gandhi, who arrived here this afternoon, told newspapers that the time had come for the Centre to show that it was serious in containing terrorism. "The Congress has always backed the Centre in matters of national security. We have supported all its policies whether it was after the attack on the World Trade Center or even the December 13 attack on Parliament".

The Centre had to act swiftly and punish those who were responsible for the inhuman attack. "The country was proud of the jawans who were staking their lives day and night to finish off terrorism."

Ms. Gandhi arrived here with the State Congress president, Ghulam Nabi Azad, and other senior leaders. She visited the Army family quarters where the attack took place.

## Toll increases to 31

The toll in the Kaluchak suicide attack has gone up to 31, with an 18-month-old girl child dying in the military hospital today. Hospital sources told *The Hindu* that the daughter of Subedar Major Manjit Singh — who himself died on Tuesday in the attack — died this morning.

# Cong, Left pitch for Narayanan

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: The Congress made it clear on Monday that it was in the reckoning for the presidential election, claiming that the ruling NDA did not have a majority in the presidential electoral college.

"It is not a matter of the NDA's choice," said Congress spokesman Jaipal Reddy. He said President K.R. Narayanan had been one of the exceptional presidents of the republic and that the party would decide on supporting him only after knowing his decision. "You can count on the Congress to hold consultations with the President before we take a stand on the presidential candidate," Mr Reddy said.

The Congress has left it to the President to decide whether he wants to seek a second term. By all indications, the Congress prefers to field Mr Narayanan and is merely waiting for his consent. "In the case of the Speaker, it was the ruling coalition's choice. But the NDA does not have a majority in the presidential electoral college. And there is no question of any trade-off when it comes to the election of the President and the Vice-President," Mr Reddy told mediapersons.

Meanwhile, the Left parties have openly pitched for Mr Narayanan for a second term, claiming that despite his indifferent health he is not averse to such a proposal.

"President Narayanan is a proven success, he has brought lustre to the office," senior CPM leader Somnath Chatterjee said on Monday. He made it clear that his party had decided to back Mr Narayanan's candidature and claimed that other constituents of the People's Front had no objection to a second term for him.

"My party has expressed its choice. His record in office speaks for itself, he is not an unknown, untested person," the CPM leader said, insisting that it was possible to build a consensus on Mr Narayanan. Mr Chatterjee said Mr Narayanan had overcome his recent illness and that he was ready to carry the rigours of office for another term.

Although Mr Narayanan belonged to the Congress, the Left had strongly backed him as the presidential candidate for his first term. An informal dialogue has apparently begun between the Left representatives and the Congress leadership on this issue.



# Parliament turns 50

A forum for informed debate and principled dissent?

AS the Indian Parliament turned 50, there was the commemorative stamp, the launch of a new inland letter and the release of a book, actually two. Was there also a moment of reflection and sober stocktaking of an institution that enshrines the practice and possibilities of dialogue and accountability? Did our MPs take a breather from their hectic engagements for the day to ask themselves why the edifice looks so shrunken, so besieged, half a century after its foundations were laid with immense faith and hope? Did anyone wonder why India's Parliament has become the arena for enacting bitter showdowns and staging occasional bodycounts to determine majorities? In between these, it only appears to go through the formal motions of dialogue and debate.

If that sounds pessimistic, take a look at this Budget session so far: it has seen, in no particular order, the budget process accomplished without serious discussion, a draconian law steamrolled by the government through a joint session of both Houses, and a much-awaited debate on a crucial issue hijacked by blame-games. Pota was promulgated twice as an ordinance — a clear mark of disrespect to Parliament — before it became a law in a manner that established a precedent which will hopefully be ignored. The joint session the government convened to force the legislation through Parliament represented the complete

breakdown of dialogue between government and Opposition; Pota entered the statute book only because the NDA government had the numbers. The debate on Gujarat was similarly dwarfed by the bald arithmetic of the House. There was no attempt at reaching across political and ideological divides to explore and forge a common ground on an issue that fundamentally affects us all. Gujarat's tragedy was trivialised as MPs reduced it to a provocation for political swordplay. The marathon 16-hour debate generated much high voltage drama but it cheated the nation of the catharsis a genuine soul-searching could have generated. Why did Gujarat erupt in the kind of violence it did? What kind of steps must we institutionalise to ensure it doesn't revisit us again? Parliament had no answers.

Is the decline of Parliament part of a larger degeneration? Does it reflect the inevitable waning of commitment after the first euphoric flush of democracy? Or is it a specific and malevolent subversion of the institution that encourages discussion and enforces accountability? On its 50th birthday, we must acknowledge these questions and search for their answers. That — not Monday's token celebrations, commemorative stamp, new inland letter, two books et al — would be the best gift we could possibly give to the Parliament of India on its 50th birthday.

'IT HAS STOOD US IN GOOD STEAD'

# Basic structure of Constitution will not be changed: PM

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MAY 13. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, today said that the basic structure of the Constitution would not be changed.

Speaking at a function to commemorate the golden jubilee celebrations of Parliament, Mr. Vajpayee said, "The country's institutions have seen many changes but the basic structure of the Constitution remained the same, and it should not change."

Mr. Vajpayee said there were ample provisions within the Constitution for amendments but there was no need to change its basic structure and shape. "It has stood us in good stead." He admitted that certain infirmities had seeped into the system, but said the parliamen-

tary form of democracy provided an equal opportunity for all sections of society.

"Despite our problems what binds us together is the fact that the parliamentary system does not discriminate on the basis of caste or religion. Every vote has the same value; it also provides an equal opportunity to all sections of society." He admitted that sometimes the wheels of parliamentary democracy functioned slowly but that was not reason enough to abandon it. "Those who have abandoned democracy have suffered."

The function was primarily an affair got together by the Communications Ministry in the new Parliament Library precincts. The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, who also holds the

Communications portfolio, used the occasion to get the Prime Minister, the Vice-President, Krishan Kant, and the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, to release a stamp, a first day cover and an inland letter card to mark the event.

Ms. Gandhi urged the gathering to reflect on the challenges faced by the system from the forces of communalism and fanaticism. "This is a challenge that must be met because it strikes at the very roots of our democracy. The Parliament must ensure a sense of security to all citizens and instil in them a feeling that the country belongs to all its citizens."

The former Lok Sabha Speaker, Shivraj Patil, who had mooted the idea of the new building, came in for praise from all those

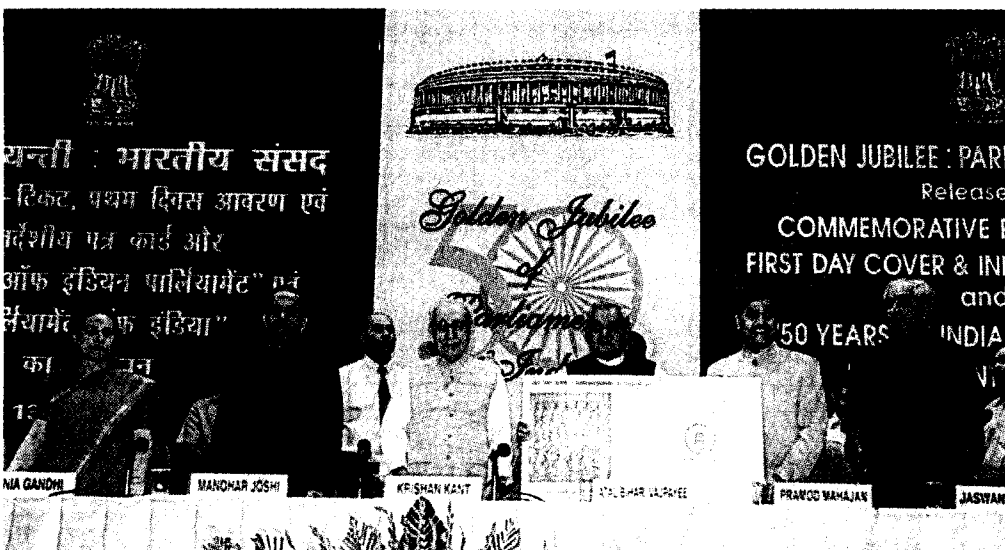
who spoke, as also G.M.C. Balayogi, who died recently in an air crash. The Speaker, Manohar Joshi, suggested that the new auditorium be named after Balayogi, which was readily accepted. Mr. Krishan Kant, the Lok Sabha Deputy Speaker, P.M. Sayeed, the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh, and the Congress Rajya Sabha member, Manmohan Singh, were among those who spoke.

Earlier, Mr. Joshi said it was an occasion for introspection. The country could be legitimately proud of the socio-economic progress and political stability achieved through successive Parliaments.

"Our democratic institutions have stood the test of time. Our Parliament today stands tall and proud to remind us of the primacy of our people in the political order that we chose in the wake of freedom. At the same time, it is imperative that we further safeguard and strengthen our democracy and democratic institutions. We all need to remind ourselves, time and again, that democracy is a system based on dialogue and debate."

Mr. Joshi said that as elected representatives, all members needed to recognise the fact that the country's diversity was its source of strength. "There should not be any room for any divisive agenda in our political landscape. Democracy is about the art of coexistence. We should realise that no purpose is realised through violence and hatred."

In the Rajya Sabha, its Chairman, Mr. Kant, said that the close involvement of the House in numerous legislative measures was a testimony to the fact that though a second chamber, "it is not a secondary chamber"



The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, releasing the commemorative first day cover to mark the golden jubilee of Parliament in New Delhi on Monday. Also seen (from left) are the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, the Lok Sabha Speaker, Manohar Joshi, the Vice-President, Krishan Kant, the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, and the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh. — Photo: Shanker Chakravarty

MONDAY, MAY 13, 2002

## THE CHALLENGE BEFORE MR. JOSHI

THE ELECTION OF the Shiv Sena's Manohar Joshi as Speaker of the Lok Sabha and his ceremonial induction into office on May 10 had all the conventional trappings of parliamentary democracy, most importantly the absence of a contest. Sticking out of the formal 'unanimity', however, was a pervasive sense of disquiet and worry over the serious implications of the nation's highest popularly elected legislative body being stewarded by one whose political and ideological upbringing is totally alien to such liberal concepts such as democracy, composite culture and secularism. If reservations on this count remained largely unarticulated within the House, and for obvious reasons, what did find an expression was the lurking "fear" of Mr. Joshi being remote-controlled by the Shiv Sena supremo, Bal Thackeray, whose authoritarian ways are legendary. For his part, Mr. Joshi has of course been prompt in allaying such fears. Not to be missed, however, is the clear suggestion that Mr. Joshi was giving the assurance on the 'remote control' issue only on the strength of Mr. Thackeray's own direction to him — that he be impartial and non-partisan in discharging his duties as the Speaker.

In this day and age, even the fundamental duty of ensuring the smooth functioning of the House has become quite an exasperating task for the Presiding Officer, thanks to a whole range of factors affecting the nation's political and socio-economic profile. Given the changed context, which inevitably got reflected in Parliament with all its malignancies and infirmities, it will be unrealistic to hark back to the halcyon days of the early post-Independence decades when both the institution and the system had, by and large, worked as envisaged by the founding fathers of the Constitution. But the fact remains that there can be no excuse for the way Parliament has been functioning in recent years, what with unruly behaviour, not just by some back benchers but even by some party

leaders, becoming the order of the day. The remedy for this corrosion lies in bringing about systemic reforms in different areas, such as the poll-related statute and processes. Considering the sort of negative impact these institutional deficiencies and flaws have on the functioning of Parliament, the responsibility of the Presiding Officer is indeed quite onerous, which only gets heightened by the growing tendency of the Government to use its numerical superiority for frustrating even legitimate attempts by the Opposition to bring before the House important public issues just because they are politically too embarrassing to the ruling establishment; witness the wrangle over the 'Gujarat' issue that stalled the proceedings for a full week.

Mr. Joshi's non-partisanship, even-handedness and impartiality will be on test particularly in such situations, given the circumstances under which the Vajpayee Government has picked him for the Speakership and the ideological affinity that exists between his own party (the Shiv Sena) and the BJP. Posing a virtual challenge to his management skills is the task of enforcing discipline among errant members — whose tribe seems to be, unfortunately, increasing — and maintaining the dignity and decorum of the House. Some months ago, Mr. Joshi's predecessor, G.M.C. Balayogi, took a significant initiative towards evolving, by consensus, a 'code of conduct' that prescribed a graded punishment for 'offending' members; in effect, it constituted a 'parliamentary penal code', so to say. But, in spite of the all-party support it is supposed to enjoy, the 'code' has made little difference to the 'ground situation' in Parliament for the simple reason that Balayogi himself remained wary of enforcing it. It should be the endeavour of Mr. Joshi to enlist the cooperation of all sections of the House, especially of the party/group leaders, in combating the menace of unruly behaviour, by persuasion and judicious application of the code.

# RS passes Patents Bill with amendments

Our Delhi Bureau  
NEW DELHI 9 MAY

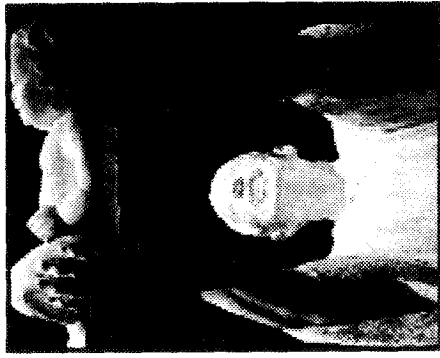
**T**HE CONTROVERSIAL Patents (Second Amendment) Bill, 1999 has passed the first hurdle. It was passed by the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, along with official amendments that expand and strengthen the scope for compulsory licensing and unpatentability.

While the government has retained the right to declare a "public health crisis," in the event of which, compulsory licences may be issued to enable manufacture of patented products, it has also excluded all inventions involving life forms and traditional knowledge from the patent regime. In total compliance with the Doha Declaration, the Bill not only defines national and health emergencies such as war, breakout of HIV-Aids, TB, malaria and other epidemics, but it also empowers the government to declare a "public health crisis" as and when necessary.

This in addition to the definition of national emergency provided by the Doha Declaration and through the Bolar Provision which allows initiation of all work towards sale of a patented product before the expiry of the patent period. The

stipulated period is 20 years, government sources said.

The Bill, however, does not spell out the royalty to be paid and has said that it can be fixed, depending on the economic value of the product at that time. It also envisages the modernisation of the



**BIRTH OF A NEW ERA**

patent offices across the country, additional infrastructure and reduction of backlog weeding out of applications through a deferred examination system.

Minister for commerce and industry, Murasoli Maran, who placed the Bill in the Upper House

said in his opening remarks: "Let any crisis situation be visualised, the present Bill covers all contingencies." He said the amendments to the Patents Act, 1970, were being done to carve out a law, without permitting any ambiguity under the Trips agreement to come in the way of safeguarding national security, public health and availability of medicines at affordable prices.

Apart from the pharmaceutical sector which has dominated discussions, the Bill expands the scope of unpatentability to include living plants and animals and inventions in the realm of traditional knowledge. The Bill is to be introduced in Lok Sabha on Tuesday.

If passed in its present form, it will fully restructure the existing provisions. The provisions are related to public interest, compulsory licensing, government use, national security, protection of traditional knowledge, protection of public health and nutrition as contained in Chapter XVI (Working of Patents, Compulsory Licences and Revocation) of the Patents Act.

Reacting to criticism that it is not Trips-compliant and goes beyond that, Mr Maran said that if so, it only shows India is on the right track.

## House witnesses rare bonhomie

Our Political Bureau  
NEW DELHI 9 MAY

**I**T WAS a rare sight in Parliament: the coming together of the ruling party and the Opposition. For once, the parties put aside their differences and joined hands in passing the Patents (Second Amendment) Bill in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday. The only aberration in the proceedings was the Left's opposition to the Bill.

The landmark Bill, moved by commerce minister Murasoli Maran, witnessed a smooth passage by a voice vote. Congress leaders remarked satisfactorily that the Bill had incorporated safeguards to protect national interests. The stage for the co-operation between the two was set on Wednesday, when the government agreed to incorporate suggestions made by the Congress.

At a time when the two main formations were locked in a bitter political fight over Gujarat and other matters, the two came together to ensure that the Patents Bill did not suffer any postponement this time. Burning the midnight oil, Mr Maran and his ministry worked into the wee hours of Thursday to incorporate the Congress suggestions into the Bill.

The co-operation has once again underscored the fact that there was greater convergence of views between the Congress and the BJP on economic matters, at least. This has been demonstrated earlier, too, when the Congress supported the BJP on other economic matters like the Insurance Bill.

## Speaker's Corner

"We are Hindustanis, therefore, Hindu is the belief of our party", proclaims the official website of the Shiv Sena, the Indian far right party that has just bagged the prestigious post of speaker of the Lok Sabha. So what does Manohar Joshi's dramatic promotion from industry minister to presiding officer mean? Mr Joshi is known to be even-tempered and affable, qualities that many would consider vital for controlling a House with a penchant for breaking into pandemonium at the slightest pretext, and quite often without a pretext. On the other hand, he has a reputation that precedes him, most famously as a chief minister who was remote-controlled by Sena chief Balasaheb Thackeray. Now Mr Thackeray, as we all know, wears his saffron ideology on his sleeve. Not for him the pangs of remorse almost ritually exhibited by an Atalji. Not for him the carefully measured words of an Advaniji. And certainly not for him the excruciating legalese so expertly expounded by a Jaitleyji. Balasaheb says it like it is, even if that means running afoul of the law on occasion. Of course, Mr Joshi has clarified that he is adequately conscious of the burden he would be carrying to his chair. The presiding officer of a parliamentary House is not unlike a judge in that he arbitrates between two often warring sides. But his duties extend beyond merely enforcing order. He judges the validity of different censure and adjournment motions, and plays a key role in deciding defections and recognising splits, which in turn influence the course of government formation.

However, it is long since the quality of neutrality was used as the qualifying factor for the post of speaker. Quite the opposite, in fact, with the presiding officer increasingly seen as a tool to control parliamentary outcomes. A case in point is the recent discussion on Gujarat under Rule 184 in the Lok Sabha, which was upheld by deputy speaker P M Sayeed, much to the chagrin of the BJP. Senior party leaders went as far as to hint that Mr Sayeed was moved by partisan considerations, implying thereby that a nominee from the treasury ranks would have obliged with a more favourable ruling. In states like Uttar Pradesh, where parties feel free to poach on each other's cadres, speakership has come to be regarded as the single most important post. Not surprising, considering that most speakers have shown themselves to be completely loyal to the party that nominated them. In the case of Mr Joshi, we have still to see whether he will feel bound by the diktats of Mr Thackeray, a man used to seeing his every word obeyed. That a member of the Shiv Sena, once regarded as an extremist political party, will henceforth preside over parliamentary proceedings and arbitrate between mainstream parties, is itself a reflection of the times we live in. And yet, the blame for this must go, not so much to the BJP, as to the Congress, which simply did not put up any resistance, and the Telugu Desam Party, which turned down the post in a fit of childish pique. Had the TDP voted against the government over the latter's handling of Gujarat, it might have arguably gone out with its head held high. But in retaliating in this fashion it has hurt its own interests — never mind those of the country's.

# Decks cleared for Manohar Joshi

By Javed M. Ansari

*9-Parliament*

**NEW DELHI, MAY 9.** Manohar Joshi, who resigned as Minister for Heavy Industry and Public Enterprises, is all set to become the next Speaker of the Lok Sabha tomorrow, with the Opposition deciding to leave the post uncontested. Ten additional sets of nomination papers, signed mainly by the NDA constituents, were filed today in his favour.

In addition to the two sets of nomination papers filed yesterday, another set of 10 nominations were filed on Mr. Joshi's behalf. Of the two sets, the Prime Minister, A.B. Vajpayee, had proposed the first set which was seconded by the

Home Minister, L.K. Advani, while the second set was proposed by the NDA convener, George Fernandes, and seconded by Yerran Naidu of the TDP.

However, in a departure from normal practice, the mainline Opposition parties — the Congress, the Left and the SP — did not propose or second any of his nomination papers. At the time of the election of the former Speaker, Balayogi, in 1999, several of his nomination papers had been proposed and seconded by the Opposition parties. In fact, one had been proposed by the Leader of the House, Mr. Vajpayee, and seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi.

Though the Opposition parties have chosen not to put up a candidate against Mr. Joshi, they have also chosen to distance themselves from his election. The Congress said it had chosen to stay away because it had "no effective say in Mr. Joshi's election". Speaking to newsmen, the Congress spokesperson, Jaipal Reddy, said Mr. Joshi was a nominee of the ruling coalition and the Congress had "no voice in their choice".

The Left parties, on the other hand, were far more critical and said the development would send disturbing signals and adversely affect the image of Parliament.

Besides the NDA constitu-

*10/5*

ents, the NCP, the JD-S and the BBM (Bharipa Bahujan Mahasangh) are the three Opposition parties which proposed and seconded the nomination of Mr. Joshi.

The NDA allies which supported the nominations included Mamata Banerjee and Akbor Ali Khandoker (both Trinamool Congress), Omar Abdullah and Ali Mohammed Naik (both NC), Murasoli Maran and S.S. Palanimanickam (both DMK), Sharad Yadav and Ramjivan Singh (both JD-U), Braja Kishore Tripathy and Trilochan Kanungo (both BJD), C. Krishnan (MDMK), N.T. Shanmugham (PMK) and Anant Geete and Prakash Paranjpe (both Shiv Sena).

**THE HINDU**

MAY 2007



MOVE TO APPEASE SHIV SENA?

9-Parliament  
10-1

# Manohar Joshi to be Speaker

By Neena Vyas

NEW DELHI, MAY 8. Manohar Joshi, Shiv Sena MP who is Union Minister for Heavy Industries, is set to become the next Lok Sabha Speaker for which election is scheduled on May 10, when the motion is expected to be carried through a voice vote in the absence of a second candidate.

Two sets of nomination papers were filed this evening — one by the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, seconded by the Home Minister, L.K. Advani, and the other by the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, seconded by the Telugu Desam Party leader, K. Yerran Naidu — soon after Mr. Joshi returned here from a quick trip to Mumbai to seek the blessings of the Sena chief, Bal Thackeray.

It seems that for the Sena the position of Speaker means further legitimacy, the chance to "preside over" the largest democracy in the world. The Sena chief was disenfranchised by the Election Commission for highly inflammatory communal statements and coming as this decision does in the midst of the



Gujarat horror, it has indeed raised many an eyebrow.

The Opposition parties, including the Congress, the CPI (M), the Samajwadi Party and several others have let it be known that they were not interested in contesting the election as the Speaker's post belonged by convention to the ruling party. They would neither propose nor second the name for it was "entirely the business of the NDA."

Yesterday, the Parliamentary

Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan had conveyed to the Congress the possible names for the Speaker's position, and later the shortlist of two was also mentioned. The Congress conveyed to Mr. Mahajan that it was not contesting the post and it was for the NDA to decide who should preside over the Lok Sabha. Opposition leaders, Mulayam Singh Yadav and Somnath Chatterjee, were also kept informed, Mr. Mahajan told reporters.

The first five-name shortlist was further shortened to two — the Petroleum Minister, Ram Naik, and Mr. Joshi — after an informal meeting between Mr. Vajpayee, Mr. Advani, the External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh and Mr. Mahajan, yesterday morning.

The other three were struck off; Jagmohan, the Urban Development Minister, was considered too inflexible, V.K. Malhotra did not have the requisite stature to command all round respect, and Shanta Kumar had recently got embroiled in an internal BJP controversy which led him later to offer unconditional apologies to the BJP

president and to the Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

And after another meeting last night at South Bloc — Mr. Vajpayee, Mr. Advani, Mr. Mahajan and Defence Minister, George Fernandes attended — Mr. Joshi's name emerged on top. By 10.30 p.m. Mr. Mahajan had conveyed the decision to Mr. Thackeray and in the morning the Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, Chandrababu Naidu, whose nominee, G.M.C. Balayogi, had occupied the position till his death in March, was also told.

Although BJP leaders did not say this in so many words, it seems that Mr. Naik's name was dropped as the Prime Minister did not want the Petroleum Ministry which he heads to be up for grabs — Mamata Banerjee of the Trinamul Congress Party is waiting to be accommodated. Moreover, the Speaker's post could also appease the Sena which has been demanding an additional Cabinet portfolio. It is assumed that in the next Cabinet re-shuffle the Sena would retain the Heavy Industries portfolio or be given something "substantial" in its place.

THE HINDU

MAY 9 1997

# Talks on for Speaker nominee

9-Parliament H-1 895  
By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MAY 7.** The government today began the process of consulting the Opposition on the election of Speaker of the Lok Sabha although even internally the Bharatiya Janata Party does not seem to have zeroed in on a nominee for the post.

The Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, met the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, to discuss the issue. Apparently, a shortlist of five names was discussed, but for the moment, it seems that the Congress has not expressed its opinion on the names.

Over the last two days, Mr. Mahajan has also met the Congress Deputy Leader in the Lok Sabha, Shivraj Patil, as well as other opposition leaders. The non-Congress Opposition parties met separately to chalk out its own strategy on Gujarat where the Speaker election issue also came up. However, the stand taken was that so far the government had failed to come up with a concrete proposal in the form of its chosen nominee for the post.

Although on the record the Congress spokes-

person, Abhishek Singhvi, said that "all options are open" informally, the Opposition parties agree that the Speaker should be elected unanimously, and that the choice was that of the ruling coalition as the Deputy Speaker's post had already gone to the opposition.

Within the National Democratic Alliance informal consultations have begun and a formal meeting could take place tomorrow. What was stated unambiguously was that a few names were being considered, but there was nothing final even about the shortlist comprising Cabinet Ministers, Jagmohan, Shanta Kumar, Ram Naik (all BJP), and Manohar Joshi (Shiv Sena) and V.K. Malhotra, the BJP chief whip and spokesperson for its parliamentary party. It was also said by some party leaders that Mr. Joshi's name was included to please the Sena chief, Bal Thackeray, who has publicly said his party was not adequately represented in the Cabinet. Clearly, the BJP does wish to see its own partyman in the job of Speaker.

By tomorrow the situation will be clearer -- nominations for the post can take place till noon of May 9 and elections are on May 10.

THE HINDU

8 MAY 2002

# Diplomatic high ground lost: Opp

Statesman News Service

## Walk-out in Lok Sabha

NEW DELHI, May 7. — The Opposition today expressed concern in the Rajya Sabha that the Gujarat violence had tarnished the nation's image abroad and nullified the diplomatic high ground it had gained after the 11 September and 13 December incidents.

Reacting to foreign missions' reports on Gujarat and their alleged leaks to the print media, Mr Jaswant Singh said: "I as minister and officials of the external affairs ministry are ready to take up the matter with anyone at any point of time either publicly or through the accepted diplomatic norms. The diplomatic dialogue should not be

NEW DELHI, May 7. — The Opposition today raised the issue of the continuing violence in Gujarat in the Lok Sabha and later staged a walk-out protesting against the Centre's response to it. It wanted to know if the reports from Ahmedabad, suggesting that the state was closing many relief camps, were true, and if so, what the Centre was doing about it after accepting responsibility under Article 355. Mr LK Advani, who was present in the House, said the government would discharge its responsibility as provided under Article 355, but refused to elaborate on the Centre's directions to Gujarat. — SNS

conducted through the media and that was the accepted international norm."

He rejected the EU's stand on Gujarat and asserted that India would not accept prescriptions from outside on internal matters and ruled out presence of out-

side observers in the forthcoming Assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir. "India won't accept prescriptions to do this or that. We didn't accept them in 1998 when we conducted nuclear tests. India won't accept being spoken to from assumed posi-

tions of superiority or greater morality," said Mr Singh while replying to a debate on the ministry's working.

On British foreign secretary Mr Jack Straw's reported remarks on positioning of outside observers for Jammu and Kashmir Assembly elections, Mr Singh said the import of Mr Straw's comments was not that he suggested presence of such observers, but made it clear that India, in any case, rejected such a notion totally. "The issue is entirely in the EC's domain."

Dismissing the Opposition charge that India was slipping in its policy towards Afghanistan, Mr Singh said the government was aware of all the developments in that country.

# Walkout in LS over Govt. 'inaction'

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MAY 7.** The Opposition today served notice of its intention to pursue the issue of continuing violence in Gujarat. In the Lok Sabha, the entire Opposition walked out to protest the Government's "inaction" in the State.

The issue was raised during zero hour by Somnath Chatterjee of the CPI (M) and supported by the rest of the Opposition.

Taking advantage of the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani's presence in the House, Mr. Chatterjee drew the Government's attention to the latest round of violence that has resulted in the killing of those returning to their homes from relief camps.

He cited media reports to counter the Government's claim that people were returning to their homes.

Mr. Chatterjee demanded

that Mr. Advani inform the House what specific instructions were sent to the Gujarat Government in the exercise of Article 355 of the Constitution and what was the brief of the new Security Adviser, to the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, K. P. S. Gill.

In his reply, Mr. Advani limited himself to saying that the Government was conscious of its duty under Article 355 and prepared to discharge it. The

Centre would do everything possible to help in the relief and rehabilitation efforts.

His reply did not satisfy the Opposition which walked out of the House.

Earlier in the day, the leaders of the non-Congress Opposition parties, their ranks bolstered by the inclusion of the Lok Janshakti Party, met at Mr. Chatterjee's residence to work out their strategy on the issue.

They included Mulayam Singh Yadav (SP), Sharad Pawar (NCP), Raghuvansh Prasad (RJD), the former Prime Minister, H. D. Deve Gowda (JD-S), Jai Narayan Prasad 'Nishad' (Lok Janshakti), Ajoy Chakraborty (CPI), Abani Roy (RSP) and Debabrata Biswas (AIFB).

The leaders decided to keep the focus on the violence in Gujarat and demand for Central intervention under Article 355. They also decided to continue "boycotting" the Defence Minister, George Fernandes, in Parliament.

Briefing correspondents, Mr. Chatterjee said after the meeting that the non-Congress Opposition leaders would coordinate their action on Gujarat. In pursuance of the objective, he had also called on the Congress president, Sonia Gandhi, who had agreed to support the move.

Contending that the Government was obliged to act since it had adopted the Opposition-sponsored motion in the Rajya Sabha under an Article applied in emergency situations, he said "the Government has been directed by the Rajya Sabha to take steps."

Referring to the current developments in Gujarat, he said that irrespective of all the action, the State Government was pursuing its own agenda and mounting pressure for winding up the relief camps.

"Where will the people in relief camps go," Mr. Chatterjee asked adding that in some instances, Muslims who tried to go back to their villages were being intimidated.

## 10 killed, stabbing spree in Ahmedabad

By Manas Dasgupta

**AHMEDABAD, MAY 7.** At least 10 persons were killed and scores injured in stabbing, police firing and stoning in Ahmedabad today while most other parts of the State remained incident-free. Kalupur, Vejalpur, Juhapura and Sarkhej areas in the city were placed under curfew today. Dani Limda, Behrampur and Shahpur have been under curfew since Sunday evening.

The city witnessed 15 incidents of stabbing today. While two persons were stoned to death, two killed in police firing and one succumbed to injuries sustained in a bomb blast. In most of the cases, the bodies of those stabbed to death were set afire.

A youth was stabbed right inside the V. S. Hospital, run by the Congress-controlled Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation, in the presence of police. The youth was stabbed when he alighted from an ambulance carrying a patient stabbed in Juhapura locality when some Sangh Parivar volunteers were demonstrating against the alleged "partisan attitude" of the hospital authorities against Hindu patients.

While three persons each were killed in Kalupur and Vejalpur localities, two were killed in Juhapura and one each in Jamalpur and Dani Limda areas. Perhaps for the first time the night remained by and large peaceful and most of the violent incidents took place in broad day-light.

The day began with a stabbing incident in Majoorgam under Kalupur police station and soon the violence spread to the outskirts of the city. A college instructor was stabbed to death and then his body set afire in Sarkhej locality.

The incident had its repercussions in the neighbouring Juhapura and Vejalpur localities

where violent mobs came out on the streets and indulged in stone throwing and attacked passers-by. At least three trucks in Sarkhej and Juhapura localities were set ablaze after their drivers fled.

A camel cart owner was stabbed to death in Vejalpur where two others were killed when police opened fire to disperse the violent mobs. The Juhapura and Vejalpur incidents spread tension in the city with one person was stoned to death near Revdi Bazar in Kalupur. At least seven persons, including three policemen, were injured in a bomb blast near the Kalupur police station. One of the injured later died in the hospital. The charred body of a middle-aged person, believed to have been stabbed to death and later set afire, was recovered from Jamalpur.

Police admitted that bombs were being exploded like firecrackers and there was no count of the number of bombs exploded in the city.

The State ruling BJP president, Rajendrasinh Rana, expressed concern over the deteriorating law and order situation and admitted that the image of Gujarat and that of the BJP had taken a beating. Stressing the need for immediate steps to stop the violence, Mr. Rana said strict action must be taken against all those involved in violent activities. "They are criminals and criminals have no religion, caste or creed or any political affiliations. All of them must be dealt with firmly," Mr. Rana told media persons.

However, Mr. Rana said the BJP was going ahead with the preparations for the Assembly elections the timings for which would be decided by the Chief Minister, Narendra Modi, if accepted by the Election Commission. He said he would convene a meeting of the State party executive towards the end of this month for election preparations.

# Gujarat erupts in Lok Sabha again

HT Correspondent *XCA*  
New Delhi, May 6

AFTER FIVE days of relative calm, the Gujarat issue rocked the Lok Sabha once again today with the Opposition lashing out at the "casual and cavalier" manner in which the Centre was handling the unabated violence in the State.

The Opposition attacked the Government for going back on its word after having accepted Friday's Rajya Sabha resolution on the use of Article 355 to quell internal disturbance. Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee was targeted for his statement in Gwalior yesterday that there was need to invoke Article 355, which casts a duty on the Centre to protect States from external aggression or internal disturbances.

Raising the issue during Zero Hour, Samajwadi Party's Ramji-

*MS*  
lal Suman sought a clarification over the "contradictory" statements made by Vajpayee in Gwalior yesterday and External Affairs Minister Jaswant Singh in the Rajya Sabha on Friday.

Suman said Singh had assured the Upper House that directives under Article 355 had been issued and would continue to be sent to Gujarat, while Vajpayee had reportedly said the Modi Government was functioning well and there was no need for any directive under the provision.

He also quoted news reports, which claimed that K P S Gill, the new security advisor to Modi, was told by police officers that they had been directed to "go soft on VHP and Bajrang Dal activists during the violence". Suman said normalcy cannot prevail in the State if Modi continued as Chief Minister.

The defeat of the Opposition's motion on Gujarat in the Lok Sabha under Rule 184 by a majority of nearly a hundred, only means that floor managers of the BJP succeeded in frightening the allies in the NDA that a vote against the government automatically brings it down leading to fresh elections. Apparently they were told that Vajpayee has had enough and a defeat would be the last straw. Modi by contrast has taken the vote as a ringing endorsement of his handling of the crisis and is emboldened. He also blames dark, nameless conspirators and the media bartering for his two favourite local newspapers, for doubting his claim that normalcy has returned. A shade of the ridiculous is provided by George Fernandes who spots Sonia Gandhi chewing gum in the House, a circumstance compared to which I suppose, Modi and his pogrom pales into insignificance!

The House let the Prime Minister off lightly over his offer of

Rs 150 crores for rehabilitation. Two points must be made. Given the scale of death and destruction, it is not even peanuts; those who disagree must be just plain nuts! This is assuming that relief does reach the affected and is not diverted to their tormentors. I encountered the minister of state for defence in Ahmedabad; I asked him what he was doing there. He was comforting his party men, he said, provoking me to enquire whether he was sure he was comforting the right people! Secondly there is no reason why the Rs 150 crores or any figure at all should come from taxes paid by honest citizens. The names of people who perpetrated the vulgarity and the indescribable horrors are known; they would also have been on record if FIRs filed were not torn and dumped in relief camps by Modi's Gestapo. I have to concede

...there is no reason why the Rs 150 crores or any figure at all should come from taxes

that avoidance of responsibility comes naturally to politicians in India, not only in Gujarat. But it is wrong, in law and in equity. If Dr Pravin Togadia and the Sangh Parivar can be induced to have an attack of conscience; by what means I do not know, it is they and their organisations that should pay for it all. The Prime Minister's relief fund is not meant for horrors perpetrated in cold blood and brought about with malice aforethought. The law should take care of these.

The one who has lost the most is Atal Behari Vajpayee. He was openly taunted; questions were raised as to whether he was the same person who had chastised Modi in Ahmedabad, while the latter was led to believe that he was the hero of the hour. Ahead of the vote, Modi changed tactics; not backtracking by any means but building on the success he was assured. Whole areas with poor Muslims or those who lived or had shops in mixed localities or some corner of Hindu areas were targeted, first by a visit from the Gestapo who confiscated even kitchen knives to leave victims without

hope of resistance. It is different now. Mobs drunk as usual, attack entire Muslim mohallas in better areas, with police poised to intervene if they are rash enough to resist. The Gestapo can then claim that they are confronting Muslim mobs bent on mischief. More misery for an already traumatised people but do note the diabolical cunning.

The vulgarity forced on our polity because of the perceived need to protect one man has yet to unfold itself fully. Farooq Abdullah may fancy himself as the next President but son Omar's decision to leave the Cabinet is not explained by his father's desire to move into Rashtrapati Bhavan or his own willingness to accept the challenge in Srinagar. Mamata Banerjee continues to flounder; Chandrababu Naidu is waiting for signals from Andhra Pradesh, which he can read.

# Can it get worse?

A demarche has indeed been delivered to the government; it makes no difference that it was outside the country. The international community is laughing at us.

Finally Vajpayee seems irreparably damaged. Brajesh Mishra and Ranjan Bhattacharya obstruct him for selfish reasons. He may linger as Nehru did after the Chinese attack, which effectively finished him. Sonia is a lucky mascot for the Congress; see what keeps dropping into their lap without ever trying! But governance needs more than a mascot. The party must understand the distinction. *The fault dear Brutus is not in our stars but in ourselves that we are underlings!* If Congress had any sense, they would act quickly to produce a credible prime minister-in-waiting, while Sonia plays her part till her luck runs out; she can keep busy forced to apologise every time she attacks the Prime Minister. Consider the performance in the Rajya Sabha where the BJP succeeded with tactical ploys because Congress did not even see them coming! Can it get much worse? I do not know!

*The one who has lost the most is Atal Behari Vajpayee. He was openly taunted*

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Naidu dumps post,  
continues support

9-  
particulars

# Desam Speaker slap to BJP

5/5  
(1-1)

FROM G.S. RADHAKRISHNA

Hyderabad, May 4: Chandrababu Naidu tonight took the first direct action against the BJP-led government by refusing to stake claim to the Speaker's chair, a post in exchange for which he had originally supported Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Naidu said the Telugu Desam Party's politburo decided to reject the offer because of the government's rigid stand in persisting with Narendra Modi as Gujarat chief minister. However, he added that the party would support the government "whenever it does something good".

Though Naidu had been clamouring for Modi's ouster, he had so far limited his actions to ultimatums which eventually gave way to ambiguous statements or innocuous walkouts. In the Lok Sabha, his party had emerged as a trenchant critic of the government on Gujarat, but had chosen to walk out and not vote with the Opposition on a censure motion.

Against such a backdrop, tonight's refusal is being seen as a slap in the face of the government. Naidu's pledge to continue support may calm the government's nerves but he has now demonstrated his ability to become a constant headache for the coalition.

The Congress was quick to

rub the salt into the wound, saying the Desam's decision made the government's claim of running a "secular government" under a common minimum programme ring hollow.

Naidu based his decision on his favourite theme of politics of principles.

"We have taken a principled stand. ...The NDA's dealing of the Gujarat issue was one of the reasons for the TDP to keep away from any amount of participation with the regime," Naidu said.

The Speaker's election, necessitated by the death of Naidu's party colleague G.M.C. Balayogi, will be held on May 10. Vajpayee had written to the Lok Sabha secretary-general to set the motion in process.

The tense relations between the Desam and the BJP had soured further after BJP spokesman V.K. Malhotra said the Speaker's post was meant for only those who "supported" the ruling party during the Gujarat debate.

Naidu said reports coming out of Delhi have been adverse to the Desam. "One agency went to the extent of even declaring a split in the Telugu Desam parliamentary party," he said.

Though Vajpayee indicated tonight that he preferred a consensus choice, Malhotra said the Speaker's post should now come to the ruling party.

# A venal farce

RS debate a tactical gain for BJP

The government changing tack during the 2 May Rajya Sabha debate on Gujarat — by supporting the censure motion in “letter and spirit” — fooled few and impressed no one. Since the Opposition was going to win anyway, a show of support from ruling MPs doubled as an example of political maturity and genuine grief for Modi’s victims. Except that two days earlier, the BJP and some NDA allies made very different noises in the Lok Sabha. The Prime Minister was busy defending his “honour”, George Fernandes seemed to suggest that past violence in Gujarat justified the present version and there’s no point wasting adjectives on Uma Bharati. The BJP’s move in the Rajya Sabha is therefore the worst kind of political action — stupid and cynical.

That said, the Opposition emerged even worse. The Congress and the rest allowed the BJP considerable wriggle room by personalising the issue. Not one Opposition speaker had done his homework to present a damning account of the Gujarat’s failures and the Centre’s abdication of its responsibility to act. In fact, this should have been the focus of the Opposition’s attack. They should have carefully read the Deputy Speaker’s ruling, which mentioned Article 355, the power of the Union government to issue directions, which can be ignored on pain of the follow-up of President’s Rule. Incredibly, the 16-hour debate failed on all counts to fix responsibility. Instead what was on offer was cheap political stunts. NDA allies, given the choice of backing the Opposition motion or ensuring the government has the numbers, chose the latter, never mind the calls to conscience by Mamata Banerjee and Chandrababu Naidu. Soon, rewards will be forthcoming — a cabinet post for Mamata, the Speaker’s job to a TDP MP. Even Omar Abdullah, who sought to resign on principle, allowed the Prime Minister not to accept his resignation, and is back at work. At least he made a point. The BJP tested its allies and found them where it wanted them. This will have consequences for the future. The lesson is if the BJP has a problem like Gujarat, its best bet is an Opposition party like the Congress.

THE STATESMAN

13 4 MAY 2011



# Oppn refuses to shake hands with govt in RS

*Criticises its turnaround on Gujarat motion*

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: Although the Vajpayee government took pains to get the opposition's censure motion on Gujarat defeated in the Lok Sabha, it changed tack in the Rajya Sabha on Thursday, saying that it was ready to pass the motion unanimously. The government is in a minority in the Rajya Sabha and if the motion is put to vote, it is certain to be defeated.

However, the opposition wanted to know why the government had blocked proceedings in the lower house for seven days. "If this was the position it had taken all along, what prompted the government to hold up proceedings for seven days?" asked Nilotpal Basu of the CPM, immediately after leader of the house Jaswant Singh made the suggestion.

Rejecting the government's sudden appeal for unanimity, the opposition sought a CBI inquiry into the various incidents of violence, including Godhra, and also a commission of inquiry by a sitting judge of the supreme court as recommended by the National Human Rights Commission.

Arjun Singh of the Congress moved the motion, pointing out that the constitution had become irrelevant as those who had taken oaths to protect the constitution had failed to do so. Going into the ideological background of communal hatred, Mr Singh quoted RSS ideologue M.S. Golwalkar's reference to the Jewish holocaust.

Mr Jaswant Singh asked Mr Arjun Singh

why he did not refer to Italy or Mussolini, since he had referred to events in Germany. Although the chair called the Prime Minister to respond, Mr Singh said the PM would intervene later.

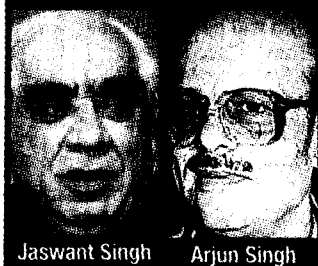
Mr Jaswant Singh said, "The government shares the sentiments in totality. There is no difference with the phraseology of the motion. We are all naked in the bathroom, so there is no point in the slinging of charges. We accept the motion with the reference to article 355 of the constitution (that entails the Centre's intervention). The home minister has already taken action and will take more action. Let us pass this motion with unanimity."

However, Mr Basu questioned the PM's commitment to *rajdharm* for reversing the government's position on the Gujarat carnage from his speech in Ahmedabad to that in Goa.

Nana Deshmukh, former Jan Sangh leader and nominated RS member, wanted Mr Vajpayee and Sonia Gandhi to visit Gujarat together.

Ahmed Patel of Congress from Gujarat said that Mr Modi had not visited any relief camp other than while accompanying Mr Vajpayee. "Take away our vote but let us at least live, that is what an elderly Muslim told me," Mr Patel said. He pointed out that the defence minister had said nobody was raped in Gujarat, whereas he had a list of rape victims. He pleaded with the Prime Minister not to speak in many languages. "have one heart and one language for the country."

## CROSS WORDS



Jaswant Singh

Arjun Singh

THE TIMES OF INDIA

23 MAY 2007

# Beyond Parliament

By Rajeev Dhavan

HD-10/8/5

*India's parliamentary politics has been mortgaged to brute voting strength.*

INDIA AND Indian institutions of governance are going adrift. The Gujarat Government stands accused of complicity in a terrible communal carnage. The BJP-led Union Government conspires in this complicity. The Gujarat Government's affidavit to the Supreme Court speaks of 13,000 people arrested and 3,500 charged with offences. The human stories are painfully genocidal as the horror continues. The Centre has violated its constitutional duty to quell the riots and take over the governance of Gujarat. Narendra Modi should have resigned. The Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, should have sacked him. But he has not done so. Gujarat remains frighteningly and embarrassingly unstable.

Parliament had to be paralysed to secure a debate under Rule 184 to censure the Government. Earlier, the rule was that if it lost a major debate in Parliament, the Government would resign. But, this is no longer the case. Margaret Thatcher was defeated over 10 times on major matters but refused to step down. P. V. Narasimha Rao's Government was defeated over patents and TADA. But, a censure motion is not just a defeat on a policy or statute. It is a much more serious matter. In the past two years, Rule 184 motions against the Vajpayee Government have not succeeded. The first such motion of August 21-22, 2000, demanding a Commission of Inquiry on the Amarnath killings was not even permitted the dignity of a proper count but determined by a voice vote. The next motion of December 13-14, 2000, on the crucially secular issue of the Babri Masjid and dropping the then criminally indicted Ministers such as L. K. Advani, Murali Manohar Joshi and Uma Bharti was defeated by Government majorities of 291 to 179. In March 2001, the Balco motion was defeated by 263 votes to 154. Even the motion on the UTI scandal in which millions of people lost crores of rupees was defeated.

This Government has made itself impregnable to any kind of attack in the Lok Sabha. The Government's defeat in the Rajya Sabha over the Ayodhya matter in December 2001 proved to be meaningless. Despite the censure, the Government defied embarrassment. Now, the motion over Gujarat has been defeated in the Lok Sabha by 276 to 182 votes with 8 abstentions.

India's parliamentary politics has been mortgaged to brute voting strength. So far, the allies have stood by the BJP-led NDA Government. If the BJP loses, they lose. The posturing over the Gujarat debate is without shame. The Telugu Desam's stance of walking out and abstaining if Mr. Modi's head is not offered on a resignation platter is symbolic, evasive, ineffective and cowardly. The AIADMK leader, Jayalalithaa, seeks to make a virtue of necessity by taking the stance that she cannot ask for some other Chief Minister's resignation — other than her opponents in Tamil Nadu — if and when it pleases her. If communal carnage is not a reason for bringing down a Chief Minister — leave alone a Government — what is? George Fernandes stands by Mr. Vajpayee to negate the very principles of democracy and secularism once associated with his name. Omar Abdullah has no choice but to stand up for secularism on the basis of which rests India's claim to Kashmir. But, in terms of votes, Kashmir counts for too little to upset Mr. Vajpayee's arithmetic. Ram Vilas Paswan may have resigned belatedly, but the allies seem to have forgotten their oath to the Constitution. Given these facts, manipulating a victory in the Lok Sabha and ignoring a defeat in the Rajya Sabha is within the Government's grasp.

What all this adds up to is the fact that Parliament has persistently failed as the conscience of the na-

tion. And, in making governance accountable to it. This failure has been demonstrated again and again. Only staying in power counts. There seems to have been no coherent Opposition plan. The standard of debate was low and disorganised. Real issues were ignored. Dramatic stances were taken amidst turmoil. The debate strayed into whether the Congress created separatism in supporting the Khilafat movement in 1920-22. Somnath Chatterjee rightly quoted Mr. Vajpayee's speech of 1970 allegedly declaring that Muslims were not to be trusted. The debate reached its lowest point on whether Sonia Gandhi was chewing gum in the House; and, whether she should be punished for doing so, even though the central question of whether the Government should send in the troops under Article 355 was raised by her. There have been many communal riots before — no less in Gujarat in the late 1960s. But, the Gujarat carnage of 2002 surpasses all others. What hurts Indian governance is not that a communal flare-up has occurred. That is bad enough. The continuous killings and systematic plans of extermination encouraged not just by provocative pamphlets but allegedly Government-sponsored murder and mayhem suggests that a BJP-led Government can no longer control the pernicious communalism that the Sangh Parivar has unleashed to foment support to stay in power. There is both anguish and anger in the foreign response to what is happening. On May 1, the New York-based Human Rights Watch wrote a 76-page report stating that the "attacks were planned in advance with extensive participation by police and State Government officials". The European Union on March 24, 2002, refused to accept that an incident of such proportions could be an inter-

national issue; and on May 1, E.U. diplomats issued statements that they were in little doubt that State Ministers were involved in one of the worst religious riots. The Ministry of External Affairs had little to say other than that it was an internal matter and that the E.U. diplomats had crossed the norms of diplomatic courtesies! On April 27, 2002, the E.U. President issued a demarche asking for a meeting. Indonesia's President, Megawati Sukarnoputri, had already expressed her country's displeasure. In England, Lord Adam Patel (originally from Bharuch in Gujarat) demanded that the British Foreign Secretary ask for a United Nations fact-finding team. India can plead its sovereignty against any or all of these efforts — including against the claim for compensation contemplated in proceedings before a British court. But the problem remains. India once held pride of place as the greatest experiment in secular multi-cultural living that the world has ever known. It is now besmirched as a communal society incapable of fair, just and objective governance. The Prime Minister refuses to act either politically to remove Mr. Modi or to constitutionally restore peace to Gujarat.

Parliament is the ultimate repository of constitutional power apart from the people. If Parliament fails us, where do we go next? On April 25-26, France was aghast at the prospect of a racist even reaching the second ballot for the Presidency. The power of the people was expressed through a unified demonstrative voice. Gujarat has got out of hand. Nothing can vouchsafe for India's future or its standing in the world if no action is taken. India, including Gujarat through Gandhi and others, has taught the world democratic protest. Mr. Vajpayee must feel the power of the people in whose name he rules. He must either resign or be made to use his full constitutional power to impose President's Rule and run that State through an all-party committee. Gujarat is Indian democracy's toughest test. So far, we have failed.

THE HINDU

MAY 2002

# Now, over to RS

By Our Special Correspondent

HD-11  
25  
NEW DELHI, MAY 1. The Vajpayee Government would face another acid test on the Gujarat issue tomorrow when the Opposition-sponsored motion on it comes up for discussion in the Rajya Sabha, where the ruling National Democratic Alliance is in a minority.

If it was a foregone conclusion that the Government would defeat the Opposition motion in the Lok Sabha, it is equally certain that it would have to face a setback in the Rajya Sabha.

The joint Opposition motion to be debated under Rule 170, which entails voting, is expected to put the spotlight on the cracks in the ruling combine that surfaced in the Lok Sabha where the issue was discussed on Tuesday. While the Government defeated the censure motion in the Lok Sabha, the Opposition has the requisite strength to turn the tables in the Rajya Sabha.

But even if the Opposition motion is carried in the Rajya Sabha, it does not amount to a censure of the Government but would cast a shadow on the NDA Government that has already come under severe strain with one constituent, Lok Janshakti pulling out and another, National Conference abstaining from voting in the Lok Sabha.

Another aspect is that the motion in the Rajya Sabha is worded differently, expressing anguish over continuing violence in Gujarat and urging the Government to intervene effectively to protect the lives and properties of people, provide effective relief and rehabilitation for the victims.

After the marathon and often acrimonious debate in the Lok Sabha, the Government would have to face the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha debate, which is expected to be opened by senior Congress leader, Arjun Singh.

The Opposition MPs in the House had put up a coordinated show during the ongoing budget session and had ensured that the controversial Prevention of Terrorism Bill was defeated, forcing the Government to call a joint session of Parliament to enact it last month.

Unlike POTO, which was supported both by the Telugu Desam Party and the AIADMK, the stand of these parties on the Gujarat issue has been spelt clear.

The AIADMK did not participate in the vote, in the Lok Sabha, and the TDP has staged a walkout in protest after its demand for change of leadership in Gujarat was not accepted.

The Opposition was of the view that even in POTA, where the ruling coalition had walked the extra mile to whip up support in favour of the Bill, the margin of defeat was a comfortable 15 votes.

THE HINDU

2 MAY 2002

# Numbers salve NDA's bruised face on Gujarat

- Vajpayee defends himself in his reply
- George makes that job more difficult

AJAY SURI  
NEW DELHI, MAY 1

THE Government won the censure motion on Gujarat by 87 votes but after the 16-hour debate that ended in the Lok Sabha early this morning, it came out with several red and bruised faces.

The plight of refugees, over 1 lakh and climbing, the daily violence and curfew found hardly any mention as speaker after speaker kept blaming each other. These distractions, on several occasions, seemed to acquire more importance than the debate itself.

At around 3.30 am, CPM's Somnath Chatterjee proposed the idea that the House condemn Godhra and what happened subsequently. Prime Minister A B Vajpayee agreed and egged on by Home Minister L K Advani's nod, he asked Sonia Gandhi if she approved. Sonia agreed as well but after the voting, the proposal was promptly forgotten as MPs rushed out on their way home.

Earlier, Vajpayee wrapped up the proceedings defending

himself against the charge of doublespeak but not before Defence Minister George Fernandes made things extra difficult for the Government. So much so that Home Minister L K Advani had to get up and snub him—politely.

Fernandes said he saw "nothing new" in the mayhem let loose in Gujarat. "A pregnant woman's stomach being slit, a daughter being raped in front of her mother," said Fernandes, "aren't new things." They have been happening, he claimed for 54 years, and on the streets of New Delhi in 1984.

Fernandes said all this with a straight face even after being heckled and booed for over an hour by the Congress-led Opposition.

Fernandes's attempt to downplay Gujarat by comparing it with earlier riots not only drew flak from the Congress but was also met with a subtle disapproval from Advani. Making it clear, though not in so many words, that he did not share the view, Advani said the Gujarat communal unrest had come as a personal anguish and shock to him.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

INDIAN EXPRESS

MAY 2002

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## Parliamentary Farce

In the event, the mandarins at Mandi House deserve the nation's gratitude for their decision not to telecast live the Lok Sabha debate on the Gujarat censure motion. The blackout might have reflected poorly on the indifferent health of the world's largest democracy, but it spared its citizens the embarrassment of a farce. For what was on view in Parliament on Tuesday was not a serious political debate but the equivalent of a sordid streetside brawl in which our honourable law-makers indulged in the vilest form of abuse and name-calling. In happier times, the quality of political exchanges in the House might have made for a none-too-engaging black comedy — the kind that is routinely featured on DD prime time, if not at the Capital's Sapru House — but given the enormity of the human tragedy that is unfolding in Gujarat, it is unlikely to have amused anyone other than the august assemblage that was privileged to participate in it. While the plaudits for the no-show were shared on both sides of the political divide, some members from the treasury benches emerged with particular credit. Among them, cabinet ministers Uma Bharati and George Fernandes: The former for a personalised attack on the leader of the opposition, the latter for pointing an accusing finger at Sonia Gandhi for the unpardonable misdemeanour of "chewing gum" in the House. Taking their cue from these senior leaders, lesser NDA members went one better, calling the Congress leader "videshi gudiya" (foreign doll) and "moorti chor" (a thief of statues). From the opposition benches, it fell to the irrepressible Mani Shankar Aiyar to respond in kind which he did, by branding a PMK member an "LTTE agent".

At the end of 16 long hours of mud-slinging and acrimony, with India's democratic image further tarnished, the prime minister duly discharged his rajdharma by announcing a relief and rehabilitation package for the victims of Gujarat's carnage which can best be described as too little, too late. One can only hope that when the debate goes to the Rajya Sabha, the elders, rather than taking a cue from the Lower House, will explore constitutional ways to bring relief to the sorely-wounded state. As the adjoining extract from a Constituent Assembly debate suggests, a case could be made out for the application of Article 355, which, even while stopping short of Article 356, enjoins upon the Centre to intervene in situations of internal disturbance. The severity of the body blow dealt to Gujarat can be gauged from industry estimates that place the economic loss caused by the continuing lawlessness in the state at a staggering Rs 11,000 crore. Clearly, beyond the colossal human cost, Gujarat is also an economic disaster in the making. From being a powerhouse driving the national economy, it has been virtually brought down to its knees by an inept government. The debate in the Lok Sabha made it clear that few in the political establishment, especially in the BJP, are willing to acknowledge the real dimensions of the problem. Will it be any different when the focus shifts to the Upper House? The NDA's pyrrhic victory in the Lok Sabha doesn't inspire much hope. If anything, it suggests that the alliance is loath to put its money where its mouth is.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

MAY 2002

HP-11

LS DEBATE / DON'T STAND ON PRESTIGE: PASWAN

2/52

# We are now on the backfoot: Omar

By Our Special Correspondent

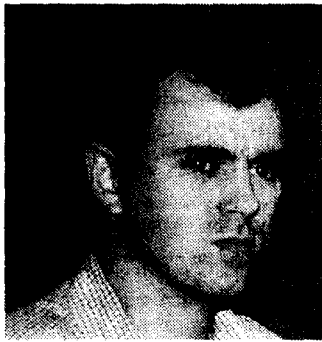
**NEW DELHI, MAY 1.** Two of the Vajpayee Government's former Ministers — Omar Abdullah and Ram Vilas Paswan — also attracted national attention with their speeches in Parliament early today.

Delivered well past midnight, Mr. Abdullah's speech stood out both for its clarity and earnestness. Having resigned from the Council of Ministers earlier in the day, Mr. Abdullah was heard in rapt attention.

He spoke of the "great damage" the carnage in Gujarat has done to India's image abroad.

"We have lost the moral high ground that we occupied because of our track record of democracy and secularism, we are now on the backfoot, having to explain and defend ourselves all the time", Mr. Abdullah said.

It was possible that a "for-



Omar Abdullah

eign hand" was behind the carnage in Godhra, but the aftermath was worse.

"By creating a vicious communal divide, we had played directly into the hands of such people, the General must be laughing," he added.

He pointed out that the nation's enemies had realised that the country was susceptible to a

communal divide and that they wanted to exploit it by attacks like the one that happened at the Raghunath temple in Jammu.

In his impassioned speech, Mr. Paswan explained that he found it difficult to continue in the Government after the developments in Gujarat and because of its "ambivalent attitude" on the issue.

He rejected the theory of minority versus majority harped upon by some BJP members.

He warned them that Hindus were the majority in India, but everywhere else in the world they were in a minority, "those living abroad are ashamed of what is happening, please think of what will be their position if the other countries also mete out the same treatment to the minorities".

He urged the Government, especially Mr. Vajpayee, not to



Ram Vilas Paswan

stand on prestige and accept the Opposition resolution as, in his view, all that it was asking for is that the Centre should direct the State Government to take steps for the protection of the minorities.

He demanded the removal of Narendra Modi as Chief Minister and called for a massive effort to rebuild confidence among the people.

THE HINDU

2 MAY 2007

# Dirty debate stretches suspense

At 1.45 am: BJP isolated on Modi; voting yet to start

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, April 30

THE LOK Sabha sank into chaos tonight during the debate on the censure motion over Gujarat, with members across the divide locked in a verbal skirmish, and Opposition MPs making pointed remarks against chargesheeted ministers on the Treasury Benches.

Deputy Speaker PM Sayeed could restore order only with a promise that all unparliamentary remarks made during the debate would be expunged. He also convened a meeting of party leaders to end the impasse. It was Sayeed's ruling that the debate must be gone through tonight that finally ensured its resumption.

Trouble began early when Fernandes rose to speak in an already surcharged atmosphere and blamed the Congress for past riots and all that had gone wrong in the country over the past 50 years.

"The Leader of the Opposition is provoking her members. She is also chewing gum. The country has seen 15,000 riots and if the Centre and State Governments had acted in time this would not have happened," he said. "Stories are being told about the Gujarat as if it has happened for the first time. Did it not happen in 1984 on the roads of Delhi?" he asked.

All hell broke loose after this comment, with Congress MPs shouting that the minister was talking without relevance. This drew sharp protests from the Treasury Benches.

Uma Bharti only added fuel to fire, saying Sonia Gandhi's "behaviour was not in keeping with the office of the Leader of the Opposition. It is very childish behaviour, out of keeping with traditions of the House," she said. Someone should tell her that one doesn't chew gum in the House, she said.

Indeed, the first interruption was triggered by MDMK leader Vaiko's intervention and subsequent reference to a newspaper report that suggested a Congress hand in the Godhra carnage. The second disruption happened when the Congress took exception to the Defence Minister's "attempts to draw parallels between the 1984 anti-Sikh riots and the Gujarat carnage". Both assertions were strongly resented by Congress MPs, forcing the Deputy Speaker to assert his authority for return of normalcy to the House.

What stung the Congress most was Vaiko's allegation of Congress complicity in the 1984 riots and the implicit criticism of the then Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's subsequent role. The Congress MPs said those sitting on the Treasury Benches (DMK & MDMK) were murderers.

Mani Shankar Aiyar of the Congress too didn't help matters when he accused Vaiko of being an "LTTE agent" involved in the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi. Others went to the extent of calling him a "representative of the murderers". This sparked counter charges from the Treasury Benches. The debate was still raging when we went to press.



Atal Bihari Vajpayee on his way to Parliament on Tuesday for the censure motion.

Fresh jolt to PM as Omar offers to quit

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, April 30

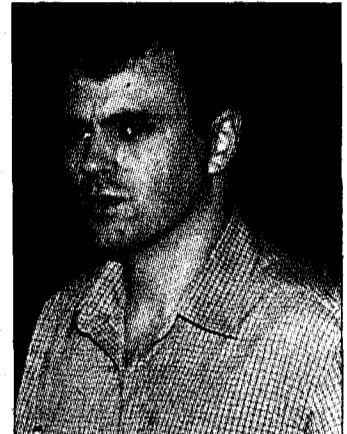
IN ANOTHER body blow to the Vajpayee Government, Minister of State for External Affairs Omar Abdullah today offered to resign from the Council of Ministers, and his party, the five-member National Conference (NC), a key coalition constituent, decided to abstain from voting on the censure motion in Parliament. NC sources said Omar's decision to quit was "final".

The NC's decision comes a day after Lok Shakti leader Ram Vilas Paswan resigned as Coal & Mines Minister over the violence in Gujarat and the Centre's refusal to remove Narendra Modi as Chief Minister. The Lok Shakti said last night that it would vote against the Government.

The PM is reported to have told the NC to rethink Omar's decision to resign, but NC sources said they "were holding firm" on the decision to abstain from voting and pull out of the Government. A two-member NC delegation comprising Ali Mohammed Naik and Omar conveyed the party's decision to Vajpayee.

BJP spokesman VK Malhotra said the PM had rejected Omar's resignation, but Omar told reporters in Parliament that his party's decision to abstain was "final", for "whatever is happening in Gujarat is unacceptable".

He said the five-member NC wouldn't put the Government in a state of embarrassment as it have offered to



OMAR ABDULLAH

resign but the PM said he would convey to me later whether I need to submit my papers or not".

In fact, J&K CM Farooq Abdullah had put in Omar's resignation to Vajpayee on Saturday. But Vajpayee turned down the offer, urging Omar to "reconsider" the decision.

However, Omar and Naik again met the PM this afternoon at his office in Parliament before the debate began and confirmed that the NC would abstain from voting. Omar also put in his papers.

"If we don't vote in favour of the Government, how can Omar remain a minister? This would be an embarrassment for the Government. So we told the PM that Omar would resign," Naik explained.

Related report on Page 10

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

MAY 2000

# Political ripples after RS cross-voting

HT Correspondents  
Bangalore/Bhubaneswar,  
March 29

THE CROSS-VOTING that produced some unexpected winners in Wednesday's Rajya Sabha election has begun to have repercussions across States and parties.

A BJP MLA from Karnataka on Thursday threw in his lot with six colleagues expelled a day earlier, bringing the party closer to a split in the state.

In Orissa, three Congress MLAs were suspended for proposing former Biju Janata Dal leader Dilip Ray's nomination. They have been given 14 days to plead their case.

Karnataka BJP leader Putta Ranganath on Thursday accused Union minister Ananth Kumar and party general secretary M. Venkaiah Naidu of conspiring against the rebel group in the state unit. Should Ran-

## The aftershocks

- Karnataka BJP MLA joins six expelled colleagues
- Rebel group close to 14-member figure needed to split party
- Three Orissa Congress MLAs suspended
- Naveen Patnaik accused of cross-voting

ganath be thrown out, the expelled group will go very close to the figure of 14 needed to split the party without attracting the anti-defection law. The BJP has 41 members in the Vidhan Sabha.

Six more dissident legislators are expected to join the expelled group soon. One of the expelled legislators K H Hanume Gowda said that including the six of them there were 14 who were planning to split from the party in the next few days. The dissi-

dent legislators needed at least 14 to circumvent the Anti-Defection Act as the BJP has 41 MLAs.

To pre-empt the split, the six of them had been expelled, Gowda said. The dissidents still with the BJP now need 12 legislators to break from the party to avoid the Anti-Defection Act. With seven waiting in the wings (including the Ranganath who openly joined them), the dissidents need five more.

The expelled legislators said this was the real intention for dismissing them from the party, contrary to the party's contention that we cross-voted for the Independent Vijay Mallya.

In Orissa, Congress MLAs T.P. Bahinipati, Kartik Mohapatra and Mamata Madhi were suspended, allegedly for bringing about the defeat of party nominee Maurice Kujur.

The party has 25 MLAs in the Assembly, but Kujur got 23 first-preference votes — mean-

ing two MLAs cross-voted. The decision to suspend all three who signed Dilip Ray's nomination papers, however, was taken to send out a stern message within the party.

Orissa PCC chief Sarat Patanayak told *Hindustan Times* the MLAs had been punished for defying the party whip.

Suspended MLA Mamata Madhi complained that she had been misled into signing Ray's papers. Kartik Mohapatra said he would soon submit an explanation on why he signed Ray's nomination papers.

Naveen Patnaik, however, remained tightlipped. Dilip Ray's victory has been a personal setback for him. "The voting took place in secret ballot. But whatever has happened will come out in the future," he said.

Kartik Mohapatra, suspended from the Congress on Thursday, alleged that Naveen indulged in cross-voting.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

30 MAR 2002



425 AYES, 296 NOS IN HISTORIC JOINT SESSION

# Bill on POTO passed

By Our New Delhi Bureau

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 26.** The controversial Prevention of Terrorism Bill to replace the ordinance secured Parliamentary approval today in a historic joint sitting of Parliament, when the ruling National Democratic Alliance — as well as its old ally, the Telugu Desam and its new friend, the AIADMK — added up a comfortable majority of 129, with 425 votes in favour of the legislation, 296 against and 60 abstentions.

After a day-long debate in the Central Hall of Parliament which saw as many as 42 speakers spiritedly participate, the joint sitting mechanism, as per Article 108, allowed the NDA's parliamentary managers to overcome the Government's lack of majority in the Rajya Sabha.

Though the Vajpayee Government had the satisfaction of winning the numbers game, the combined Opposition voices had the better of the ruling combine.

The balance of arguments tilted against the Government, as speaker after speaker from the Opposition cited chapter and verse to make the point that the proposed law was morally and constitutionally untenable.

The nine-and-a-half hour debate degenerated into an open confrontation between the ruling and Opposition parties, and the personal attack against the Leader of the Opposition launched by the Prime Minister himself at a last minute 'intervention' — he was responding to what he described as Sonia Gandhi's attack on him in her speech — led to ugly scenes. At one point, the entire House was on its feet and even members of the Treasury benches rushed towards the Speaker's podium forcing the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, to herd his flock back.

The debate was along predictable partisan lines, and neither side hardly cared to convert the other to its views. Even the Prime Minister did not speak about the legislation on hand, instead he talked about his "Parivar" (the Sangh Parivar) and said no one dare question his devotion to the cause of the people. The minds were made up on both sides and the final voting tally reflected exactly what had been expected.

The Trinamool Congress absented itself and the National Conference finally voted with

the Government. Mr. Advani, who kicked off the debate on behalf of the Government, made the familiar case in defence of POTO: after the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, and after the Security Council resolution no. 1373 of September 28, India had an international obligation to enact an anti-terrorist law.

He also sought to assure the members and the nation at large that the Government was motivated by a sincere desire to

deal effectively with the proxy-war being waged by our "neighbour".

However, his appeal to political parties was to pass the proposal unanimously in the national interest.

The long debate, and the ugly scenes at the very end when the Prime Minister intervened, led to Mr. Advani virtually abandoning his response to the debate, finishing it off in just two sentences and then suggesting to the chair that the motion be

put to vote.

**Divisive agenda: Sonia**

The Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, charged that the Government was promoting a divisive agenda, already POTO had been used selectively, it had not been used against those who had attacked the Orissa Assembly and organisations like the VHP and the Bajrang Dal which threatened to tear apart the social fabric.

The time had come when the

Prime Minister had to decide whether he would succumb to 'internal pressures' from the Sangh Parivar organisations or protect the welfare of the people. The Government had not allowed the emergence of a consensus — it had refused to send the Bill to a select committee — and, worse, POTO was being pushed through against the backdrop of communal killings, murder and looting in Gujarat and a divisive campaign on Ayodhya.

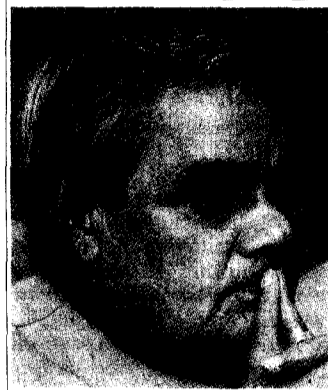
The BJP's 'secular' allies reiterated the arguments spelt out in both Houses last week. They highlighted the need for a special law in these troubled times and felt the Central Government was not doing anything unusual by referring to the Congress' exertions in this direction in the two States ruled by it — Maharashtra and Karnataka. "The need of the hour is to legislate such special laws. So many governments, depending upon the scenario existing in their States have enacted such special laws," observed the Telugu Desam leader, K. Yerran Naidu.

The allies also took solace from the Prime Minister's assurance at an all-party meeting of suitably amending the law if any provision was found to be misused continuously. They also pointed out that it would seem strange for the country not to have an anti-terrorist law when it had been at the forefront of all multilateral forums for concrete steps to clamp down on terrorism.

The former Speaker and Nationalist Congress Party leader, P.A. Sangma, perhaps encapsulated the formulation best when he said the dichotomy of domestic resistance to a special law and an opposite stand overseas "will not sell."

Non-Congress stalwarts from the Opposition camp took on the Government for creating suspicion among political parties by questioning the bonafides of Chief Ministers in Opposition-ruled States. "I did not expect this from L.K. Advani," rued the CPI (M) leader, Somnath Chatterjee, who accused the Government of indulging in partisan politics "to terrorise the minorities and the Opposition".

Since most of the States were inimical to the BJP brand of politics, he forecast that nemesis will finally overcome this Government.



**"I am not Prime Minister courtesy Congress and despite its opposition people want me, and I will remain Prime Minister till they want."**

**"Will he (Vajpayee) be submissive or will he uphold the prestige of the high office he holds? His moment of reckoning has come."**



**"We cannot score a decisive victory against terrorism unless a special law of this kind is enacted."**

**"This is a terror law intended to be used selectively against minorities."**



## I cannot stand personal accusations: PM

By Harish Khare

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 26.** Once again, it seems, Sonia Gandhi, succeeded in provoking the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, into a personal offensive against her.

Taking objection to Ms. Gandhi's reference to him earlier in the day, a bristling Prime Minister, during his "intervention" in the POTO debate, came close to questioning the right of the Leader of the Opposition to question his stewardship.

Mr. Vajpayee's brief intervention turned into a verbal assault,

with the Prime Minister accusing Ms. Gandhi of a lack of etiquette while patting himself on the back for his four decades of observance of parliamentary manners and traditions. Mr. Vajpayee was clearly in a combative mood and took sentence by sentence the closing paragraph of Ms. Gandhi's speech to suggest that she had somehow questioned his integrity.

"I cannot and will not stand personal accusations against me," said a defiant Prime Minister.

Responding to her charge that he was succumbing to pressures

(from the Sangh Parivar), Mr. Vajpayee recalled how he defied the world opinion when in May 1998 he staged Pokhran-II, and how another Prime Minister (an oblique reference to P.V. Narasimha Rao) had succumbed to Western pressure at the last minute.

As the ruling NDA benches thumped approvingly, Mr. Vajpayee continued his offensive.

He recalled how he spurned the former U.S. President, Bill Clinton's suggestion to travel to Washington during the Kargil conflict for a meeting with the former Pakistan Prime Minister,

Nawaz Sharif. More applause from the treasury benches.

As Ms. Gandhi appeared to be wilting under Mr. Vajpayee's offensive, the Congress benches rose to the defence of their leader.

Mr. Vajpayee challengingly noted that he had been tested all these years, much before Ms. Gandhi was anywhere near public, and added: "What right (she) has to question?"

This was too much for the Congress members. It prompted the senior Congress leader, Arjun Singh, to intervene — much against the wishes of the treasury benches — to chide the Prime Minister for lowering the dignity of the office of the Leader of the Opposition. The disruption subsided only when Mr. Vajpayee asked the Deputy Speaker to delete any "unparliamentary" word.

PTI reports:

Mr. Vajpayee said he was not Prime Minister courtesy the Congress and despite its opposition "people want me and I will remain Prime Minister till they want".

He questioned the language used by Ms. Gandhi and quoted from her speech to say that she had reminded me that "the moment of reckoning has come".

"What does she mean? Why she is reminding me of my primary duties and telling me not to come under pressure of the 'Parivar'," he asked adding "Yeh parivar ka mamla hai. Sonia Gandhi isme dakhil na dey (this is a matter regarding 'Parivar'. Sonia Gandhi should not interfere)". To Opposition protests, he said, "Be quiet. There is a limit to enduring anything... you don't like to hear the truth."

Mr. Vajpayee said he was in Parliament since 1957 when Ms. Gandhi was "miles away from politics... I have been facing a test everyday. And today I am being put in the witness box. What right have you to do that," he asked.

## An instrument of suppression: Sonia

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 26.** Batting first from the Opposition in the joint sitting of Parliament, the Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, today gave what probably is her best parliamentary performance so far.

Speaking soon after the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, who was rather off-colour, Ms. Gandhi took the high road, putting the onus of partisanship on the Government. Rather than getting bogged down in technical details on the "inadequacies" of the proposed law, she made a statement of political intent. Simply put, the Congress is opposed to POTO because it "violates the basic human rights of individuals".

Moreover, as far as the Leader of the Opposition was concerned, there were enough reasons to doubt the Government's intentions and motives.

She began by pointing out that "we are not here today to celebrate a consensus on a measure of national importance. We are here today because this Government wishes to exploit a sparing Constitutional provision to achieve its narrow and controversial end."

Accusing the Government of wanting to "manipulate" the process of Parliament to further an agenda of divisiveness, Ms. Gandhi pointed out that the earlier law, TADA, had become "law in a climate of consensus and not in a climate of confrontation".

She referred to the "backdrop of communal tension of murder and looting in Gujarat, a divisive Ayodhya campaign and an outrageous physical attack on the Orissa Assembly" and pointed out that the Government had hoped POTO would yield po-

litical and electoral dividend and how the electorate had "rebuffed" the ruling BJP in the recent Assembly elections.

Ms. Gandhi spelt out her party's doubts about the Government's intentions, especially in the context of the Gujarat Chief Minister, Narendra Modi's "blatant partisanship".

"POTO, I suspect, will become an instrument in the hands of this Government to suppress political opponents, religious minorities, ethnic groups, weaker sections of our society and the trade unions."

She questioned the very *raison d'etre* of the proposed law. "History is witness to the fact that draconian laws have rarely been successful in combating terrorism. This evil is best combated by strengthening social cohesiveness, by promoting communal harmony, by accelerating economic growth and above all, by ensuring distributive equity in the country."

She ended by directing her remarks towards the Prime Minister, and told him that he had to make up his mind: whether he wanted to "protect the welfare of the people of India" or "succumb to the internal pressures of his party and its sister organisations".

She warned that Mr. Vajpayee's "moment of reckoning has come".

The 25-minute speech, delivered before a live national audience, brought out the parliamentarian in Ms. Gandhi. She seemed to pause at the right places, emphasised the crucial points and spoke with a becoming passion. Though she had a prepared text, her delivery was impressive.

She was heard, for most of the time, in silence. Only towards the end of her speech did the NDA benches become restive.

# No Poto-finish, bill is all set <sup>9-1</sup> <sup>parliament</sup> to sail through <sup>26/3</sup>

**Cong has no reason to oppose bill: PM**

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: The controversial Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance (Poto) will become law by Tuesday evening, with the BJP-led government all set to win the vote comfortably in the scheduled historic joint sitting of parliament.

With all the NDA allies—barring the Trinamul Congress, which has announced that it will abstain from voting—backing the BJP, the government is expected to sail through with a margin of between 65 and 100 votes, depending on attendance.

The National Conference (NC), which had voted with the government in the Lok Sabha but stayed away during the Rajya Sabha vote, has announced it will back the government on Tuesday. The BJP has also secured the support of a group of five Lok Sabha MPs who have formed the Indian Federal Democratic Party and joined the NDA. Trinamul Congress rebel Ajit Panja has also decided to support the bill.

With the results a foregone conclusion, all eyes in the months to come will be on how the legislation is used. Already, the NC,

which voted for Poto in the Lok Sabha, stayed away in the Rajya Sabha to register its protest against the fact that while 62 Muslims had been arrested under Poto in Gujarat, not a single Hindu had been booked under the law. Eventually, the Gujarat government had to drop the Poto charges and apply normal law.

Akali Dal leader Prakash Singh Badal has once again warned the government that while his party will vote for Poto, he does not want it to be "misused".

Of the NDA allies, the Trinamul Congress is staying away from the vote because it wants to oppose the Prevention of Organised Crime Act (Poca), a similar piece of proposed legislation in West Bengal. Incidentally, the Left Front government in West Bengal has put Poca on hold because of the controversy surrounding it.

Of the opposition parties, the NCP and the AIADMK have announced they will vote for the bill. However, NCP leader Jagannath Mishra has made a last-minute appeal to his leader Sharad Pawar to vote against Poto. The

Bahujan Samaj Party has announced it will abstain from voting. All the others will vote against the bill.

The Congress, which met on Sunday to discuss the joint sitting, is trying to work out the best way to register its protest against the manner in which the government is pushing through the legislation despite its defeat in the Rajya Sabha. It will either vote against the bill or stage a walkout at the voting stage.

The joint sitting on Tuesday, which is being held after 24 years, will begin at 11 a.m. in the Central Hall of parliament and will be presided over by deputy speaker P.M. Sayeed. The bill, which was rejected in the Rajya Sabha by 15 votes, was passed in the Lok Sabha by a margin of 116 votes.

Earlier, speaking to newsmen at Mashobra Retreat, 10 km from Shimla, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee said

that the Congress, which is in power in 11 states, had no reason to oppose Poto.

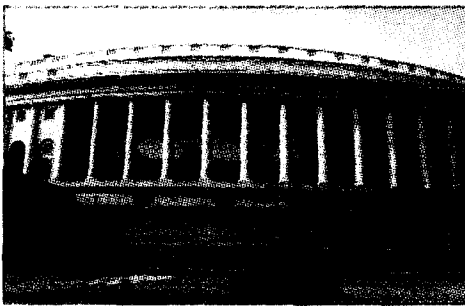
"I urge the opposition parties to support Poto. India is waging a war against cross-border terrorism. It is the need of the hour for all parties to stand as one," he said.

Mr Vajpayee claimed that Poto would certainly be passed during the joint session of parliament on Tuesday. However, he said, the "joint session of parliament need not have been called. But the government has been left with no other alternative".

He said that the Congress was a national party with plenty of experience in fighting cross-border terrorism. "Tada was the creation of a Congress government, which had been supported wholeheartedly by the BJP, which was at that time in the opposition. Back then, the BJP had felt that such a law would be in the nation's interest," he said.

Mr Vajpayee said that he was dismayed at the short-sightedness of the Congress leaders on the issue. "It is high time that the Congress realises that its opposition to Poto is against the national interest, and also that of the party," he said.

Mr Vajpayee said that the government had already cleared misgivings that Poto would be used against select groups. He added that political parties must realise that Poto was required to combat terrorism.



# Joint session on Tuesday

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 22. — President Mr KR Narayanan has summoned a joint session of Parliament on Tuesday, exercising his powers under Article 108(i) of the Constitution, with a directive to discuss and vote on Poto. This was announced in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha today.

The 26 March sitting is being called following the defeat of the Poto Bill in the Rajya Sabha last night, and the government deciding to bring in the legislation by getting it passed in a joint session.

Going by the voting pattern in the Upper House — where the Bill was defeated by 15 votes — the government needs a margin of

31 votes in the joint session to carry the Bill through. The NDA has a majority of more than 60 votes in the Lok Sabha, enough to get the Bill passed.

The Trinamul MPs have announced that they will not attend the session, Mr Sudip Bandopadhyay, party chief whip in the Lok Sabha, said tonight.

This would be the third time in parliamentary history that a joint sitting of the two Houses is being held in the absence of unanimity between the two Houses.

In 1961, Jawaharlal Nehru preferred a joint session of Parliament despite holding a majority in both Houses. Since the Bill was against dowry, he sought a broader consensus among MPs. And in 1978, Morarji Desai wanted to annul the Banking Services Com-

mission Act enacted during the Emergency.

The joint session will be telecast live by Doordarshan on DD-1 from 11 a.m. on Tuesday, adds UNI.

## Cong appeal to allies

The Congress has asked NDA allies to "soul-search" and "vote according to conscience". Criticising the government's move to call a joint session, the Congress said it was against the spirit of both the Parliament vote on the Poto Bill and the Constitution.

Mr Anand Sharma, Congress spokesman, said: "Yesterday, the Opposition parties demonstrated their united determination to defeat Poto and the same will be done on the day of the joint session."

THE STATESMAN

23 MAR 2002

# Sparks fly over Hindutva issue

By Javed M. Ansari

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 21.** The simmering tension between the NDA constituents and a section of the BJP over the Hindutva issue burst into the open in the Lok Sabha today and the House was adjourned for over an hour to prevent a physical clash between the two sides.

The situation turned ugly during zero hour as two MPs belonging to the Janata Dal (United) and the INLD were heckled and berated by the Bajrang Dal MP, Vinay Katiyar, and Adityanath while making their submissions. Though the timely action by the Deputy Speaker, P.M. Sayeed, in adjourning the House for over an hour put an end to the fight, the battle continued to rage even after the House was adjourned, and, later outside it.

Soon after Mr. Sayeed adjourned the House, Mr. Katiyar and Mr. Adityanath, supported by Shanker Prasad Agarwal of

the BJP, moved aggressively towards Devendra Prasad Yadav of the JD (U) and Sushil Indora of the INLD for some remarks they had made against the "saffron brigade." A shouting match and an eye ball-to-eye ball confrontation ensued. But the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, and Digvijay Singh moved swiftly to separate the two sides.

Mr. Yadav, in his submission, referred to the "atmosphere of tension" in the country because of the "irresponsible behaviour of certain outfits of the Sangh Parivar." These organisations were behaving as if they were above the law, were challenging the courts, and had even disregarded the Prime Minister's appeal. He attacked the VHP for threatening to take out "asthi yatras" and said the move was bound to ignite communal passions and "lead to the disintegration of the country."

He also questioned the VHP's right to speak on behalf of the

entire Hindu society. "Who is the VHP, who has given this saffron outfit the certificate to speak on behalf of the Hindus," he asked and made it clear that the "hardline Hindutva agenda" that the VHP was propagating was not part of the NDA agenda. "If this had been a part of the agenda we would never have joined the NDA," he said.

Mr. Indora said that secular Hindus were being targeted by hardline Hindutva activists and referred to an incident in his constituency where certain priests occupied a piece of land and were holding "kirtans." When requested by the neighbourhood to cut it short because of the ongoing school examinations, they refused. "These people believe they are the only guardians of the Hindus" he said. He had barely spoken for a couple of minutes when he was rudely interrupted by Mr. Adityanath and Mr. Katiyar. "You cannot attack the Sangh Parivar like this," Mr. Katiyar said and

was joined by Mr. Adityanath, who accused the members of "betraying the NDA by talking like this."

Irked by the show of aggression, other allies — the TDP, the Trinamool Congress and the Samata Party — also protested vehemently. "This is unacceptable and we should be allowed to speak," said S. Venugopal of the TDP. Speaking to the media outside the House, Raghunath Jha (Samata Party) demanded a ban on the proposed "asthi yatra" of the VHP. "This will lead to a communal conflagration, if they do not ban it we will be forced to withdraw support to the NDA," he said.

The issue was initially raised by the former Prime Minister, Deve Gowda, who drew the attention of the House to the grave situation in the country. He appealed to the Prime Minister and the Home Minister to stop the VHP from going ahead with the "asthi yatra" as it would lead to more bloodshed.

7 2 MAR 2002

# CPI(M) endorses plan to forge third alternative

By K. V. Prasad

9-10-02  
11  
MS  
**HYDERABAD, MARCH 21.** The plan of the Communist Party of India (Marxist) to forge a third political alternative at the national level was cleared by the party's 17th congress here tonight with accent on building the combine through mass struggles and unity of the Left and democratic forces.

The draft political resolution was put to vote with amendments, aimed at sharpening the party's political line and direction in the next three years. The congress approved of it unanimously after five sessions of extensive debate, which began on Tuesday afternoon, with some dozen of the 233 amendments moved finding a place in the final version.

With a political churning taking place in the country and with the developments in Ayodhya and Gujarat adding to it, the situation called for an alternative, the CPI (M) said. The disenchantment of some National Democratic Alliance constituents with these developments was also noted. And the assembly endorsed the view that the CPI (M) should take the lead in carrying forward a third alternative — essentially a non-Congress formation — to take on the "communal combine," meet the challenge posed by the existing "critical situation" created by the BJP's policies.

The existing alternative — People's Front — was to be strengthened through "mass struggles" on policies which affected the working classes and not just by attracting parties, the resolution said. The overwhelming feeling was that the Congress could not be the only alternative to the BJP. People had voted for a third alternative, wherever it was strong, the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh being an example.

It was suggested that the CPI (M) sharpen itself to convert struggles into issues so that the people could choose and back the parties which stood by them when the time came in Parliament and Legislatures — it was the effect of numbers which eventually counted.

The Front's priority would be prevent the BJP from occupying political power, oppose the eco-

nomie policies of the Congress and build the third alternative. However, it would not hesitate to cooperate with political forces on specific issues, if the need arose, within the overall objective, the politburo member, Sitaram Yechury, said. On whether the CPI (M) would support the Congress in forming a government in a post-election situation, he said the decision would be taken with a view to keeping the BJP out, as had been done in Maharashtra where the party had backed the Congress-NCP coalition against the BJP-Shiv Sena combine.

Mr. Yechury and another politburo member, Prakash Karat, said there was little difference between the BJP and the Congress, since both represented the ruling classes. Mr. Yechury charged that the party had at times compromised with "communal forces" and its economic policies were diametrically opposite to those of the Left parties.

The CPI (M) felt that the BJP/Sangh Parivar was diverting the people's attention from issues of concern by raking up matters like Ayodhya — "a last ditch effort by the RSS/BJP to retain its political base by communal polarisation at the cost of India's unity," as Mr. Yechury put it.

The congress adopted two resolutions, one against the privatisation of public sector undertakings and Government departments, and another expressing solidarity with the struggle of the people of Palestine.

While releasing the resolution on Palestine, Mr. Yechury stressed that never before had representatives from both Israel and Palestine Liberation Organisation, who were attending the congress, adopted such a document.

The congress endorsed the demand of the Palestinian national council for the immediate withdrawal of the Israeli forces from "occupied Palestine territory" and other parts of Arab territory, complete implementation of the U.N. Charter and its resolutions and the recognition of the rights of the Palestinian people — including the right to return, of self determination, independence, sovereignty and statehood of the territory of the Palestinian homeland.

THE HINDU

9 7 2002

# The joint session

By Rajeev Dhavan

*The BJP is now making its third attempt to introduce POTO in violation of constitutional norms... Parliament cannot be reduced to a matter of rubber-stamping arithmetic.*

9<sup>th</sup> Parliament  
10-10-22/3

**P**ARLIAMENT IS the supreme legislative body. It is a constitutional fraud to manipulate its process and undermine the functions assigned to it. Such frauds may not be justifiable in a court of law. It may well be — as Lord Denning put it in Picken's case (1972) — that it would be the duty of a court to point the fraud out to Parliament. But, obviating a constitutional fraud remains the responsibility of everyone — including the Prime Minister and the Cabinet who are custodians of the Constitution. Conventions are invented to make Constitutions work. They are the dharma of the Constitution. Take them away and the Constitution becomes a piece of paper — a mere playing in the hands of politicians.

The BJP is now making its third attempt to introduce POTO in violation of constitutional norms. The first fraud was when the POTO 2001 was introduced on October 24 even though Parliament's session was to start a few days later, on November 19. TADA had lapsed in 1994-95 precisely because the BJP itself opposed it. The TADA Bill of 1995 was sent to a Joint Committee. The recommendations of the Joint Committee were not accepted. Apart from being unacceptable, TADA has been socially, judicially and politically recognised as the most abused statute since 1950 — especially against innocent minorities. The admitted position was so bad that the Supreme Court ordered a review of the cases which revealed vast misuses. Meanwhile, the NHRC has also reiterated its disapproval of both TADA (in 2000) and POTO in 2001 — adding to its controversiality. Hence, it was a fraud to use POTO as a new TADA through the Ordinance process — knowing that it was controversial, lacked consensus and a potential majority in Parliament. The second fraud came when POTO I lapsed without parliamentary approval; and was re-promulgated. The Supreme Court correctly warned in Wadhwa's case (1987) against indiscriminate use of the Ordinance power — certainly in controversial cases to bypass parliamentary approval.

Now, comes the third fraud. POTO II has also lapsed. POTO III — correctly

dubbed as the 'terror' bill — was rushed through the Lok Sabha. Such a Bill needed to be considered by a Joint Committee — because the new POTO has alarming features on forfeiture of property, telephone tapping, ban on association and other deeper infringements of civil liberties. No real debate took place in the Lok Sabha which passed the Bill on March 18. Now the Bill is in the Rajya Sabha which is set to reject it. On March 18 itself, the Rajya Sabha was effectively sent a chilling political message by the Government that if it did not pass the Bill, a Joint Session of Parliament would be called on March 26 so that the Government's majority in the Lok Sabha would overwhelm the Opposition's numbers in the Rajya Sabha. How can the Upper House — or even Parliament — operate sensibly under these threats which undermine its effective functioning without real discussion, debate or detailed consideration? Contrast how the British House of Lords in December 2001 carefully and freely scrutinised Britain's anti-terror law. Parliament cannot be reduced to a matter of rubber-stamping arithmetic.

What are Parliament Joint Sessions for? For this we have to go back to Lloyd George's famous budget crisis of 1909-11 when the Lords blocked a welfare budget. The Parliament Act, 1911, gave the Commons overriding power over money bills. This is part of our Constitution (Article 109). But what about other Bills? Drawing on the Government of India Act, 1935, the Constituent Assembly created the extra option of Joint Session. The extra option meant that the normal procedure was that both Houses should carefully consider each legislation — if need be by Joint Committee. It was never the intention of the Constitution to overwhelm the Rajya Sabha into submission

with threats. Meanwhile, England evolved procedure under the Act of 1949 which avoids joint sessions.

How has the working of the Joint Session provision (Article 108) been understood. The scheme of the Article is that the President may call a Joint Session if a Bill is rejected by the other House, disagreements are not resolved or six months have lapsed in the interregnum. This is simply an enabling provision if full discussion fails. The

question of holding out a threat to the Rajya Sabha does not arise if it has not even

## LAW AND SOCIETY

considered the matter. This is constitutional terrorism in advance. Deadlocks in the Constitution need to be resolved. The proper procedure is time honoured. The receiving House can still pass the Bill even after six months as long as the Lok Sabha has not been dissolved. This was followed in the case of the Architects Act, 1980, the Sales Promotion Employees Act, 1982 and other statutes earlier. The reason is obvious. The whole point of having two Houses — one representing the States — is to have complete and total discussion. There have been two occasions when the Joint Session procedure was used — for the Dowry Act in April 1961 and the Banking Act in December 1977 after extensive discussion on the Bills in both Houses. It may be recalled that even when the Emergency Amendments of 1976 were being passed in 1978-79 discussions with the Rajya Sabha took place to find the correct answers. This was equally true of TADA in 1995 — through a Joint Committee. Otherwise the Rajya Sabha and, indeed, the parliamentary process is undermined.

A Joint Session is not a satisfactory solution. No real discussion can take place. The Constitution permits only those amendments which deal with the delay (for example, if the date of

the Act or its starting has to be changed). The other amendments are restricted to those which are the area of disagreement — with the decision of the Presiding Officer being final. But, no amendments can be discussed if the Rajya Sabha is not even given the time and space to discuss the Bill properly under the coercive threat of a Joint Session. These are not the kind of conventions we want to develop about Parliament which is the prime institution of Indian democracy.

Whatever the Rajya Sabha may be coerced into doing, the issue remains one of principle. The President, K.R. Narayanan, needs to consider this carefully. The question of a Joint Session arises only after the Rajya Sabha's consideration. A threat in advance is pre-emptively unacceptable and should not be carried out. It is the President's duty to warn and advise that an issue of this nature should be resolved by normal procedure and not shot gun tactics. We need a precedent — as was set by him for President's Rule in Bihar — that appeals to the President for a Joint Session will be sent back for reconsideration if threatened in advance or constitutionally subversive.

This is all the more important for POTO III. It is a new Act. It has never been scrutinised by Parliament properly. It is hugely inimical to civil liberties. We are just going through the carnage of Gujarat where TADA was most misused and the travesties in Orissa following Ayodhya. The last thing India wants or needs is to arm partial State Governments with the kind of massive powers that made TADA infamous in design and use. Meanwhile, India is not defenceless. It has preventive detention, an already over-powering Criminal Procedure Code, an existing Unlawful Association Act and innumerable powers. Denial of bail, telephone tapping, forfeiture of property, reversal of burden of proof are all serious issues that require proper consideration. What is required is the wisdom of Parliament not the haste of a Joint Session.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20, 2002

119-10  
2002

## POTO AND PARLIAMENT

WITH A DETERMINED Opposition vowing the defeat of the Prevention of Terrorism Ordinance Bill in the Rajya Sabha, the BJP-led Government is preparing the ground for convening a joint session of Parliament to muster the required majority and ram the legislation through. In the specific circumstances which prevail today, this is an unfortunate and unsatisfactory stratagem to change the status of POTO — a severe piece of legislation which raises legitimate concerns from a civil and human rights perspective — from Ordinance to Act. It is true that a constitutional provision exists to convene a joint session of Parliament to consider Bills passed by one House and rejected by the other. But in the case of POTO, it is imperative to adopt a long view — namely, to examine the deplorable manner in which the Government has attempted to hustle it through from the very inception. It began with the hasty issue of POTO as an ordinance when there was no reason why it could not have waited a little longer and been introduced in the form of a Bill. Faced with an ordinance that was in danger of lapsing, the Government had it re-promulgated (albeit with some minor changes) despite the fact that rule by successive ordinances goes directly against the constitutional grain and amounts (as the Supreme Court has ruled in one case) to a fraud on the Constitution. Joint sessions of Parliament have been convened under Article 108 on two previous occasions, but the circumstances then, if not materially different, were at least free from the political acrimony and the cynical manoeuvring witnessed ever since the first POTO ordinance was issued.

So much for the procedure (or really the lack of it) which has attended the creation of a new terrorism law. Even more worrying, is the substantive aspect of the law itself. In some ways, POTO may be a less severe version of TADA, but there are a clutch of specific provisions — such as the use of

confessions made to the police and strict rules for bail — which are extremely worrying from a civil rights point of view. In a country like India, such provisions carry the real risk of abuse and victimisation at the best of times. But in these troubled and communally vitiated times — when the temperatures raised by the Ayodhya campaign have scorched the body politic, when the embers of Gujarat still glow in pain and in shame and when lumpens belonging to the VHP and the Bajrang Dal take the law into their own hands in Orissa — it is difficult to avoid asking the proponents of POTO why they want this law, whom they want to use it against and whether they will ever use it fairly. Such questions become inevitable when the Chief Minister of Gujarat can demand that POTO be used against the criminals who perpetrated Godhra but brush away the ensuing pogrom in his State as a (possibly unavoidable) reaction. Such questions also demand to be answered when a Government slaps a ban on SIMI with alacrity, but is prepared to handle the vandalism of the VHP and the Bajrang Dal with no more than routine or ritual reprimands. Very little that the BJP-led Government has done after issuing the first POTO ordinance has had the ring of sincerity. The attempt to associate support for POTO with a sense of patriotism and opposition to it as minority appeasement is a case in point. The manner in which the ordinance was exploited as a campaign issue in the recent Uttar Pradesh Assembly election is another example which suggests that POTO, in the hands of some of its most vocal advocates, is really more about politics and less about terrorism. The BJP-led Government may be correct when it points out that any criminal law, and not just POTO, is liable to misuse or abuse. But the question is whether such a severe piece of legislation can be trusted in the hands of a Government which has displayed little or no sign of being fair and even-handed. The answer, quite unequivocally, is no.

THE HINDU

20 MAR 2002

## LS passes POTO Bill

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 18.** The Lok Sabha tonight passed a bill to ratify the controversial anti-terrorism ordinance (POTO).

In the division pressed by the Opposition, 261 voted for and 137 against. 10-1

The opposition staged a walkout after the bill to Replace the Prevention of Terrorism (second) Ordinance was passed, following a division. Key NDA 19/3 constituents, Trinamool Congress, NCP and BSP stayed away from the House during the voting. The DMK, which took an ambivalent stand during the discussion, and its rival AIADMK both supported the bill during the voting.

Replying to a debate on the bill, the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, said the Government had incorporated changes suggested by various political parties to ensure that the measure was not misused.

"Safeguards have been incorporated. I appeal to the House to pass the bill unanimously and that there should be no dispute on that," Mr. Advani said.

Maintaining that POTO had been enforced since October 24 last year, he said that so far 146 people, including five Pakistanis, had been booked under the measure in Jammu and Kashmir, Delhi and Gujarat among others. — PTI



# Jana, Keshubhai elected to RS

**AGENCIES**  
GANDHINAGAR/CHENNAI/RAIPUR/  
CHANDIGARH/HYDERABAD,  
MARCH 18

**B**JP NATIONAL president Jana Krishnamurthy and former chief minister Keshubhai Patel were today declared elected to the Rajya Sabha from Gujarat.

The other leaders to enter the House of Elders are Gujarat Khadi Board chairman Jayantibhai Barot (BJP) and Alka Kshatriya (Congress). Only these leaders had filed their nominations for the four vacancies from the state caused due to the retirement of Bangaru Laxman, Anant Dave and Gopalsinh Solanki (all BJP) and Brahmakumar Bhatt (Congress) next month.

Tamil Maanila Congress (TMC) president G.K. Vasan,

## Subbarami is in too

■ **T. SUBBARAMI** Reddy has been declared elected as Member of Rajya Sabha. He was Member in Lok Sabha for two terms. He was previously elected as secretary to the Congress Parliamentary Party. Earlier, he was chairman, Tirumala Tirupathi Devasthanam Board. Presently, he is the secretary to All India Congress Committee. —ENS



**Keshubhai Patel**

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister J. Jayalalithaa's counsel N. Jothi were elected unopposed from Tamil Nadu while Congress leaders Motilal Vora and Ramadhar Kashyap were among the candidates declared elected unopposed from

the BJP did not field any candidate facilitating the unopposed election of Vora and Kashyap.

Uttar Pradesh Indian National Lok Dal president Harinder Singh Malik and Sumitra Devi, widow of former Health minister Om Prakash Mahajan, were today declared elected unopposed from Haryana.

With this, the ruling Indian National Lok Dal will have four of the five seats in the Upper House. The remaining seat is held by former Lt Governor and Haryana Vikas Party member Swaraj Kaushal.

All the six candidates from Andhra Pradesh were declared elected unopposed today. They are, S.M. Lal Jan Basha, R. Chandrasekhar Reddy, N.P. Durga and A. Sudarshan (TDP), T. Subbarami Reddy and Nandi Yellaiah (Congress).

Chhattisgarh. In Chhattisgarh, the ruling Congress got an additional seat in the Upper House following the defection of a dozen BJP MLAs to the party recently.

With the depleted strength of only 22 in the 91-member House,

# Reddy remark on PM sets House on fire

HT Correspondent  
New Delhi, March 14

THE NDA Government in Parliament today did what the Opposition usually does: Creating pandemonium and forcing an adjournment of the Lok Sabha for the entire day after Congress leader S Jaipal Reddy described the Centre's plea for a symbolic puja at the undisputed site in Ayodhya at the Supreme Court as a "humungous fraud on the nation".

Prime Minister A B Vajpayee read out a statement to the Lok Sabha, defending Attorney-General Soli Sorabjee's submission before the Supreme Court: "It is the constitutional duty of the Attorney-General to interpret a law or judgment of the court, when asked by the court to do so. This is what the A-G did when the Supreme Court asked him yesterday if a symbolic puja on the undisputed acquired land in Ayodhya was permissible".

Bedlam was triggered during

## Not sorry

JAIPAL REDDY refused to apologise for his remark on the Prime Minister in the House and said he did not use "unparliamentary" language. He stuck to his "formulation and expression" at a meeting with Deputy Speaker P M Sayeed. Reddy said the language may have been strong but not unparliamentary, considering the reversal of stand by the Government.

HTC, New Delhi

Zero Hour after Reddy rose to seek clarification on Vajpayee's statement on Sorabjee's submission before the Supreme Court yesterday. "It is a humungous fraud on the nation," Reddy said.

Almost all ruling NDA members, barring the TDP and Tri-

namool Congress, were up in arms, shouting slogans and demanding an unconditional apology from Reddy.

An agitated Mahajan egged on NDA members to gather at the edge of the well. The Treasury demanded that Reddy apologise to the House for use of "unparliamentary language" against "such a senior member and the Prime Minister". Mahajan was seen speaking to former Prime Minister Chandrashekhar who tried to convince Reddy to withdraw his word and apologise to the House.

Reddy, however, refused, angering the ruling coalition members further. Chandrashekhar also spoke to Vajpayee and other senior ministers.

Deputy Speaker P M Sayeed adjourned the House till 2 pm. NDA members persisted after the House assembled and gathered near the well again following which the House was adjourned for the day.

# Lok Sabha adjourned over Govt. stand in Supreme Court

HD-11  
19/3

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 13.** The Government's stand on the Ayodhya issue in the Supreme Court, and the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee's refusal to explain it in the Lok Sabha plunged the House in turmoil and eventually led to its adjournment for the day.

Trouble erupted towards the end of question hour, as news of Government's stand in the apex court reached the House. Angry Opposition MPs were on their feet charging the Government with "misleading" them and demanded an explanation from Mr. Vajpayee. Somnath Chatterjee, Priya Ranjan Dasmunshi, Buta Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav accused the Government of "misleading the country." The agitated members trooped into the well of the House raising slogans and demanding Mr. Vajpayee's presence. Sensing their belligerent mood, the Deputy Speaker, P.M. Sayeed, adjourned the House till 2 p.m.

All along, the Treasury benches, non-plussed by the Supreme Court ruling in favour of maintaining status quo, did not react.

The Congress president and Leader of the Opposition, Sonia Gandhi, conferred with Mr. Chatterjee and G. M. Banatwala in her party office. She also consulted the former Prime Ministers, Deve Gowda and Chandrashekhar. As soon as the House assembled after lunch, a determined Opposition raised a din, demanding Mr. Vajpayee's presence.

However, his arrival a few minutes later failed to cool tempers as he showed no signs of yielding to the Opposition's demand for a statement. The Union Home Minister, L. K. Advani, looked on impassively as a large number of Opposition MPs trooped into the well. He even made a feeble attempt to intervene in vain.

Soon, the BJP members joined the "action" and shouted counter-slogans. Mr. Chatterjee said it was only proper for the

Prime Minister to explain why his Government had "misled" the House, the all-party meeting and the President. Shivraj Patil of the Congress said the Government should allow the Opposition to make its point before Mr. Vajpayee spoke. But Mr. Vajpayee showed no signs of responding.

With the sloganeering reaching a feverish pitch, Mr. Sayeed adjourned the House till 4 p.m. A meeting of senior leaders in his chamber failed to break the deadlock. At the meeting, the Opposition continued to insist on a statement from Mr. Vajpayee, with the Government refusing to relent.

Tension continued as the House reassembled. Mr. Vajpayee stayed away. The Law Minister, Arun Jaitley's attempt to explain things was shouted down by the Opposition MPs, who again trooped into the well of the House. With the bedlam showing no signs of easing, the Lok Sabha was adjourned for the day.

DR. ...

# Sonia alleges breach of rules during debate on Gujarat riots

*9-Parliament 11-9 1813*

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: The normally reticent Congress leader Sonia Gandhi, who is not given to impromptu interventions during parliamentary discussions, created a stir in the Lok Sabha on Monday when she raised an angry protest during the ongoing debate on the Gujarat violence. She charged that the BJP MPs were being given documents by officers from the officials' gallery which is against the rules.

The house was, consequently, plunged into chaos as Congress members took the cue from their agitated leader and rushed to the well of house to register their protests even as BJP members sought to shout them down.

The drama unfolded when BJP member Bhavna Chikalia put up a stout defence of the handling of the Gujarat situation by the Narendra Modi ministry and alleged that local Congress leaders were actually involved in the Godhra incident. She also waved a photocopy of a document to support her contention and wanted to place it on the table of the house. Congress members were just about responding to this charge when several BJP members started flashing photocopies of the same document.

It was during this clash that Ms Gandhi, who had been following the debate quietly till then, got up agitatedly to protest that officials from the officers gallery

had passed on documents to BJP members. Ms Gandhi, who was in an unusually combative mood, then walked up to the speaker's chair and repeated her charge as her remarks were drowned in the shouting. She could be seen gesticulating angrily and shaking her head in disbelief even after she returned to her seat while she narrated the incident to her colleagues.

Responding to Sonia's prompting, Congress members rushed to the well while party chief whip Priyaranjan Dasmunshi pointed out that the whole episode could be viewed on the close circuit television installed in the house. Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, who was in the chair, pointed out that rules clearly stated that members could not take the help of officials, only ministers could, and that members were also not allowed to distribute any document or paper which had no bearing on the ongoing debate. BJP members denied taking documents from any official and instead charged that Congress MP Renuka Chaudhary, who had moved towards the officials' gallery, was threatening officials.

This exchange of allegations continue with neither side showing any signs of relenting. Home minister Advani counselled both sides to keep peace and allow the debate to continue while asking the chair to give a ruling later.



# LS condemns Modi over Gujarat riots

5 Feb 9 Parliament

Statesman News Service

NEW DELHI, March 11. — The Opposition today condemned Gujarat chief minister Mr Narendra Modi for failing to take pre-emptive measures to contain communal violence after the Godhra carnage on 27 February. Some ruling coalition allies also criticised the Gujarat government for failing to tackle the situation.

Admitting that the Gujarat riots were a "blot" on the nation, Union home minister Mr LK Advani rejected the Opposition demand for his resignation and the sacking of the Gujarat chief minister Mr Narendra Modi.

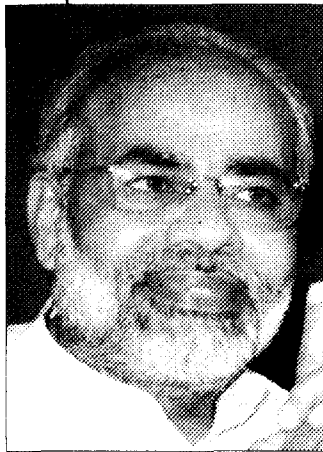
The Opposition staged a walk-out in both Houses in response.

Replying to an eight-hour discussion in Lok Sabha tonight on the Godhra massacre and subsequent violence, Mr Advani remained non-committal on the issue of appointing a sitting Supreme Court judge to probe it.

"Sweeping allegations against the police, administration and the chief minister is highly unfair and totally unjustified. If Mr Modi had been hand-in-glove, 100 people would not have been killed in police firing," he said.

In the Rajya Sabha, on the opposition demand for his and Mr Modi's resignation, Mr Advani said it had become a habit for political leaders to demand the resignation.

To the demand for a probe by a sitting Supreme Court judge, Mr Advani said the state government has ordered a judicial inquiry and named a judge.



Mr Narendra Modi

"I don't think it would be right for me to reverse the state government's decision."

Defending the Modi government, he said it had, in fact, brought the situation under control within 72 hours after the outbreak of violence.

In the Lok Sabha, Mr Yerran Naidu of the TDP and Miss Mamata Banerjee of the Trinamul said Gujarat has a long history of communal riots and the state government should have responded immediately after 57 kar sevaks were burnt to death in Godhra.

Initiating the debate, Mr Priya Ranjan Das Munshi of the Congress reminded the Centre of its duty to uphold the image of the country known for its secular values and culture.

He charged the chief minister with ignoring ground realities. Perceptions differed when Mr

Somnath Chatterjee of the CPI-M, Prof VK Malhotra of the BJP and Mr Anand Gite of the Shiv Sena gave different stories of the "relief camps".

Opposition members said the relief camps were being run by NGOs and stories of violence, arson and killings were pouring in from the camps.

Mr Gite refuted the claim saying he had visited the camps and both Hindus and Muslims were victims of killings and arson.

The Opposition was trying to paint a picture in which only section of society was being victimised.

There was pandemonium in the House when Mrs Sonia Gandhi said that an official had passed on a leaflet to a BJP member which was in violation of the rules on conduct of business of the Lok Sabha.

THE STATESMAN

# Hung Houses worry lawmakers

**Statesman News Service**

IT was only a day's affair in the Lok Sabha last week. The rest of the four working days were lost in mourning (three days) and disruption.

Nevertheless Friday was significant, since for the first time the government conceded the fact that there was something missing in the Indian Constitution, which ought to be amended yet again, to deal with the verdict in elections if it happens to be fractured.

The SP and the CPI-M members cried foul, accusing the Centre and the UP Governor of denying Mr Mulayam Singh Yadav his right to form the government by virtue of being elected as the leader of the largest single party in UP.

Since most of the 'leaders' in Parliament were out in Gujarat on Friday, the leader of the House, Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, was present. And what he said was significant.

The Prime Minister told the Lok Sabha that should all political parties

agree, the Centre was prepared to discuss if the law is to be amended — to make it obligatory for the Governor of a state to invite the leader of the single largest party in the Assembly if no single party or group of alliance has the bare majority in the legislature.

Given the trend in some states, it is likely that in future polls too clear majority might elude parties or alliances.

## week in LOK SABHA

But far from grasping the seriousness of the subject, the Opposition members stuck to the beaten track of hurling accusations and creating disorder.

Friday, 8 March, being the International Women's Day, something had to be said or done in the Lok Sabha to show that our politicians are also conscious about women welfare.

Mrs Sumitra Mahajan, minister of

state, introduced the Domestic Violence Bill 2002, to curb the day-to-day atrocities against women, particularly abuses and assault on women in household. The draft of the bill, however, is misleading and appeared to be fully tilted in favour of men.

The women members, on their part, pressed their demand of bringing the Women Reservation Bill, ensuring 33 per cent reservation in state legislature and Parliament. The Bill somehow has been sent to the archives of Parliament Library in absence of consensus among the political parties.

Mr Vajpayee came out with the idea that the government was ready to 'consider' the issue, if parties develop a consensus to go by the suggestion of the Election Commission of India.

The Commission is of the view that instead of amending the Constitution, the parties should adopt resolutions and make it a written commitment in their party constitution, to offer 33 per cent of the seats in elections to women candidates.

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# Rajya Sabha MPs cross swords over Modi's performance

Times News Network

NEW DELHI: If the Gujarat pogroms were an angry Hindu reaction to the Godhra train massacre of February 27, why were Muslims being hunted and killed only in that state? Do Hindus elsewhere identify less with their faith or people?

"The answer is so clear," said CPI(M) member Nilotpal Basu on Thursday, at the outset of the Rajya Sabha debate on Gujarat. The discussion was taken up after the house was adjourned in the morning amidst noisy scenes over the Gujarat and Ayodhya issues. "Nowhere else is the BJP in such power; nowhere else are the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and RSS so strong."

Mr Basu and Congress chief whip Pranab Mukherjee, who initiated the debate, besides some opposition members who spoke, demanded to know what moral justification the state chief minister had to continue in office. Reading out Gujarat CM Narendra Modi's several statements on how things were basically under control and how the mass violence was quite understandable, Mr Mukherjee asked the ruling party if this was their conception of a CM's job. He and others went on to ask Union home minister L.K. Advani if he had measured up to his job at all. Clearly not, they said.

The ruling party's Gopalsinh Solanki, an MP from Gujarat who was chosen to lead the debate from the BJP side, said Mr Modi's administration had actually done a commendable job. The situation was brought largely under control in a little over 72 hours. Contrast

this, he said, with the Congress record of controlling mass violence in the riots of 1969, 1980 and 1985, etc, when places remained under curfew for weeks, and even months.

Later, Union law minister Arun Jaitley made an allied point: data showed the police had actually arrested close to 4,000 rioters over the first five days of violence, and shot dead 98 rioters. Contrast this, he said, to the November 1984 anti-Sikh pogrom in the nation's capital, Delhi, under Congress rule, when 3,000 people were massacred in one day, with the police twirling their thumbs.

Mr Jaitley said he condemned the post-Godhra rioters and killers without any reservation. It was an inhuman act and it is solely for the police and government to punish anyone for a crime, not any citizen's self-appointed task. But so much of the criticism was based on hearsay and falsity, as in the common belief about Mr Modi having said the violence was an equal and opposite reaction to the Godhra killings, when he had never said anything of the sort, Jaitley said. Stop scoring cheap political points if you want a proper introspection, he said, to approving thumping of desks by Advani and other BJP members.

The decision to discuss actually took half the day. The entire morning session was drowned in shouting and counter-roars, leading chairperson Krishan Kant to twice adjourn the house, with nothing done or decided. Sanity prevailed only a little before lunch, with the discussion proceeding after that.



## Ministry appoints inquiry committee

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 3.** A three-member inquiry committee headed by Lt.Gen. A. Natarajan and including two technical members was today appointed by the Ministry of Civil Aviation to report on the helicopter crash in Andhra Pradesh which killed the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, G.M.C. Balayogi, his private secretary, K.S. Raju and the pilot, Capt. G.V. Menon.

The Ministry asserted that no report of any in-flight emergency had been received from the helicopter by either the Hyderabad or the Chennai ATCs. The Deccan Aviation Bell 206 helicopter VT-DAP of 1991 vintage which was on a non-scheduled flight from Bhimavaram "had a valid certificate of airworthiness" at the time of the accident, the Ministry stated.

On receipt of information of the accident, the Regional Controller of Air Safety, office of the Director-General of Civil Avia-

tion in Hyderabad, Bir Singh Rai, had rushed to the spot to carry out on-the-site investigations.

According to an eye-witness account when the helicopter was coming down the engine sound of the aircraft could be heard. It hit a coconut tree and fell nose down in a fish pond near Koluru Lake in village Kalkalur, the Ministry stated. The eye-witness also reported foggy conditions and poor visibility at the time of the accident, about 7.45 a.m.

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### Delay in Army deployment denied

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 3.** The Defence Minister, George Fernandes, who submitted a report to the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, on his visit to Gujarat denied charges of delay in sending the Army to the riot-torn State. He had gone to take stock of the situation and the steps taken to curtail violence. — UNI

THE HINDU

MARCH 3, 1992



**OBITUARY: GMC BALAYOGI (1951-2002)**

# Speaker who grew with the job

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In simple physical terms climbing just a few stairs will suffice to negotiate the difference in height between the floor of the Lok Sabha and the Speaker's podium. The impartial manner in which GMC Balayogi conducted himself as the presiding officer of the apex legislature proved that the difference in those levels went far beyond the physical. Hence the mourning was genuine as news of his untimely death circulated across the country.

It was with virtually no credentials that Balayogi assumed that office in 1998. He had served only one term in the House without having really made a mark.

It was also rather well known that he was not his party leadership's first choice for the post, but was better positioned than the more preferred person to rush to the Capital to file nomination papers for the Speaker's election.

Even worse, it soon became obvious that the dirty tricks department of the ruling entity had both embarrassed and ditched his immediate and popular predecessor, Mr PA Sangma, making the election to the highest of parliamentary offices a truly murky affair.

Add to that a lack of fluency in Hindi, the language used most often in the legislature, and it was clear that the new Speaker would have a hard time conducting the business of a House whose members increasingly ignored the traditions of decorum, dignity and sobriety. The 12th Lok Sabha opened to scenes of the proverbial fish market — unparliamentary though that description might be.

Yet when it was time to elect the Speaker of the 13th (the present) Lok Sabha there was only one candidate — Balayogi. Among those who formally proposed his name on a set of nomination forms was the leader of the Opposition.

That was not contrived-consensus attained through political negotiation. The 12th Lok Sabha had not lasted a full term, but it had sufficed for Balayogi to establish his place on the podium.

What really earned him the respect due to Mr Speaker was his refusal to bow to covert political pressure and be hustled into a move that might have averted the government of the BJP-led alliance (which his Telugu Desam Party strongly supported, albeit from "outside" coming a cropper after Miss Jayalalitha withdrew the AIADMK from the coalition.

The numbers game, everyone knew, would go down to the wire. As heads were counted when the motion of confidence was being debated the tally indicated that it would boil down to a single vote. Seated in the Congress benches was Mr Girdhar Gomango who had just been elected chief minister of Orissa, but had yet to resign his Lok Sabha seat.

That became a vote of contention. The treasury benches mounted a strong assault, technical as well as political and sought to press the Chair into adjudicating the validity of Mr Gomango's vote. Balayogi refused to be drawn into the political squabble: he left it to the "good sense" of the member. The government fell.

Yet his was not a one-act play. With the institution being reduced to an excessively politicised battlefield, orderly proceedings in the 13th Lok Sabha became a casualty and adjournments, noisy scenes in the well, near-physical confrontation was just about all that took place.

Disgusted and dismayed, Balayogi took the initiative to get the House to eventually adopt a code of conduct, with provisions for stringent penalties.

How effective that code will be is for the members to now prove. There would be many other "features" of Balayogi's tenure as Mr Speaker: the first Dalit, the youngest person to be elected to the Chair, the first to die in office.

What will ever stamp him as distinct is that, unlike the majority of people in contemporary public life, he grew with the job.

OF STATESMAN

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## BID FOR EMERGENCY LANDING FAILS

# Balayogi killed in copter crash

By Our Special Correspondent

VIJAYAWADA, MARCH 3. The Lok Sabha Speaker, G.M.C. Balayogi, died when a private helicopter in which he was travelling crashed while trying to make an emergency landing at Kovvadalanka village in Kolleru area of Krishna district this morning. His assistant secretary, Sathi Raju, and pilot, Girija Vallabha Menon (48) of Kochi, were also killed.

It was literally a death call for Mr. Balayogi who cancelled his scheduled journey by train from Eluru to Visakhapatnam last night at the behest of his friend and Christian missionary, S. A. Paul. Mr. Paul had persuaded him to stay back in Bhimavaram and offered to fly him to Hyderabad in his helicopter today to catch his flight to Delhi in the morning.

The helicopter developed some technical snag soon after take off at Bhimavaram at 7.15 a.m. The pilot made frantic efforts to land and hovered in vain over Kovvadalanka village, hardly 30 km away. He could not find a safe landing place among the fish ponds dotting the entire landscape. Poor visibility due to fog compounded his problems.

The pilot finally tried to land on the narrow stretch of a pond bund but failed. When he tried to go up again, he hit a coconut tree and the propeller at the rear end broke. The copter plunged into the pond. Mr. Balayogi suffered multiple injuries on the skull, legs and hands and was found dead on the seat.

Mr. Balayogi came to West Godavari district on Saturday to visit the ancient Venkateswara temple at Dwaraka Tirumala. Many other programmes had been arranged for him at Eluru and Tanuku. After his dinner at Tanuku, he wanted to catch either the Godavari or the Gowthmi Express and reach Hyderabad or Visakhapatnam to board a flight for Delhi.

Mr. Paul, who was camping at Bhimavaram for prayer-healing, called on Mr. Balayogi and requested him to go over and meet the Arkansas Governor, Mike Huckabee, who was visiting India. Mr. Balayogi obliged them. They wanted him to have dinner with them but Mr. Balayogi declined saying he had already had his dinner. "You can smell my hand," he told them.

While the two Christians left Bhimavaram for

## Two-day mourning declared

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, MARCH 3. The Union Cabinet today condoled the death of the Lok Sabha Speaker, G. M. C. Balayogi, killed in a copter crash in Andhra Pradesh, and decided to observe a two-day national mourning and accord a State funeral to the departed leader. The national flag will fly at half-mast on Government buildings as a mark of respect and all official functions stand cancelled.

Tributes poured in, with the President, K. R. Narayanan, the Vice-President, Kishan Kant, the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee, and leaders of various political parties and organisations expressing shock over the death of Mr. Balayogi — first Lok Sabha Speaker to die in harness.

Everyone recalled the affable and smooth manner in which the youngest Speaker conducted the proceedings of the 12th and 13th Lok Sabha and carried everybody along during a difficult phase.



The Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister, N. Chandrababu Naidu, paying floral tributes to the Lok Sabha Speaker, G.M.C. Balayogi, at the Eluru Government Hospital on Sunday. — Photo: Ch. Vijaya Bhaskar

Visakhapatnam by separate helicopters, Mr. Balayogi left for Hyderabad by the spare helicopter.

According to an eye-witness, Thirupathi Venkanna, who was feeding fish in his three-acre pond when the copter crashed, "the chopper hovered over our ponds for some time before trying to get down on the bund of an adjacent pond owned by Anjaneyulu. Fearing danger, Anjaneyulu jumped into the pond. The chopper had almost touched the water but rose again to hit a coconut tree...

"It was cinematic. We panicked as there was smoke. The smoke subsided within five minutes and we went near the copter. We saw the pilot breathing his last and the two other occupants were dead."

Manikyalarao, a farmer, learnt from the diary on the spot that the deceased was Mr. Balayogi. Using his cellphone, he informed police at Aki-vedu and two others whose numbers were found in the diary. Police arrived soon after "making us realise that the deceased was a big man," Mr. Venkanna said.

The farmers extricated the bodies and carried them to the Eluru-Bhimavaram road, 2 km away, by a country boat used for feeding the fish and handed them over to the officials.

### Body to be kept in Parliament House

Our Special Correspondent reports from New Delhi:

The body of Mr. Balayogi will be brought to the Capital tomorrow morning and kept at the Parliament House from 8 a.m. to 10.45 a.m. to enable the parliamentarians and staff members to pay their tributes. This was decided at a meeting called by the Parliamentary Affairs Minister, Pramod Mahajan, this evening. The body will then be flown to his hometown in Andhra Pradesh for the funeral.

More reports on Page 13

# Speaker Balayogi dies in helicopter crash

Statesman News Service

HYDERABAD, March 3. — The Lok Sabha Speaker, Mr GMC Balayogi, died at 8.10 a.m. today when the helicopter he was travelling in crashed near Kaikalur, 25 minutes after the take-off from Bhimavaram in East Godavari district. The pilot, Mr GV Menon, and the Speaker's personal security officer, Mr Sati Raju, the other occupants, also died in the crash.

Mr Balayogi was the first Lok Sabha Speaker to die in office and was the first Dalit to occupy the post. He is survived by his wife, three daughters and a son. His body will be taken to Delhi on Monday morning for people to pay their last respects. It will be accompanied by the TDP MPs, Mr Chandrababu Naidu and many state ministers. The body will be brought back to Yedurulanka, Mr Balayogi's birth place, in

Amalapuram for final rites on Wednesday. He represented Amalapuram. The Prime Minister will attend the cremation.

(At a special meeting, the Union Cabinet declared a two-day state mourning as a mark of respect to the departed Speaker, adds PTI from Delhi. Both Houses of Parliament will adjourn for the day tomorrow after an obituary reference to Mr Balayogi. The Cabinet meeting, presided over by Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee, observed a two-minute silence and a resolution mourning the Speaker's "tragic and untimely" death. It cancelled official entertainment today and tomorrow. The national flag will fly at half-mast at government buildings on these two days.)

## Who will be the next Speaker?

NEW DELHI, March 3. — Who will be the next Speaker of the Lok Sabha? In 1998 Mr N Chandrababu Naidu had bargained for the Speaker's post without joining the government and nominated Mr Balayogi for the office. Although a few names have cropped up as the likely successor of Mr Balayogi, Mr M Jagannath, a TDP member of the Lok Sabha, is the front-runner for the post. Another name being mentioned is that of Mr K Yerran Naidu who is the TDP Parliamentary Party leader. The Deputy Speaker, Mr PM Sayeed (Congress) will preside over the proceedings of the House till a new Speaker is elected. — SNS

Details on page 6

Mr Balayogi had gone to Bhimavaram to inaugurate a marriage hall yesterday. He was to return to Hyderabad by Godavari Express the same day. His hosts requested him to stay back for the night. A Deccan Aviation helicopter was hired for his return journey

channel that a technical snag could not have caused the accident as the helicopter had other emergency features to overcome such crises.

Local villagers, who saw the helicopter crashing down, were initially scared to get

this morning.

The helicopter took off at 7.45 a.m. The pilot tried for an emergency landing in a fishpond after he discovered some problems on board. He ordered all luggage to be disgorged. But just a few feet above the pond, the pilot lost control and the helicopter hit a coconut tree and crashed into a *burid*. A part of the helicopter slipped into the pond. Mr Balayogi's head rammed into the front panel.

Deccan Aviation told a TV meeting. The APCC chief, Mr M Satyanarayana Rao and the leader of the Opposition, Dr YS Rajashekar Reddy, who returned from Delhi this evening, drove to the TDP office to pay their respects.

closer to it. Later, some villagers went near the helicopter and found Mr Balayogi in his seat with the seatbelt on. They could not recognise him but pulled him out. Police were alerted. A sub-inspector who rushed to the spot identified Mr Balayogi and informed the SP. The news spread like a wildfire.

Police rushed the body to the Eluru government hospital where doctors declared him as brought dead. Mr Chandrababu Naidu and some of his ministers rushed to Eluru. They brought the body and took it to Mr Balayogi's Banjara Hills residence here.

Mr Naidu chaired a Cabinet condolence meeting. The APCC chief, Mr M Satyanarayana Rao and the leader of the Opposition, Dr YS Rajashekar Reddy, who returned from Delhi this evening, drove to the TDP office to pay their respects.

Obituary, more reports on page 6

THE STATESMAN

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**GUJARAT INCIDENT / BJP MPs QUESTION SENIOR MINISTERS**

# Angry scenes in Lok Sabha

By Our Special Correspondent

**NEW DELHI, FEB. 28.** The spectre of a communal conflagration in Gujarat and the danger of its spreading elsewhere did not prevent Vinay Katiyar, BJP MP from Faizabad-Ayodhya, from virtually attacking the Government and its Ministers for daring to ask the Vishwa Hindu Parishad to roll back its temple construction plan.

The venue was the Lok Sabha and the verbal assault led to an impromptu statement from the Union Home Minister, L.K. Advani, after the budget presentation. The Speaker's indulgence in allowing the statement helped cool the tempers and the budget was presented smoothly although earlier Mr. Katiyar had threatened not to allow it.

Even before the House assembled, Mr. Katiyar and fellow MP from Padrauna, Ram Nagina Mishra, were seen gesticulating and talking angrily with Mr.

Advani and Minister, Murlu Manohar Joshi. "Jo Hindu hit ki baat karega, wahi desh mein raj karega (only those who are pro-Hindu can govern this country)," the VHP activists among BJP MPs shouted. "Ram bhakt ke hatiyaron ko phansi do phansi do (hang those who killed the Ram bhakts)," they chanted, referring to the gruesome Godhra incident. In response Mr Advani simply stood before them with his hands folded.

In fact, for about 15 minutes even before the House proceedings began and after the Speaker took his chair, the Opposition mutely watched some BJP MPs shouting angrily at senior BJP Ministers. It seemed as if the internal bickerings within the sangh parivar had spilled out in the open, and would have also gone on air had it not been for someone quickly stopping the live telecast that was ready to present the budget to the people.

Advani's statement

Mr. Advani made a brief statement later. He said the Centre was in constant touch with the State Government. Immediately after Wednesday's attack on the Sabarmati Express at Godhra he had alerted States to take action to prevent communal flare-ups. A judicial inquiry by a retired High Court judge had been ordered and 40 persons arrested in connection with the incident in which 58 persons were reportedly killed. Trouble had also broken out in Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Anand where four persons had been killed in different incidents.

Mr. Advani said the Government would try and find out whether only local residents were involved in the murderous attack or "there was another angle to it." He indicated that in the present security environment nothing could be ruled out.

Sympathising with the an-

guish of members who earlier in the day had occupied the well of the House, Mr. Advani said "there can be no two opinions on the incident, no words were strong enough to condemn the Godhra attack." He also added that perhaps the burning of coaches with passengers on board was the worst ever incident of violence. He promised to get back to the House when he had more information.

Echo in RS

The Godhra incident echoed in the Rajya Sabha when it met at 2 p.m. Members sought a statement from the Government and the chair said a detailed discussion could be held later.

The Leader of the Opposition, Manmohan Singh, said it was a "ghastly tragedy which had led to loss of many lives. It was the obligation of the Central and State governments to protect the lives of citizens." Many other MPs expressed similar views.

THE HINDU

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## Commonwealth Speakers condemn attack on Parliament

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JAN. 10. Members of the Standing Committee of Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers today joined the Lok Sabha Speaker, G.M.C. Balayogi, in condemning the December 13 attack on Parliament House.

Mr. Balayogi, who is attending the 16th Conference of Commonwealth Speakers in Kasane, Bot-

swana emphasised the need to sensitise youth about the evil of terrorism which poses a serious threat to civilisation, democratic values and pluralistic societies. The Standing Committee comprises Speakers of Australia, Kenya, U.K., Bangladesh, Canada and Zimbabwe among others.

In one of the four papers presented on Parliament's responsi-

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bility and role in raising the political awareness of youth, the Lok Sabha Speaker also drew attention to the terrorist attack at the heart of Indian democracy — its Parliament.

He told the conference that the "nefarious design of terrorists was to paralyse our country politically and leave it completely devastated. The terrorist attack on Indian

Parliament was virtually an act of war against the people of India and was most shocking and provocative."

It is only by awakening the people, particularly the youth, against the dangerous consequences of terrorism, that this scourge can be rooted out," Mr. Balayogi told the meeting of the Standing Committee which met on January 8.

# Ayodhya heat disrupts Parliament session

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NEW DELHI, Feb. 26. — Proceedings in both Houses of Parliament were disrupted today by the Opposition over the Ayodhya issue.

The matter was raised during the Question Hour in the Lok Sabha. The Opposition demanded immediate discussion on the subject. The Prime Minister intervened and told the House that the government was ready to discuss the subject and asked the members not to disrupt the proceedings as the Railway Budget was to follow after the Question Hour. Mr Atal Behari Vajpayee assured the members that the government was committed to maintain law and order and status quo at Ayodhya though the government would like the dispute to be resolved mutually by the parties concerned.

The Opposition didn't pay any heed to Mr Vajpayee's appeals and the Lok Sabha was adjourned for half-an-hour. Later, the Opposition allowed the papers to be laid on the table and Mr Nitish Kumar present the Railway Budget proposals for the year 2002-03.

When the Lok Sabha reassembled after lunch, Opposition members wanted a discussion on Ayodhya. Mr Raghuvansh Prasad Singh, who was in the Speaker's chair adjourned the House for the day when Congress and SP members refused to calm down. — SNS

## UK worried over Pak nukes' fate

NEW DELHI, Feb. 26. — Britain remains worried about the possibility of Pakistan's nuclear assets falling into the hands of terrorists. Sir Kevin Tebbit, a top British defence ministry official who is here for discussions with Mr Yogendra Narain, the defence secretary, as part of the defence consultative group between the two countries, said today that Pakistan had assured Britain that it had complete command and control over its nuclear assets. But, he added, the issue "remains a matter of grave concern".

**Hawk negotiations:** Defence secretary Mr Narain said that negotiations were on for acquiring the Hawk advanced jet trainer from Britain, stalled for a long while. — SNS

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