

Mohite-Patil to replace Bhujbal

Pawar nips revolt in the bud, gives home to close aide

By S. Balakrishnan
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Faced with the prospect of a revolt by supporters of PWD minister Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil, Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar named him as deputy chief minister on Thursday, but denied him the crucial home portfolio. The new home minister will be R.R. Patil (48), who was handling the rural development portfolio.

Mr Mohite-Patil (60) replaces former deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal, who was in charge of the home ministry. Even as the NCP office at Nariman Point witnessed feverish activity, Mr Bhujbal complained of chest pain and was admitted to Breach Candy hospital. He was admitted to the same hospital last week, but was discharged after two days.

Both chief minister Sushilkumar Shinde and Mr Mohite-Patil belong to Solapur district in western Maharashtra. The new home minister



NCP leaders Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil (left) and R.R. Patil are garlanded by their supporters at the NCP office in south Mumbai on Thursday.

also has his origins in the same geographic region, hailing from Sangli.

On Wednesday, NCP legislators who could not arrive at a consensus had passed a resolution authorising Mr Pawar to select the new deputy CM. Mr Pawar then started individually ascertaining the

MLAs' views. He was scheduled to hold a press conference at the NCP office at Nariman Point at noon on Thursday to announce the name of the new deputy CM. He did meet mediapersons, but said the chief minister would make an announcement. He had obviously not been able to take a decision in view of the pressure mounted by the aspirants, which included Mr Mohite-Patil, Madhukar Pichad and Dr Padamsinh Patil.

After the last assembly polls, despite mustering the support of 25 of the 58 MLAs, Mr Mohite-Patil's claim had been overlooked by Mr Pawar, who opted to back Mr Bhujbal who wears an OBC tag. Fearing that history may repeat itself, Mr Mohite-Patil is believed to have put his foot down this time around.

Sources close to him said the possibility of a revolt was real even though Mr Mohite-Patil denied it.

● Maratha lobby calls the shots, Page 3

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DISSIDENCE IN CONGRESS 110-12
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WITH THE DISSIDENT faction in the Punjab unit of the Congress agreeing to let the AICC president, Sonia Gandhi, handle the inner-party rivalry, the Chief Minister, Amarinder Singh, appears to have earned a respite. The Agriculture Minister, Rajinder Kaur Bhattal, veered away from a confrontationist course, after initially insisting that she would not leave New Delhi until Capt. Singh was removed as Chief Minister. Ms. Gandhi held two separate meetings with Capt. Singh and Mrs. Bhattal last week. Although she could not immediately resolve their differences, the AICC president imposed her authority on the dissident faction and brought about a truce. Subsequently, Mrs. Bhattal attended office after a gap of a fortnight and Capt. Singh, in a mood of introspection, promised corrective measures to overcome mistakes made during the last two years. But if the issue were so simple as to disappear with the mere intervention of Ms. Gandhi, then it would not have assumed such menacing proportions in the first place. The problems are only too likely to resurface before the crucial Lok Sabha election next year, when both camps play for high stakes.

The origins of the dissidence lie in the corruption case against Mrs. Bhattal, a former Chief Minister. At a time when a Chandigarh court was to frame charges against her, Capt. Singh could not possibly withdraw the case. This was especially so given the background of the corruption cases filed by the Amarinder Singh Government against the leaders of the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), including former Chief Minister, Prakash Singh Badal. Any concession shown to Mrs. Bhattal would have lent credence to the SAD allegation that the Congress Government was indulging in political vendetta. With the coalition of SAD and the

Bharatiya Janata Party clamouring for the resignation of Capt. Singh, a leadership change in Punjab would have meant handing over the political advantage to the Opposition. Further, the manner in which the dissidents sought to pressure the high command into forcing Capt. Singh out did not go down well with Ms. Gandhi. By giving in to such threats, the national leadership would have sent a wrong signal to dissidents in all the other Congress-ruled States, especially Kerala, where efforts are on to work out a compromise between the two dominant factions, one led by the Chief Minister, A.K. Antony, and the other by the former Chief Minister, K. Karunakaran. In such a situation, the high command could only have bought time, which is precisely what it has done.

However, the dissidence inspired by Mrs. Bhattal found support among nearly half the members of the Congress Legislature Party because of the growing disenchantment with the style of functioning of Capt. Singh who seemed to be under the influence of a 'pressure group' of senior officials. Also, the defeat of the Congress in three States in the recent Assembly elections encouraged the rebels to try and force the hand of the national leadership against Capt. Singh. However, with the Bill for checking defection getting Parliamentary approval, they would have been conscious of the serious limitations on their ability to pressure the high command. Given the need of the Congress high command to keep both factions under check, a resolution of the crisis is not likely to go beyond a forced compromise: more berths in the Cabinet for the disgruntled elements in the dissident camp and a respite for Capt. Singh. As long as the high command thinks it can avert a showdown, there will be no urgency in resolving the issue definitively.

Bhujbal stamped out

His departure will help uncover links between politicians and scamsters in the stamp paper scandal

FOR someone reputed to be a persuasive orator, Chhagan Bhujbal certainly let the side down on Tuesday. 'Twas freedom of the press, he offered, clumsily, as he put in his papers as deputy chief minister of Maharashtra. His cover-up has been immediately and widely seen to be what it is. Not all the din and bluster of the attack on Zee TV's Alpha Marathi channel by rampaging NCP "activists" has been able to drown out the sounds of silence that had settled down about the NCP leader ever since Telgi's storm sucked him into its centre. In fact, when it came, Bhujbal's resignation had an inevitable ring to it. Speculative whispers about his possible replacement in the Mantralaya had already been doing the rounds in Mumbai's power circuit. Bhujbal had been left virtually alone to defend himself by colleagues and partymen, one by one. The hardboiled veteran of many a party had even checked himself into Mumbai's Breach Candy Hospital for "uneasiness and anxiety" recently.

This is a moment to look back at a tempestuous career. Bhujbal rose from the ranks, travelled from the Shiv Sena to the Congress, and finally braved the clout of the powerful Maratha lobby to claw his way to the top of the NCP. The colourful politician, who invokes Jyotiba Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar and has also

produced Marathi movies. More significantly, this is a sobering moment in the still unfolding Telgi saga. Bhujbal's is the biggest political scalp so far in the multi-crore fake stamp paper scam whose true enormity continues to taunt the imagination of all its chroniclers. Even as top policemen were netted, many pointed out that so many thousands of crores could not but have spilled over beyond the police echelons and that highly placed politicians had surely acted as Telgi's protectors. Bhujbal's resignation could, hopefully, signal the uncorking of a new set of exposes of these political godfathers.

Bhujbal's exit from the Mantralaya will also further unsettle the ever rocky alliance that rules Maharashtra. Ever since the NCP and Congress joined hands to form a government, they have lurched from one flashpoint to another. With little ideology, principle, or common programme to bind them together, the coalition is vulnerable to ego-trouble; personal equations have always been able to overtake the issues. This unnatural alliance may find it difficult to carry on as usual after Bhujbal. But whatever the political outcomes, one thing is clear. Telgi's ghosts are not yet done. And for a nation that is growingly cynical about political corruption, there's good news in that.

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Funny business

TALK ABOUT the stand-up comic calling the joker funny. Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray, currently trying everything short of hard-selling the virtues of warm beer on television to get back under the spotlights, has described RJD chief Laloo Prasad Yadav — disparagingly, we think — as a ‘joker of Indian politics’. The truth be told, Mr Bihar with his quick wit and quicker repartee is the man who lightens up the dreary business of politics for the rest of us. Maybe there’s some sort of trade-off there as not everybody in Bihar finds living in the state very funny.

Nonetheless, Mr Thackeray’s observation comes as a response to the well-tufted Mr Yadav’s recent remark that Mumbai belongs to all Indians and nobody could prevent outsiders from coming into the city. Wrong, says the man whose party launched the ‘*Mee Mumbaikar*’ campaign earlier this year which states that the city is only for *Mumbaikars*. According to Mr Thackeray, it is now the duty of every Mumbai citizen to stop the influx of people from other states and demolish

the illegal *jhopadpattis* (slum clusters) in the city.

Mumbai is tottering on the brink of an unlimited influx of people from outside. A large part of this ‘floating’ population do settle in the city’s burgeoning slums. But then, there are also as many migrants who make Mumbai what it is: a thriving, bustling, go-getter of a metropolis. To bar non-*Mumbaikar* Indians from entering the city is to create a silly Fortress Mumbai. But then Mr Thackeray wouldn’t have been Mr Thackeray if he hadn’t come up with his own variation of the Two-Nation Theory. Mr Yadav, on his part, becomes a victim of some *Saamna* ink, in which he is castigated not only for “praising General Pervez Musharraf”, but also for not “showing guts” to go to Assam where ULFA militants killed over 60 Biharis recently. At the end of the day, Mr Thackeray’s remarks against Mr Yadav have less to do with the different visions of Mumbai that they have, and more to do with the rivalry of entertainers. There’s only one funny stage, you know.

Bhattal men may quit govt

Saroj Nagi
New Delhi, December 15

THE PUNJAB crisis threatens to worsen with the ministers in the dissident group planning to step up pressure for Chief Minister Amrinder Singh's removal by handing in their resignations to Rajinder Kaur Bhattal for being forwarded to Congress president Sonia Gandhi. A final decision will be taken on Tuesday morning when Bhattal holds her daily strategy session with the 33 legislators demanding Amrinder's ouster.

Besides the 16 ministers and five parliamentary secretaries, the dissident group of about 33 MLAs also includes chairmen of various corporations. They intend to submit their resignation letters if Tuesday's meeting decides upon it. Though a senior AICC leader discounted this possibility, the group, which has stuck together, has already forced the CM to postpone his Cabinet meeting this week by making it



Amrinder Singh

Dissidents' stand

- Dissidents to step up pressure for Amrinder's removal by handing in their resignations to Bhattal to be forwarded to Sonia Gandhi
- Final decision on Tuesday when Bhattal holds her daily strategy session with her 33 legislators demanding Amrinder's ouster
- The crisis threatens to engulf the PCC, with office-bearers wondering why their views aren't being heard

clear that they will not attend it. Bhattal, camping in Punjab Bhavan for nearly a week, has taken a "vow" (saun) that she will return to Chandigarh only after ensuring Amrinder's removal. The hardening of the dissidents' stand has made the task difficult for the AICC's three-member panel - Dr Manmohan Singh, Ahmed Patel and Mohsina Kidwai - to resolve the crisis. More so,

as the 16 legislators owing allegiance to Bhattal have joined hands with the anti-Amrinder camp to get the CM ousted.

With the daylong efforts made to break the stalemate turning out to be a failure, it might be a night of long knives for the AICC leaders looking for a solution short of a leadership change. In a day of hectic consultation, Amrinder called on Dr

Singh and spoke to Patel.

Bhattal renewed her demand with AICC leaders, including Dr Singh, Patel and Ambika Soni. Senior leader R.L. Bhatia, being viewed as a possible compromise candidate should matters come to the crunch, has also been interacting with various leaders to find a solution to the crisis. MPs from Punjab, who earlier decided to call on Sonia, put off their plan till Tuesday.

But they were in touch with other Congress leaders, including Patel and Arjun Singh. On her part, Sonia, who met only Razia Sultana a legislator from Malerkotla, has kept her distance from both camps pending the panel's report.

Meanwhile, the crisis threatens to engulf the PCC, too, with party office-bearers wondering why their views were not being taken into account. Vice-president M.M. Singh Cheema has demanded a PCC meeting before a final decision is taken on the matter.

THE HINDUSTAN TIMES

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Pawar under pressure to oust Bhujbal

Deputy CM in hospital after complaining of hypertension

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Nagpur: With early assembly polls looming on the political horizon, Nationalist Congress Party chief Sharad Pawar is under pressure



C. Bhujbal

to undo some of the damage caused to the party's image by the Telgi scam. Several party members, including the factions led by Vijaysinh Mohite-Patil, Padamsinh Patil and Ajit Pawar, are baying for senior party leader and deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal's head.

On Monday, the political grapevine here was abuzz with talk that Mr Pawar had asked Mr Bhujbal, who also holds the home portfolio, to step down in view of a possible summoning of the deputy CM and his nephew Sameer by the special investigation team probing the scam. Mr Bhujbal's sudden departure for Mumbai on Monday and his admission to the Breach Candy hospital for hypertension only fuelled the speculation.

Although NCP spokesperson Praful Patel ruled out any action being initiated against Mr Bhujbal, NCP insiders say that Mr Pawar has given him sufficient hints that he will have to step down if the SIT calls anyone close to him for investigation. Mr Bhujbal was given this message on Sunday by a close associate in the NCP.

The same day, he complained of chest pain and was examined at a local hospital. The doctors diagnosed high blood pressure and advised him rest. But Mr Bhujbal opted to fly back to Mumbai and

was admitted to the intensive cardiac care unit of Breach Candy hospital. Although his condition was reported to be stable, he will continue to be under observation for the next 24 hours.

An accused in the scam, assistant police inspector Dilip Kamath, has reportedly written a letter to governor Mohammed Fazal accusing Mr Bhujbal and Sameer, who is presently in the US, of being involved in the scam. An official of the Raj Bhavan in Mumbai on Monday confirmed the receipt of Mr Kamath's letter. "But we are ascertaining if it was indeed written by Kamath, who is in Yerawada jail," he added.

Mr Pawar, who is wary of the increasing political and financial clout of Mr Bhujbal, is keen on downsizing him and the SIT may unwittingly help him in his task if it summons either the deputy CM or his nephew.

Bhujbal isolated in intensive care

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Political heavyweights from the NCP and the Congress were conspicuous by their absence at the Breach Candy hospital where deputy CM Chhagan Bhujbal was admitted for hypertension on Monday.

NCP members said that almost all the senior party leaders were out of town—either in Nagpur attending the winter session of the state legislature or were in New Delhi where parliament is in session.

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Uma starts with a ban

9.8
2.8

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

BHOPAL, Dec. 13. — The new BJP government in Madhya Pradesh has started responding to the Prime Minister's call to prepare for the 2004 Lok Sabha election - the Cabinet on Friday decided on a complete ban on cow slaughter. Though there was already a ban on cow slaughter in the state, the Cabinet has now decided to ban slaughter of even aged (above 14 years old) cows and oxen. A Bill to this effect is to be introduced in the Assembly "soon."

CHANGING STROKES



- ☞ 'Complete' ban on cow slaughter
- ☞ 'Decentralised' district administration to be dismantled
- ☞ 28,000 daily wage earners to be re-employed
- ☞ Go-ahead for project to bring Narmada water to Bhopal and suburbs

Though the BJP insists it is merely implementing a key manifesto promise, the cow slaughter issue has great political resonance as it had become symbolic of the former chief minister Mr Digvijay Singh's attempt to play the "soft Hindutva" card in the state against the wishes of some Sonia-loyalists in the Congress.

Presided over by Ms Uma Bharati, the Cabinet also virtually dismantled the entire "decentralised" edifice of the district administration put in place by her predecessor, "with immediate effect". District planning committees have been divested of powers given to them in 1999 by the Digvijay administration. Mr Singh, however, criticised the announced abolition of "decentralised" district government and said that decentralisation of power could "never be achieved now".

The Cabinet has also decided to re-employ over 28,000 daily wage earners retrenched by the previous government and the chief minister, who had promised to bring Narmada water to Bhopal, has ensured the a Cabinet go-ahead for the project to solve the water crisis in Bhopal and surrounding areas. While the decision to recall the daily wage earners who were terminated on 31 December 1998 is likely to be controversial given the huge loans the state is burdened by, the sanction for the project to divert Narmada water from Shahganj to Bhopal evoked a positive reaction even from the Mr Digvijay Singh.

New CLP leader: Former deputy chief minister Ms Jamuna Devi was today elected as the new Congress legislature party leader of Madhya Pradesh, adds PTI.

Europe's future pales before football, women!



Mr Berlusconi

BRUSSELS, Dec. 13. — Italian Prime Minister Mr Silvio Berlusconi, had a cunning plan to break the deadlock in the constitutional talks that failed but will shape the EU's future, whose presidency his country now holds.

When the talks collapsed he declared to the assembled European leaders: "Let's talk about football or women." It was not a suggestion that impressed the seven female foreign ministers and a head of state (President Ms Halonen of Finland) around the lunch table.

"Political correctness is not Mr Berlusconi's strong point," a diplomat noted.

Spanish foreign minister Ms Ana Palacio asked Mr Berlusconi to produce the "secret formula", that he said was in his pocket, to break the voting rights impasse. The Italian leader, chairing the most important EU summit for over a decade, dramatically reached into his pocket as expectations mounted... he pulled out a blue paper with nothing on it!

Later, at a press conference Mr Berlusconi took 32 minutes to explain the reasons for the collapse of the talks. His political rival Mr Romano Prodi, a former Italian Prime Minister and now European Commission President, next to him was left with one minute. "People pick up the wrong end of the stick about the finesse of our relationship," beamed Mr Berlusconi, locking elbows with Mr Prodi. "Arm in arm we tackle the problems of the world."

Mr Berlusconi, who cancelled many meetings due to stomach problems, impressed diplomats not only with his health but winter suntan.

2003

THE STATESMAN

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Behind an electoral wave in Madhya Pradesh

In this, the third of a five-part series analysing the recent Assembly election results in five States, Yogendra Yadav and Sanjay Kumar of the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies, Delhi, present the picture in Madhya Pradesh. The field work for the post-election survey was coordinated by Ram Shankar.

IN MADHYA PRADESH, it was not the verdict itself but the severity of it that surprised everyone. All the pre-election polls had consistently indicated a victory for the Bharatiya Janata Party. Still, the impact of the BJP wave was something of a surprise. Of the 228 Assembly seats for which results have been officially declared, the BJP has won 171, representing a three-fourths majority. The BJP has surpassed its previous record of winning 169 of the 230 seats in the new State of Madhya Pradesh, while the Congress won only 39 seats and barely escaped its worst-ever record of 1990.

In psephological terms there is nothing surprising about the verdict. While the Congress enjoyed a comfortable majority in the previous Assembly, it was sitting on a very thin margin of just one per cent in terms of votes. A small swing of 2 per cent against the Congress is all that the BJP needed this time in order to dislodge the ruling party. In the final analysis, the swing against the Congress was as much as 9.2 per cent. Although the BJP's gain was only 3.5 percentage points, the shift was big enough to tilt the scales massively against the ruling party.

Finally, the BJP secured a 12-point lead over the Congress. The Congress polled 31.8 per cent of the votes, while the BJP polled 42.7 per cent. It might look odd that the BJP has won 75 per cent of the seats on the strength of just 42 per cent votes, but that is the logic of the first-past-the-post system that is followed in India. In this system, any double-digit lead in the popular vote results in a landslide in terms of seats. The winner takes all. The Congress cannot possibly complain, for it has been the beneficiary of this very system all along.

The verdict has all the features of an electoral wave that we have come to see so often in the last two decades. The wave broke all the traditional boundaries and levelled the electoral battleground. The BJP not only snatched back its traditional stronghold of Malwa but also managed to inflict a humiliating defeat on the Congress in the latter's traditional strongholds of Mahakoshal and the tribal belt of Malwa. In these two regions, the swing against the Congress was more than average, at 13.3 per cent and 11.2 per cent respectively. In Mahakoshal, the Congress won only 10 of the 57 Assembly seats, while in the tribal belt it won only five of the 28 seats. But this does not indicate that the Congress was in a comfortable position in the other regions of the State. It is only in the Chambal region that the Congress did not lose any seats, but that was mainly because it did not have too many to defend. The rout of the Congress was so severe that except in the case of four districts, the party's vote share went down in all the districts.

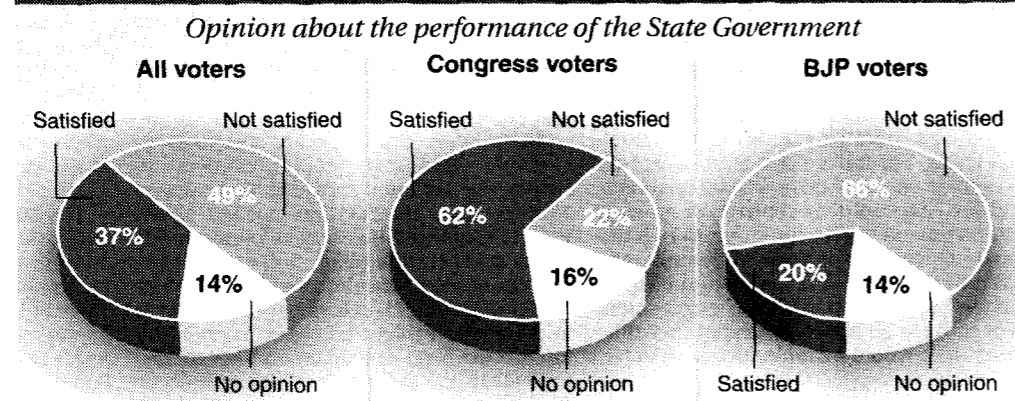
Such a huge wave leads to a large-scale shift in votes. The post-election survey conducted by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies confirms this. The Congress retained only 59 per cent of its 1998 voters, while the BJP retained 86 per cent. What made the difference

Party	Seats won		Vote share (%)	
	2003	1998	2003	1998
Congress	39	124	31.8	40.6
BJP	171	83	42.6	38.9
SP	7	4	3.7	2.1
BSP	2	8	7.2	6.3
GGP	2	0	1.9	0.4
JD (U)	1	1	0.5	2.3
CPI (M)	1	0	0.3	0.3
Others	3	3	4.6	3.0
Independents	2	7	7.4	6.1

Note: Results of the 2003 Assembly elections based on 228 seats. The results for the Niyam and Jitara constituencies have not been officially declared by the Election Commission of India.

Caste	Cong.	BJP	BSP
Brahmins	27	57	2
Rajputs	27	50	3
Other upper castes	32	52	3
OBCs	26	50	7
Dalits	31	28	19
Adivasis	40	36	2
Muslims	65	11	1

High level of dissatisfaction with the Digvijay Singh Government



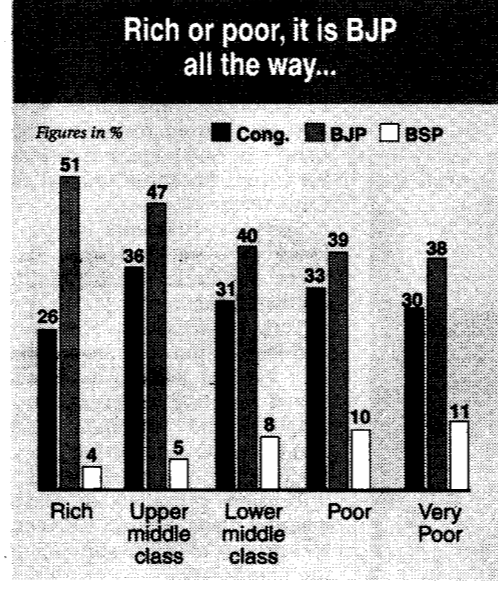
Graphics by Varghese Kallada

was that among those who voted for the Congress in 1998, 22 per cent shifted to the BJP in this round, compared to only 8 per cent of the BJP voters who shifted in the opposite direction. The post-election survey also gives a clue about the pattern of the traditional voters of

the different parties. In the survey, an equal proportion of the voters identified themselves as traditional supporters of the two big parties. But while 81 per cent of the traditional BJP voters voted for the same party, only 65 per cent of the traditional Congress voters voted for it.

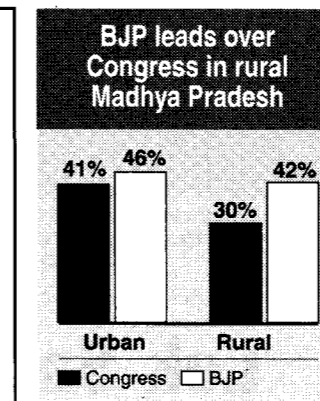
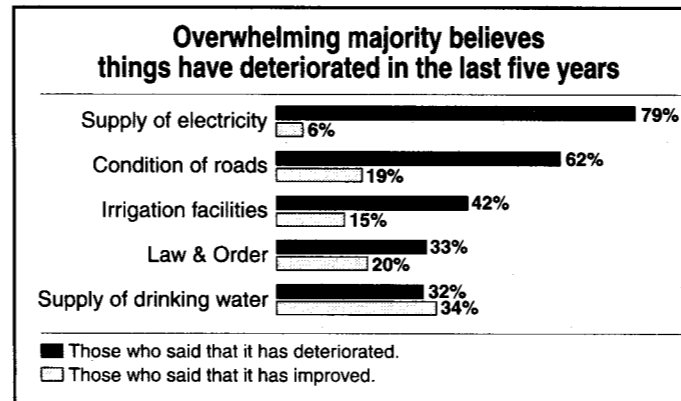
Among the traditional Congress voters, 19 per cent voted for the BJP. A large number of non-committed voters also voted for the BJP, which gave a clear lead to the party. This is very typical of a wave.

As in the case of the regions, the wave also reduced the dif-



Vote 1998	Vote 2003		
	Cong.	BJP	BSP
Congress	59	22	5
BJP	8	86	3
BSP	6	11	56

Traditional voters of...	Vote 2003		
	Cong.	BJP	BSP
Congress	65	19	4
BJP	8	81	3
BSP	5	9	69
Floating voters	27	40	10



Anatomy of a wave: BJP gains all over Madhya Pradesh

Region/District	Seats	Turnout (%)		Congress		BJP		BSP		Others									
		1996	2003	Gain/Loss	Gain/Loss	Gain/Loss	Gain/Loss	Gain/Loss	Gain/Loss	Gain/Loss	Gain/Loss								
Madhya Pradesh	228	67.4	+7.3	39	-85	31.8	-9.2	171	+89	42.7	+3.5	2	-6	7.2	+0.9	16	+2	18.4	+4.7
Chambal	34	62.5	+3.4	9	NII	28.6	-1.9	22	+6	34.8	+0.2	1	-5	13.7	-5.1	2	-1	23.0	+6.8
MORENA	6	61.7	+5.2	1	+1	26.4	+3.8	5	+2	32.3	+3.7	0	-3	18.9	-8.3	0	NII	22.4	+0.8
BHIND	6	59.1	+0.4	2	NII	26.9	-0.6	3	NII	24.7	-11.6	0	NII	18.4	-5.3	1	NII	29.9	+1.7
GWALIOR	6	63.0	+6.0	0	-1	27.6	+3.5	6	+2	39.2	+2.2	0	-1	9.7	-8.5	0	NII	23.5	+2.8
DATA	3	66.3	+5.6	1	NII	22.1	+1.3	2	+2	31.7	+3.0	0	-1	9.4	-17.4	0	-1	36.8	+13.1
SHIVPURI	5	65.9	+2.2	1	-1	26.7	-13.3	2	-1	36.7	-2.9	1	+1	14.2	+3.9	1	+1	22.2	+19.2
GUNA	6	59.4	+1.7	3	NII	37.7	-6.1	3	+1	45.9	+9.7	0	-1	5.8	-5.6	0	NII	10.6	+2.0
SHEOUPUR	2	66.4	+3.7	1	+1	31.4	-0.9	1	NII	26.3	-3.8	0	NII	21.5	-9.6	0	-1	20.8	-4.9
Vindhya Pradesh	47	64.7	+5.5	6	-13	24.9	-8.2	33	+11	36.4	+2.9	1	-1	14.7	+2.9	7	+3	24.1	+2.3
SAGAR	8	69.0	+6.9	0	-1	35.6	-8.4	7	+1	47.5	-0.9	0	NII	7.2	+3.3	0	NII	9.7	+6.0
TIKAMGARH	2	61.6	+5.5	0	NII	18.2	-13.4	2	NII	42.4	+2.5	0	NII	9.8	+4.3	0	NII	29.6	+6.7
CHHATARPUR	5	64.1	+2.3	0	-1	22.9	-4.9	3	NII	37.4	-3.0	0	NII	11.6	+3.6	2	+1	28.1	+4.3
DAMOH	4	68.4	+9.1	0	-2	27.2	-16.4	4	+2	39.2	-0.2	0	NII	10.4	+2.9	0	NII	23.2	+15.7
PANNA	3	62.8	+5.7	1	+1	24.5	-3.6	2	NII	31.6	-5.8	0	NII	14.0	-1.1	0	-1	29.9	+10.5
SATNA	7	67.3	+4.7	2	-2	21.6	-7.7	3	+1	25.2	+0.7	0	NII	21.5	+1.3	2	+1	31.6	+5.7
REWA	7	59.4	+4.1	0	-2	13.2	-9.8	5	+3	36.0	+15.8	1	-1	24.8	+5.2	1	NII	26.1	-11.2
SIDHI	6	63.6	+4.4	2	-2	29.3	-5.4	2	NII	32.8	+4.3	0	NII	14.1	-6.0	2	+2	23.8	-4.9
SHAHDOL	3	63.4	+5.5	0	-2	28.5	-3.0	3	+2	33.9	+2.5	0	NII	13.0	+0.0	0	NII	24.6	+0.5
UMARIA	2	64.3	+12.9	0	-2	25.6	-14.5	2	+2	42.3	+10.4	0	NII	11.2	-0.5	0	NII	20.8	+3.6
Mahakoshal	57	70.3	+10.9	10	-26	30.2	-13.3	42	+25	40.5	+1.9	0	NII	5.4	+2.9	5	+1	23.9	+8.4
BALAGHAT	8	77.2	+7.2	2	-4	25.2	-12.5	5	+5	32.0	+3.2	0	NII	11.4	+8.3	1	-1	31.4	+1.0
JABALPUR	4	71.9	+20.9	0	-1	32.3	-29.8	4	+3	39.4	-0.8	0	NII	4.0	+2.0	0	NII	34.2	+28.6
MANDLA	9	62.1	+7.8	1	-1	22.6	-4.7	8	+2	48.8	+6.8	0	NII	4.1	+0.8	0	-1	14.5	-2.9
NARSIMHAPUR	4	74.0	+8.9	0	-4	33.6	-14.5	4	+4	47.3	+6.3	0	NII	8.1	+3.8	0	NII	11.0	+4.5
SEONI	5	77.3	+13.9	1	-2	30.0	-11.9	3	+1	36.2	-2.4	0	NII	4.1	+4.1	1	+1	29.7	+10.2
CHHINDWARA	8	71.3	+12.7	2	-6	31.8	-24.6	6	+6	41.6	+2.8	0	NII	3.4	+2.6	0	NII	23.2	+19.3
HOSHANGABAD	4	68.2	+8.3	1	-1	31.4	-12.0	2	NII	43.1	-4.4	0	NII	7.8	-7.8	1	+1	17.7	+8.6
BETUL	6	68.2	+12.1	2	NII	35.1	-7.4	3	NII	40.1	+0.9	0	NII	0.5	-1.5	1	NII	24.4	+6.9
DINDORI	3	70.6	+17.5	0	-1	24.1	-13.1	3	+1	33.5	-7.1	0	NII	2.5	-1.2	0	NII	39.9	+21.4
KATNI	4	69.7	+7.1	1	-3	27.3	-12.5	2	+2	34.5	+6.8	0	NII	8.4	-0.0	1	+1	29.8	+5.7
HARDA	2	67.8	+7.4	0	-1	39.4	-5.3	2	+1	49.3	-4.2	0	NII	1.9	+1.9	0	NII	9.3	+7.6
Malwa Tribal	28	66.6	+8.0	5	-14	38.0	-11.2	22	+14	48.5	+4.5	0	NII	1.4	+1.2	1	NII	12.2	+5.4
KHANDWA	7	69.6	+9.0	2	-2	35.3	-9.6	4	+2	46.5	+1.9	0	NII	0.6	-0.6	1	NII	17.6	+7.1
KHARGONE	6	69.2	+5.6	1	-4	42.0	-8.9	5	+4	45.5	-0.4	0	NII	2.9	+2.2	0	NII	9.5	+7.2
DHAR	6	65.8	+5.9	2	-2	41.8	-7.4	4	+2	48.0	+5.5	0	NII	1.1	+1.0	0	NII	9.1	+0.8
JHABUA	5	56.6	+10.2	0	-4	35.7	-18.1	5	+4	52.4	+16.0	0	NII	0.0	NII	0	NII	12.0	+2.1
BADWANI	4	71.7	+10.4	0	-2	33.1	-16.1	4	+2	52.9	+3.3	0	NII	2.3	+2.3	0	NII	11.7	+10.6
Malwa North	59	70.6	+7.7	10	-29	37.7	-9.8	48	+30	50.3	+5.9	0	NII	2.3	+1.5	1	-1	9.6	+2.4
SEHORE	4	74.7	+7.0	0	-1	33.1	-4.4	4	+1	43.1	-3.1	0	NII	9.6	+4.9	0	NII	14.2	+2.6
BHOPAL	4	62.7	+5.0	1	-2	37.6	-14.2	3	+2	51.4	+6.8	0	NII	4.0	+3.4	0	NII	7.0	+3.9
RAISEN	4	74.7	+13.6	1	+1	39.5	-1.6	3	-1	47.8	-6.0	0	NII	2.8	+2.8	0	NII	9.9	+4.8
VIDISHA	5	69.0	+7.4	0	-2	33.7	-4.8	5	+3	53.5	+8.5	0	NII	1.3	-1.3	0	-1	11.5	-2.5
RAJGARH	5	70.2	+10.7	1	-4	38.4	-5.8	4	+4	49.8	+15.6	0	NII	0.0	-0.8	0	NII	11.8	-9.0
SHAJAPUR	5	75.5	+5.6	1	-4	38.6	-15.8	4	+4	47.2	+5.3	0	NII	4.0	+3.9	0	NII	10.2	+6.7
UJJAIN	7	69.1	+6.7	0	-6	31.1	-21.0	6	+5	49.6	+3.5	0	NII	2.1	+1.4	1	+1	17.3	+16.1
INDORE	8	67.6	+10.2	2	-4	41.0	-8.6	6	+4	54.7	+5.4	0	NII	0.3	-0.2	0	NII	3.9	+3.0
DEWAS	5	70.5	+4.8	2	NII	42.0	-8.7	3	NII	48.0	+0.8	0	NII	3.5	+2.8	0	NII	6.6	+5.1

Badal, son jailed in assets case

Statesman News Service

CHANDIGARH, Dec. 1. — A court in Ropar today rejected the interim bail plea of former Punjab chief minister Mr Parkash Singh Badal and Mr Sukhbir Singh, his son and Rajya Sabha member, and sent them to judicial custody till 13 December in connection with a disproportionate assets case.

Special judge Mr SK Goyal adjourned the plea for regular bail of the two to 3 December in the case which also involves four others.

The Punjab chief minister, Captain Amarinder Singh, said Mr Badal and his son have been sent to the Patiala jail where they will be given "all the necessary things required and will be treated well". He said Mr Badal has been arrested under section 6, 13(2), 13(1), 7, 8, 9, 10 of the Prevention of Corruption Act read by 420, 467,

468, 471 of the IPC.

The chief minister said no one would be allowed to disrupt law and order in the state. He said that the Akalis had failed in their attempt to politicise the issue by involving the people of the state. He said around 1,600 people have been arrested to maintain law and order.

The BJP today refused to take a stand on the judicial custody of Mr Prakash Singh Badal, and his son, Mr Sukhbir Badal, saying it was a judicial process. However, the party criticised the Punjab chief minister for "adopting a vengeful attitude towards them".

The Congress today said the "law should take its own course" in the trial of Mr Badal and his son. Party spokesman Mr Anand Sharma said: "If there is evidence of corruption, law will step in and political consideration cannot preempt the verdict of the judiciary".

THE STATESMAN

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40 injured in mosque blast

HT Correspondent
Aurangabad, November 21

AT LEAST 40 people were injured when a bomb ripped through a mosque at Parbhani in the Marathwada region of Maharashtra on Friday. Arson and rampaging broke out in the town soon after, forcing the authorities to clamp an indefinite curfew on the town — one of the most communally sensitive areas in the region.

Four of those injured are in serious condition. State reserve force battalions are being rushed to the district and a high alert has been sounded in the Marathwada region, an erstwhile part of the Nizam state of Hyderabad.

The incident occurred at 1.15 pm, when three unidentified youths on a motorcycle

hurled a bomb at a crowd emerging from the mosque right after the Friday prayers. The blast triggered a backlash, with the mob going on the rampage and pelting surrounding buildings and shops with stones. The mob marched into the house of the Shiv Sena district president, but retracted peacefully.

The town is a communal cauldron where a number of Simi activists have been arrested under Pota over the Mumbai serial blasts. Maharashtra Home Minister Chhagan Bhujbal and NCP leader Sharad Pawar addressed a rally at Parbhani a few months ago and promised to secure the release of the innocent youths.

Attack on Orissa church

A CHURCH was vandalised and a nun "mistreated" by suspected VHP and Bajrang Dal workers in Orissa's Deogarh district on Thursday. The police have registered two cases, but no one has been arrested yet. A police team has been posted at the church and the situation is now under control, an official said. The incident took place after the conversion of four tribal families at the Amulpani village of the district.

See Page 4

Mumbai top cop goes on leave

JCP (Crime) to hold charge • Shinde, Bhujbal on collision course

HT Correspondent
Mumbai, November 14

THIS MUST have been strongest leave application in the history of Mumbai police. Claiming his innocence, Mumbai police commissioner R.S. Sharma wrote in his application 17 days before his retirement that he wanted to go on leave to "uphold the dignity of the office".

Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime) Dr Satyapal Singh will hold the charge of the commissioner's office till the government appoints a new IPS officer. The government is likely to announce the candidate before Monday.

On the other hand, toughening his stand on the tainted Mumbai police, Maharashtra Chief Minister Sushilkumar Shinde said "natural justice" would

be done with Sharma.

This is a clear signal to the SIT to go ahead with its investigation and an indication that there would not be any pressure from either the NCP or Deputy CM Chhagan Bhujbal.

Sharma's leave is likely to lead to infighting between Shinde and Bhujbal, as well as the Congress and the NCP when it comes to finalising the next police commissioner. Those in the fray are V.N. Deshmukh, Dr P.S. Patricha and AN Roy.

Surprisingly, on Thursday, Sharma had told a section of the media from his office that he was not going on leave and the rumourmongers were busy tarnishing his image. *Hindustan Times* had reported that the chief minister had directed Sharma to go on leave.

On the other hand, Bhujbal had been continually defending Sharma and had said that Sharma's leave application was not received by his department. Sharma's application was exceptionally strange. The anni-



GUNNING FOR SHARMA? Toughening his stand, CM S.K. Shinde said "natural justice" would be done with Sharma.

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Sharma had been continually defending Sharma and had said that Sharma's leave application was not received by his department. Sharma's application was exceptionally strange. The anni-

sioner's office, I wish to go on leave. My conscience is clear and I am not guilty." Sharma has gone on an indefinite leave despite the fact that he retires on November 30. Such an application is unprecedented in the history of Mumbai police. Since the application of all senior IPS officers has to be approved by the chief minister, sources say Sharma was trying to impress Shinde and plead innocence.

When asked if specific action would be taken against Sharma, the CM said, "The government would give all a chance to present their case. I will ensure that natural justice would be done with Sharma," said Shinde.

This clearly means that Shinde is not ready give a clean chit to Sharma, which Bhujbal has been giving from time to time.

EC blow to Digvijay plan

SOPS BY MADHYA PRADESH GOVERNMENT GROSS VIOLATION, SAYS LYNGDOH

Rajnish Sharma

New Delhi, November 10

IN WHAT is likely to come as a severe blow to Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Digvijay Singh, the Election Commission has observed that the "much hyped populist" Rs 500-crore scheme announced by him to waive electricity bills for poor farmers was in gross violation of the election code of conduct.

The Commission on Monday wrote to the Madhya Pradesh State Electricity Board to stop the scheme with immediate effect. The Commission has also informed the State Chief Electoral Officer and its lawyer.

The view that the Commission took was that even though Digvijay had announced the scheme before the announcement of the poll dates the scheme was to be implemented from November 5. Thus the Commission felt this would have had an impact on the election proceedings in the State.

Opposition parties in Madhya Pradesh had filed a PIL in the Jabalpur High Court against the scheme saying the sops announced by the Congress Government were in violation of the model code of conduct. During the proceedings the court was of the view that the best agency to decide on the matter was the Election Commission and sought its opinion.

The Commission on November 6 invited all political parties from the State for a hearing here. The parties, accompanied with their lawyers presented their arguments before the full Commission. After the hearing the Commission deliberated over the issue for three days before reaching the decision against Digvijay.

"It was felt during the hearing that the state government while taking this decision was fully aware that the elections were going to be announced in the next few days. Further, the implementation of the scheme was to be done not only after the

model code of conduct came into effect. This could not be allowed," a senior Commission official pointed out.

EC sources said during the hearing the Commission had also summoned detailed records of the State Electricity Board and learnt that the scheme was to be implemented from November 5.

The decision was taken by the full Commission on Monday and it has asked its lawyer to convey it to the High Court also. Both the Madhya Pradesh CEO and the Electricity Board have been informed in writing that stringent action will be taken if the guideline was violated.

Meanwhile, Commission sources said administrative action could be taken against some more officials in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in the next few days. Chief Election Commission, J.M. Lyngdoh and the two Election Commissioners left for Mizoram later in the day to review the poll arrangements in the state.

Against the Code

► Chief Minister Digvijay Singh's Rs 500-crore scheme to waive electricity bills for poor farmers is a gross violation of the election code of conduct

► The EC on Monday wrote to the Madhya Pradesh State Electricity Board to stop the scheme with immediate effect

► Madhya Pradesh Opposition had filed a PIL in the Jabalpur High Court against the scheme

► The Commission took a decision on Monday and it has asked its lawyer to convey it to the High Court also

Governor summons Bhujbal in Telgi case

Shinde will brief Fazal today

Kin of senior DF leader comes under scanner

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: Governor Mohammed Fazal summoned deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal on Monday evening following a demand by the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance for a CBI inquiry into the multi-score fake stamp paper scam. The governor, who has acquired a reputation for activism, has summoned chief minister Sushilkumar Shinde to Raj Bhavan on Tuesday afternoon. Mr Fazal plans to fly to Delhi later on Tuesday to brief the Union government about l'affaire Telgi which threatens to destabilise the Democratic Front ministry.

After his meeting with the 82-year-old governor, Mr Bhujbal told TNN that he had presented a detailed account of the scam and the efforts made by the state government to unearth its ramifications. "I also told the governor that the government had no objection to a CBI probe. But it was for the Bombay high court to take a decision in this regard since it was hearing a PIL in the matter," he said.

"I informed the governor that it was my decision to appoint a special investigation team (SIT) to probe the scam. The SIT has been strengthened by the high court by appointing a retired IPS officer S.S. Puri to conduct the probe. I pointed out that the scam started during the Sena-BJP alliance rule and that we were only exposing it

in the larger public interest," Mr Bhujbal said.

Earlier on Monday, the Shiv Sena-BJP alliance turned the heat on Mr Bhujbal and demanded his removal from the ministry. Opposition leaders led by Narayan Rane of the Sena and Nitin Gadkari of the BJP called on Mr Fazal at Raj Bhavan and demanded that the deputy CM be sacked for his failure to curb corruption in the police force. The opposition leaders also demanded a CBI probe since the scam had inter-state ramifications.

'SIT will close in on key politicians'

Mumbai: Shiv Sena chief



Bal Thackeray on Monday said "bigger sharks" from politics will shortly come under the SIT's microscope.

"Many heads will roll in the coming days. Don't ask me the details, but I can tell you for sure that the SIT will close in on key politicians," Mr Thackeray told TNN. "You will not find a single Sena functionary in the SIT's list. We stay hundred miles away from such shameful deeds," he said.

Mumbai: A close relative of a senior politician in the Democratic Front alliance is likely to be questioned by the special investigating team probing the fake stamp paper racket.

He is suspected of having connived with Mumbai crime branch officers between November 2002 and January 2003. Some among them have been arrested for collecting bribes from scam kingpin Abdul Karim Telgi, say SIT officers. The investigators want to question the relative and gather more evidence against the politician, who is suspected of having profited from the scam.

Said a senior IPS officer, "During questioning, Telgi named several politicians as beneficiaries in the scam." He had alleged that several police officers had acted as a conduit between him and the politicians. "The officers registered cases against Telgi with the intention of threatening him and collecting bribes. A significant portion of the bribes was then passed on to the politician, under whose patronage the officers prospered," he stated.

On Monday, the SIT questioned assistant commissioner Ramakant Padwal of the elite Mumbai crime branch. Mr Padwal was not available for comment.

Top cop held in stamp scam

Junior officers, Telgi tapes implicate state IG S. Wagal

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Mumbai: In a day of shame for the city's law-enforcers, senior police officer Shridhar Wagal was arrested under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) in connection with the Rs 3,000-crore fake stamp paper scam on Friday.

Mr Wagal, an inspector-general at the state intelligence department, was the chief of the crime branch when he allegedly demanded and got a bribe from Abdul Karim Telgi, the mastermind behind the multi-crore scam which spans ten states.

The Special Investigating Team probing the scam called Mr Wagal to the Police Housing Corporation on Pochkhanwala Road in Worli for "routine questioning" on Friday afternoon. Wagal arrived in his official car at 12.30 p.m. and was visibly tense as he walked in for the questioning.

The SIT team, led by retired state director-general S.S. Puri, grilled him for two hours. According to sources, Mr Wagal maintained that he was innocent till the SIT showed him the confessional statements of his juniors in the Mumbai crime branch officers naming him a key beneficiary in the scam.

At around 2.30 p.m., Wagal was in tears as the SIT informed him that he was placed under arrest. Although the arrest was expected for some time now, the news sent shockwaves among policemen in Mumbai, where Mr Wagal was the joint police commissioner (crime) between March 2002 and March 2003.

It was during this period that he allegedly accepted Rs 90 lakhs

from Telgi for hushing up cases and granting special favours to the latter. The SIT has in its possession tapes of telephonic conversation between Wagal and Telgi in which the former has allegedly demanded bribes.

Wagal was escorted out of the building by a posse of policemen, three of whom took pushed him into a white Qualis and headed for Pune. He will be produced before a MCOCA court in Pune.

Following the arrest, the SIT raided four residential premises belonging to Wagal and his relatives in Mumbai and Pune. The places raided included a flat owned by Wagal in Bandra. The raids were conducted along with officials from anti-corruption bureau, which is probing whether Wagal owned assets disproportionate to his income. The SIT also plans to freeze his bank accounts in Mumbai.

Mr Wagal, who was due for promotion as additional director general of police this month, is the sixth police officer to be arrested in the scam.

During Mr Wagal's tenure as joint commissioner (crime), the police went out of their way to give Telgi royal treatment when he should have been in the lock-up. The policemen put him up in at Hotel Apsara in Kurla and at his Cuffe Parade residence for nearly 30 days.

SIT sources alleged that Wagal had also taken bribes from Telgi for not naming the latter as an accused in a raid conducted at a Bhiwandi godown in January 2003. The police had recovered fake stamp papers valued at Rs 850 crores.



THE COP WHO LEFT HIS STAMP ON THE FORCE: Inspector General of Police Shridhar Wagal (centre) is escorted by policemen from the Special Investigating Team from Mumbai to Pune on Friday. Wagal was arrested in Mumbai for his alleged complicity in the fake stamp paper scam.

Sordid scam-era: The Telgi trail so far

Who is Abdul Karim Telgi?



Abdul Karim Telgi

Born into a lower middle-class family in Belgaum, Karnataka, Telgi, a commerce graduate, came to Mumbai in the early '80s. He worked as a travel agent and in a hotel before being arrested by the police in 1991 for cheating. In custody, he met a forgery expert who taught him the tricks of the trade.

How did the scam work?

Telgi printed and sold counterfeit stamp paper and revenue stamps that resulted in losses of crores of rupees to the state. He is believed to have made personal gains of **Rs 17,000** crore in the scam.

How big is the scam?

So far fake stamps worth **Rs 3,000** crore have been recovered. Using second-hand printing machinery from the Security Press in Nashik, Telgi printed fakes in Mumbai and Bhiwandi. The printing was so meticulous that nobody could tell a counterfeit stamp paper from a genuine one.

How many persons have been arrested? Around **60**, including six police officers from Mumbai and Thane. The SIT has also arrested officials from the Nashik security press. TDP MLA and former minister C. Krishna Yadav and Maharashtra MLA Anil Gote have been arrested for their proximity to Telgi. SIT sources allege that several other politicians, IAS and IPS officers were on Telgi's payroll. Many of them are still to be arrested.

Tohra back as SGPC president

Statesman News Service

CHANDIGARH, July 27. — Octogenarian Akali leader Mr Gurcharan Singh Tohra has been unanimously elected the president of the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabhandhak Committee today at a meeting of SGPC in Amritsar.

Mr Tohra's name was proposed by the acting SGPC president, Mr Alwinderpal Singh Pakhoke, and seconded by executive member Mr Gurbax Singh.

After being elected as president, Mr Tohra said he would serve the *panth*. He also thanked Mr Sukhdev Singh Bhaur for resigning from the executive committee to pave the way for his election.

Mr Tohra, who had remained the SGPC president for 25 years, said he was not keeping in good health and sought cooperation from all.

He commended the

services by predecessors like Bibi Jagir Kaur and outgoing SGPC chief Kripal Singh Badungar.

He said that if required changes would be effected at the organisational level.

It is pertinent to mention here that Mr Tohra was removed as head of SGPC in March 1999 due to his differences with the former chief minister of Punjab, Mr Prakash Singh Badal. But the two leaders came closer after the Badal government's defeat in the February 2001 Assembly elections.

The appointment of Mr Tohra as the president of SGPC is seen as a unity formula between two Akali factions headed by Mr Badal and Mr Tohra.

The decision to elect Tohra as president of SGPC, which is responsible for management of Sikh shrines in the country, was taken at an executive committee meeting of the Committee, held in the SGPC complex here.

Badal's workshop, petrol pump searched

By Our Staff Correspondent

CHANDIGARH, JULY 4. While the sleuths of Punjab's Vigilance Bureau searched yet another property belonging to the family of the former Chief Minister, Parkash Singh Badal, in a disproportionate assets case today, BJP leaders met the Governor and sought his intervention to stop "misuse" of official machinery "to carry out political vendetta".

The search on Friday comes hot on the heels of the rebuke by the Deputy Prime Minister, L.K. Advani, on Thursday. The premises of a vehicle workshop and petrol pump of the Badal family in Killianwali village of Muktsar district were searched today. While the officials took down details of the buildings, after the end of the almost eight-hour operation, they handed over a certificate that nothing illegal had been recovered from the premises. However, a team member was quoted as saying unofficially that they had "gained something" during the search.

In a related development, a court in Kharar town, near here, where the Vigilance Bureau had filed the case, granted permission to the investigating agency to record the search, of the premises owned by the Badal family, on a video film.

Meanwhile, the BJP delegation urged the Governor, O.P. Verma, to rein in the State Gov-

ernment. The president of the State unit of the BJP, Brij Lal Rinwa, told newsmen that the party would launch a sustained agitation to seek the dismissal of the Capt. Amarinder Singh Government if the situation aggravates further.

Mr. Rinwa denied that the

BJP had left the alliance partner, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) to fend for itself in face of the pressure from the Congress Government. He listed various occasions when the BJP had in fact taken the lead over the Akalis to protest the highhandedness of the State Government.

'Ready to face probe'

By Our Special Correspondent

NEW DELHI, JULY 4. The Shiromani Akali Dal chief, Parkash Singh Badal, today dared the Punjab Chief Minister, Amarinder Singh, to arrest him and declared that he was prepared to face a judicial inquiry into allegations of corruption.

A day after securing the support of the Centre and the BJP in his party's political battle against the ruling Congress in Punjab, Mr. Badal reiterated that the authorities were adopting faulty procedures in moving against him and other SAD leaders.

"The Congress had promised in its manifesto to appoint a Commission of Inquiry to go into the issue of corruption. Let there be a probe by a High Court judge. If there is an iota of truth in the allegations, I shall retire from politics," he told a press conference here.

In his view, there were at least

three reasons why the State Government was against him. One, Capt. Singh was worried about the criminal and civil case he had filed against the Chief Minister; two, the Congress leader was upset for having been denied a ticket by the SAD during the 1997 Assembly elections; and three, the Congress was traditionally opposed to the Akalis. The current action was at the behest of the Congress central leadership, he claimed.

"Whatever Amarinder Singh is doing, he is setting a wrong precedent," he said adding that the Chief Minister was acting in an undemocratic fashion. The Punjab Government was using the State Vigilance Bureau, which was directly under the Chief Minister, he alleged. The authorities were also forcing some officials, booked on charges of corruption, to 'implicate' him by giving statements to that effect.

9.5. Punjab
 'MOVE AGAINST VALUES OF DEMOCRACY'
 9 P.P. Akali
 9 P.P. NDA
 9 P.P. N
 9 P.P. N

Action against Badal smacks of intolerance: Advani

By Our New Delhi Bureau

NEW DELHI, JULY 3. The Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, today spoke out in defence of the former Punjab Chief Minister and Shiromani Akali Dal leader, Parkash Singh Badal, being investigated by the Congress Government in the State on charges of corruption.

The scene of the Congress-SAD feud has now shifted to the Capital with the Chief Minister, Amarinder Singh, and the Congress joining issue with Mr. Advani.

The Deputy Prime Minister's public support for Mr. Badal came after a meeting between him and a delegation of the BJP and Sikh leaders this morning. Criticising the Punjab Government's action, Mr. Advani said "whatever is happening in Punjab is wrong. This is sheer intolerance of the Opposition and is against the values of democracy," he told reporters. Mr. Singh's action would not "strengthen democracy."

Mr. Advani's intervention comes months after leaders of the SAD sought the Centre's

support against the Punjab Government's move which it described as "political vendetta". Their expectation that an NDA team would be sent to the State for assessment was not met. Mr. Badal met Mr. Advani many times in this connection, including as recently as June 23.

Today, however, the Deputy Prime Minister went all out to accommodate the Bharatiya Janata Party ally with a second meeting in the evening with the NDA convener, George Fernandes, and the Union Minister, Sukhdev Singh Dhindsa.

To demonstrate its solidarity, the NDA will hold a rally in Amritsar on July 16.

The show of support for the beleaguered Mr. Badal could be the result of what the SAD leadership is understood to have told the BJP: that it was under pressure from its ranks to snap ties with it.

The BJP too spoke in support of Mr. Badal. Its spokesperson, Prakash Javadekar, charged the Amarinder Singh Government with working "in a spirit of revenge".

There was no place for "vin-



The Deputy Prime Minister, L. K. Advani, being presented a shawl by a Sikh delegation in New Delhi on Thursday. —PTI

dictive politics" in a democracy, if there was no real case of cor-

ruption. A team, led by Vijay Kumar Malhotra, would visit Punjab.

The SAD, however, is understood to have turned down the proposal saying that it was too late in the day.

If Mr. Advani invoked "democratic values" to support an ally, the Congress was swift in its response.

The Congress spokesperson, S. Jaipal Reddy, said it was "improper" on Mr. Advani's part to "make adverse comments about a Chief Minister who is following due process of law".

Capt. Singh, who was also here, defended the investigations against Mr. Badal saying that "on the one hand, the Prime Minister is seeking to be included under the jurisdiction of the proposed Lok Pal but, on the other, his deputy is trying to protect a corrupt colleague... let him explain to the nation why he is doing so".

Badal will not be arrested, says Amarinder

NEW DELHI, JULY 3. Ruling out any halt to investigations of allegations of corruption against the Akali Dal leader, Parkash Singh Badal, the Punjab Chief Minister, Amarinder Singh, today said he was not targeting individuals but corruption per se.

"I have not targeted any rivals. People have made it look as if it is I versus Badal or the Congress versus the Akali. I have said the fight is not against any individual or any party but against corruption. Whether it is a, b or c is not



Parkash Singh Badal

important. It is corruption we are going in for," he told NDTV.

Capt. Singh, however, said

Mr. Badal will not be arrested but will have to face the court after evidences against him are collected.

"I am not planning to arrest Mr. Badal. I have made it clear. I will put it before the court. Let him face it," he said. Capt. Singh, said investigations against former ministers or officials, accused of corruption, will not be stopped. He said his Government would look into any charges of corruption against any of his Ministers or officials if they were brought forward. —PTI

Split wide open

Jalandhar's caste violence points to a lackadaisical, unresponsive state government

IN one fell swoop, the Amarinder Singh government has replaced the police top brass in Punjab's Jalandhar district. So far, so belated. The shake-up is welcome in as much as it signals that the government is stirring at last. But there is reason to believe that it stoutly ignored all the warning signs in the run up to the vicious caste violence that rocked the region recently. What occurred in and around Talhan village, the epicentre of the conflict, did not happen in a day. It was allowed to build up over time. Almost five months, to be precise.

Tensions first broke out into the open when, on January 20 this year, the Jat Sikhs of Talhan announced a social boycott of the local Dalits. At the heart of the dispute was the management of a cash-rich shrine. Dalits demanded participation in the 13-member management committee of the Samadh of Baba Nihal Singh, which rakes in Rs 4.5 crore in annual offerings; their move to press for an election of a new committee triggered violence; the Jats slapped on a social boycott. Since then, the two communities have lived together separately, on the edge of violence. And the government and political leadership has been spectacularly missing in action.

The directives issued by the National Commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes following an on-the-spot inquiry were ignored. By all accounts, there was no attempt to heal the rift over these months, or to prevent it from exploding into bloody violence. In this context, the chief minister's charge that the confrontation was triggered by "outsiders" immediately invites the damning counterquestion: What was his government doing to prevent them from fishing in troubled waters?

Talhan frames a larger culpability as well. Though it is generally believed that Sikhism is not riven by caste, ground reality tells a different story. In a large number of villages, lower castes have been forced to build their own gurdwaras even though this goes against the tenets of Sikhism. The caste violence in Talhan must provoke the SGPC to some long overdue questioning: Why so many gurdwaras in one small village? Why does caste discrimination persist, centuries after the religion was founded? Why is it that almost 30 per cent of Punjab's population — incidentally, the largest percentage of Dalits in the country — owns a measly 2.54 per cent of agricultural land and lags far behind in literacy tables?

Bhujbal's 'terror tipoff' stuns senior policemen

49 TIMES NEWS NETWORK 5-1

Mumbai: Deputy chief minister Chhagan Bhujbal caught Mantralaya's press corps off-guard on Wednesday when he announced that terrorists could target the city today, the second anniversary of the 9\11 attack on the World Trade Center in New York.

Mumbai has already borne the brunt of seven separate blasts since December 2002, including the twin car bomb explosions on August 25 at the Gateway and Zaveri Bazar.

"We have specific information that terrorists are planning a strike in Mumbai and in other parts of India on September 11," said Mr Bhujbal at the a press conference following the weekly cabinet meeting at the state government headquarters. He added that the police were on high alert and appealed to citizens to be on guard.

Chief minister Sushilkumar Shinde, who chaired the press briefing with his deputy, was more circumspect. "The intention is not to spread panic, but we appeal to people to be vigilant. The 9\11 attack in America marks a watershed in

international politics," Mr Shinde said in reply to a question.

Asked if the 'threat perception' was based on intelligence gathered by a central or state agency, Mr Bhujbal said the state intelligence had intimated the Maharashtra government about a possible attack in the metropolis.

Senior IPS officers from the Mumbai police were taken aback on hearing the announcement, which was subsequently aired on TV channels. "I cannot believe that seasoned politicians can behave in such a manner," a senior police officer said on condition of anonymity.

Said another IPS officer, "Will the state government stop running buses and trains following the intelligence information on the possible blasts? The home minister's statement only shows that the state government may have lost its nerve. If there is a blast, the government will conveniently say, 'We told you so.'"

For the record, however, senior police officers tried to play down the deputy CM's statement. Mumbai police commissioner R.S. Sharma said there was an "international threat perception" in view of the 9\11 anniversary.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

11 SEP 2003

Mumbai blast accused in police custody

Statesman News Service

MUMBAI, Sept. 1. — Three of the four persons arrested by Mumbai police in connection with the 25 August twin explosions, were produced before the special judge of Pota court Mr AP Bhangale today. They were remanded in police custody till 15 September.

The four, including two women, were identified as Sayyed Mohammed Abdul Rahim (45), Arshad Shafique Ahmed Ansari (26), Sayyed Rahim's wife Fahmida Sayyed (37) and their daughter Fareen Sayyed (18). Rahim couldn't be produced in court today as he was recovering at Bhabha Hospital. This was the first time women were arrested under Pota.

Deputy chief minister Mr Chagan Bhujbal, under fire for failing to prevent recurring blasts, said Mumbai police did a remarkable job by arresting four suspects within a week of the twin blasts. He claimed the Opposition's attempts to demoralise the police had not worked.

The arrests brought to fore a new, Dubai-based outfit called Hanif, which

Intelligence agencies and Mumbai police said could be a nickname for some existing terrorist outfit or a combination of some such organisations. The plot to trigger the blasts was reportedly hatched in Dubai. Prosecution lawyer Ms Rohini Salian contended in court that all the four were involved in the blasts at Zaveri Bazaar and Gateway of India. They were also wanted in connection with the 28 July Ghatkopar blast in a BEST bus, she added. Eyewitnesses said just before the blast in the bus in Ghatkopar, a man and a woman had disembarked, like the couple who left the taxi minutes before the blast near Gateway of India.

The cabbie Mr Shivnarayan Pandey's testimony helped artists sketch the suspects accurately. Inputs were suggesting a wider conspiracy to launch attacks in Mumbai and Delhi. Mumbai police today confirmed that the four accused had a hideout in Mira Road-Bhayander in extended Mumbai suburbs. Raids there led to seizure of 205 gelatine sticks, 20 detonators, 12 alarm clocks and other materials used for bomb making.

THE STATESMAN

2 SEP 2003

EXPLOSIONS TRIGGERED BY TERRORISTS: PM ■ ARMY & NSG TO HELP PROBE

Twin blasts kill 50 in Mumbai

Nandu R Kulkarni in Mumbai

Aug. 25. — The spectre of 12 March 1993 revisited Mumbai this afternoon as two explosions, both believed to have been caused by car bombs, killed 50 people and injured 139. Unofficial reports said 65 people died and more than 200 were injured in the blasts at Zaveri Bazaar and Gateway of India.

(According to PTI, one of the blasts took place in a Gujarati-dominated area, prompting the authorities in Maharashtra and Gujarat to put the security forces on alert.)

The Prime Minister condemned the blasts, saying they were the handiwork of terrorists. The state government has announced a compensation of Rs 2 lakh each to the kin of those killed and Rs 50,000 each to those seriously injured.

When the blasts rocked the city, senior police officers were huddled with home minister Mr Chagan Bhujbal at Sayadri Guest House to discuss security measures to be taken for the 10-day Ganesh festival starting on 31 August. The meeting was called off as soon as the news came and Mr Bhujbal accompanied chief minister Mr Sushil Kumar Shinde to the blast sites.

Judging the intensity of the blasts, police suspect the perpetrators had used RDX or Sentex, which are widely used by terrorists across the world. Police commissioner Mr RS Sharma said his sleuths had "definite clues", but neither the government nor police would say whom they were suspecting. Experts from National Security Guard and the Army have been flown in to help the investigators.

The first, Zaveri Bazaar, blast took place at the intersection of Yusuf Meherally Street, Dhanjibai Street and Mumbaidevi Street at 1.30 p.m. The bomb was reportedly placed in a taxi, barely 70 metres from the Mumba Devi temple (the temple was not damaged).

Today being the first working day of the week, the area was very crowded. Even in the ensuing panic people were seen helping the injured and carrying the dead to nearby hospitals.

The blast was followed soon after by another car bomb explosion at the tourists' parking area opposite the Gateway of India, about 50 metres from Taj Inter-continental.

The impact was such that several window panes of the hotel were shattered. Immediately after the blast, six bodies were counted. Many of the victims, it is feared, were tourists.

Sources told The Statesman that the owner/driver of the taxi in which the bomb was planted came to police and said that a family of four had got down from the vehicle a few minutes before the explosives went off. He had gone for lunch after parking the taxi when the blast took place.

On 12 March 1993, remembered as Black Friday in the country's commercial capital, 12 blasts had rocked the city, killing 257 people and injuring more than 1,000.

Since December last year, there have been six explosions in Mumbai.

Bloodletting bathes hospitals, page 3.



GATEWAY TO DISASTER: Police and firemen at the Gateway of India, the site of the second blast in Mumbai on Monday. — AFP

WHO

■ LeT planned, Simi executed, Dawood helped

LeT behind blasts, carried out on its behalf by cadres of banned Simi, who had expatriated outside the country and received training at Darul-Lashkar (camp held by militant group for training in explosives for 20 days) in West Asian countries, according to central intelligence agencies. Strong indications that underworld don Dawood Ibrahim's gang could have provided logistic support for the blasts. Dawood gang members, deported from Dubai and brought to Mumbai, have

already disclosed that Lashkar was imparting training to banned Simi members to "avenge" Gujarat riots.

■ Focus Pakistan & Pune

Pakistan-sponsored jihadis were responsible is all that the Mumbai Police Commissioner is ready to disclose. Mr RS Sharma, however, said that a police team had been dispatched to Pune amidst reports that the city had become a new hub for Islamic militants. Police said investigations into the blasts at Mumbai Central on 6 December last year and Mulund on 13 March this year have revealed that the accused had also received training and

planning in the Kondva forest area of Pune. Saquib Nahan, considered to be the kingpin of the subversive activities in Maharashtra, is alleged to have facilitated their stay and other facilities in Pune.

■ Advani non-committal

Despite his party claiming that "definitely Simi and its associates are indulging in such things..." Deputy Prime Minister LK Advani said Simi's involvement would be known only after a thorough probe. Terming as "extremely alarming", he said earlier blasts in Mumbai, in almost all cases, had shown Simi-Lashkar-e-Tayyaba's involvement.

WHY

■ Fear & the city

Mumbai police and intelligence agencies are of a view that those masterminding these blasts have worked out their strategy quite carefully. "They want to maintain fear over the city by sporadic blasts at regular intervals." The idea behind such terror attacks, said a police officer, seems to be to put Mumbai in the category of a Belfast or Beirut where bomb explosions had become routine incidents or part of "normal" life there in the past.

Chronology of blasts, reports on page 3

Markets crash, rupee tumbles



MUMBAI, Aug 25. — The twin blasts set off panic selling in securities and stocks in Mumbai stock exchange in the afternoon. There was only a partial recovery towards the end of the day's trading. Nervousness gripped the inter-bank foreign exchange market too, sending the rupee tumbling down. Bullion traders at Zaveri Bazaar stopped trading soon after the first blast took place in their locality.

Industry chambers, however, said though the stock markets were down, the fundamentals of the economy would remain unaffected. Ficci secretary-general Mr Amit Mitra said in New Delhi that the foreign exchange reserves of \$83 billion would remain unaffected along with the foodgrain stock of 51 million tons. — SNS & PTI

26 AUG 2003

THE STATESMAN

Details on page 3

Another blast rocks Mumbai, 7 killed

96-5
J. B. Maheshwari 1/8

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
MUMBAI, JULY 31

AS MANY as seven people, including two women and three kids, were killed and 26 suffered injuries in a powerful blast that occurred in the house of a person engaged in manufacturing explosives for use in Bollywood shootings today.

The owner of the house, Dilnawaz Mustafa Khan (36), his wife Anjum (32), their daughter Sher Bano and a relative Aslam Ayub Khan were among those killed in the blast that occurred at 3:20 am in suburban Jogeshwari, three days after a blast suspected to be carried out by Pakistan-based militant outfit Lashkar-e-Toiba ripped through a BEST bus in Ghatkopar area on Monday.

Their neighbours Gaurav Manohar Chauhan, Sanchita Manohar Chauhan and Siddhi Chetan Singh were also killed in the blast. Of the 26 injured, nine have been hospitalised. Four of them are critical while the rest have been discharged.

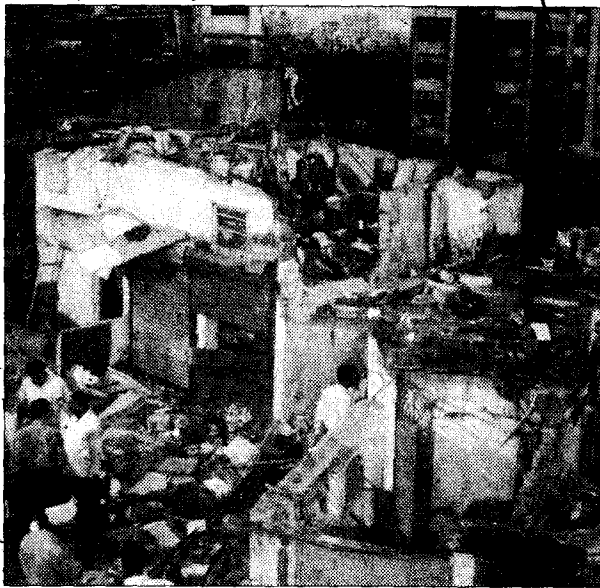
Brother-in-law of Dilnawaz, Ayub Khan, who was staying in another locality and found at the site of the blast, has been detained on suspicion and was being interrogated, Joint Commissioner of Police (Crime) Satyapal Singh said. Police is trying to ascertain whether Dilnawaz had any links with terrorist outfits, Singh said.

Joint Commissioner of Police Javed Ahmed said pipes used in pyrotechnique stunts in film shooting and some wires were found. The pipes were recovered from Dilnawaz's house, who migrated from Uttar Pradesh in 1986, police said.

Deputy CM Chhagan Bhujbal said the Jogeshwari blast appeared to be "99 per cent an accident case". However, police were probing other angles as well, he said. Police were interrogating Dilnawaz's business associate, Khalid Shaifi.

Bhujbal said police were questioning film makers and art directors Ali Morani and Mohammed Morani who had employed Dilnawaz to give special effects for their film.

Although storing explosives is not permitted in a residential area, police were exploring whether Dilnawaz had a licence



The blast happened in the house of a person engaged in manufacturing explosives for Bollywood in Mumbai.
Mahendra Parikh

to do so. The police commissioner has also called a meeting of "Movie Action and Dummy Effects Association" to inquire into the number of people employed in the business of providing special effects for explosion shots in films, Bhujbal said. Police has sent the residue of explosive material to forensic laboratory to ascertain the nature of the blast, Bhujbal added.

Meanwhile, city's Joint Commissioner (Law and Order) Ahmad Javed said a hunt is on to trace illegal storing of explosives in the city. "We are planning to find out if there is any illegal storage of explosives and to take action against those involved," Javed said.

"Though Dilnawaz had been a pyrotechnique technician and was recognised for his work, one cannot overlook the fact that storing such explosives could prove fatal to those living around," he added.

Explosion in SAIL steel plant kills seven

SHIMOGA: Seven employees of a state-owned steel plant at Bhadravathi, including two senior officials, were killed and nine injured in a blast that occurred in a converter machine early today.

The blast occurred in the steel making shop converter machine of the century-old Visweswaraya Iron and Steel Limited, owned by the Steel Authority of India Ltd (SAIL), police said.

They said the seven employees died on the spot and their bodies charred. The injured have been admitted to hospitals in Manipal and Bhadravathi, police said, adding, that the cause of the blast was not immediately known. — PTI

1 AUG 2003

INDIAN EXPRESS

Blast in Mumbai bus kills 2

By Mahesh Vijapurkar

MUMBAI, JULY 28. Two persons were killed and many injured when a blast ripped through a local bus around 9 tonight near Ghatkopar, close to the scene of an explosion on December 2 last year.

The explosion occurred when the bus was going from Ghatkopar to Andheri.

No one has claimed responsibility for the blast. Official sources have so far not ascertained the nature of the explosive used, but the location and the timing of the blast pointed to a well-planned design. It was aimed at causing maximum impact — physical as well as psychological.

The Deputy Chief Minister, Chagan Bhujbal, and the Minister of State for Home, Kripashankar Singh, rushed to the scene. The blast comes as preparations are under way for the Kumbh Mela on the river Godavari in Nashik, beginning on July 31, drawing lakhs of pilgrims.



The wreck of the bus after an explosion ripped through it in Ghatkopar, Mumbai, on Monday. — PTI

THE HINDU

29 JUL 2003

powerful explosion in Mumbai

401

12 killed in Mumbai train blast

M13

By Arunkumar Bhatt

MUMBAI, MARCH 13. A dozen commuters, mostly women, were killed and scores of others injured in a powerful blast in the ladies compartment of a crowded suburban local train at the Mulund station here this evening killed. Among the dead were some women constables.

The explosion was so powerful that it ripped off the roof of the train's first class bogie a with a grill partition for men and women. Three other bogies were also damaged in the blast. The victims were returning home from work when the mishap occurred. Mulund is the last eastern suburb of Mumbai. The deadly device went off as the Karjat-bound fast train pulled in at the Mu-

lund station's platform No. 3 at around 8.45 p.m., having left the Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus about an hour before. It was on a fast track of the suburban section of the Central Railway, and perhaps, not expected to stop at Mulund.

The bogie is seventh from the motorman's (driver) cabin. According to a railway source, the police found pieces of a pan masala tin, making them suspect whether it was a component of the device. If the tin was the container of the bomb, then looking at its size, only a small quantity of explosive was used. Its powerful nature indicated that it was a sophisticated and high-powered explosive, perhaps the dreaded RDX.

A police source said the bomb was suspected to have

been placed under a seat in the compartment.

A terrorist attack: Bhujbal

The Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister, Chhagan Bhujbal, who rushed to the station, described the blast as a terrorist attack. No group has so far claimed responsibility for the blast. It was being rumoured since yesterday that a terrorist attack would take place as it was the tenth anniversary of the serial bomb blasts in Mumbai that had claimed 257 lives. This is the third blast in the city in recent times.

The Central Railway suspended all trains passing through Mulund but later restored the services on the slow tracks of No. 1 and 2 so that thousands of commuters would not be stranded.

14 MAR 2003

THE HINDU

Bhojshala opens to public

987
M.P.

SI-5
762 ✓

Statesman News Service and Agencies

NEW DELHI/BHOPAL, Feb. 27. — The Bhojshala-Kamaal Maula mosque in Dhar, Madhya Pradesh, has been opened for people with some restrictions.

Hindus will be allowed to worship between sunrise and sunset on Tuesdays and are free to carry in flowers or rice as offerings. Muslims will be allowed to offer namaz on Fridays between 1 p.m. and 3 p.m. People who wish to visit the monument for sightseeing will have to pay Re 1 each.

Union tourism and culture minister Mr Jagmohan today said he had written to the Madhya Pradesh chief minister approving this arrangement and that the state government issue a notification on this. Mr Digvijay Singh said in Bhopal that the Centre's proposal was a modification of his government's recommendation that Hindus be granted access for only two hours on Tuesdays and not be permitted to carry in any *pooja samagri* (worship material) inside.

After a controversy broke out in Dhar in mid-February — a large number of Hindus were demanding permission to enter the monument for worship — the Archaeological Survey of India wrote to the Madhya Pradesh government saying it had no objections but the state government would have to deal with any law and order problem. The state government then wrote

to the Centre saying it would need to call an all-party meeting with the Dhar DM to assess the law and order situation. After one such meeting, the government had asked the Centre if it would accept the Friday namaz-Tuesday Puja arrangement. It had suggested that devotees not be permitted to take photographs or raise slogans in the complex and recommended continuation of the practice of opening the monument to Hindus on Basant Panchami. For Muslims, the monument was to be opened for two hours on Fridays for namaz.

Bhojshala was taken over as a protected monument by the British in 1904. In 1935, permission was granted to the Muslims to enter the premises for namaz "as there was a grave of the Maulah there". Over the years, both Hindus and Muslims have prayed there.

An official said: "In 1997, there was an incident of communal dimensions not connected to this monument but then DM had requested the ASI to close the monument... The entry of the public was banned in 1998."

Since then, Muslims have been permitted to offer namaz on Fridays and Hindus could worship there on the Basant Panchami day. **Arrests:** Three more people have been arrested for their alleged involvement in the tension over the Bhojshala controversy, taking the total number of arrests to seven.

28 FEB 2003

THE STATESMAN

Curfew imposed in Dhar

By Our Staff Correspondent

BHOPAL, FEB. 19. An indefinite curfew was imposed today in Dhar, near Indore in Madhya Pradesh, following incidents of arson and clashes between the police and activists of the Hindu Jagran Manch (HJM).

The situation worsened in the afternoon when HJM activists tried to force their way into the controversial Bhojshala at Dhar. Police resorted to lathicharge, and then fired a few rounds in the air to disperse the mob, which went on the rampage through the streets of the town.

The Bhojshala is an ancient structure, where Muslims are permitted to offer prayers on Fridays and Hindus are allowed entry on 'Basant Panchami'.

In the past 24 hours, police have arrested 177 persons, including 55 women. Even at Amjhera, near Dhar, police fired a few rounds in the air to disperse a mob.

BJP sources told *The Hindu* that four persons were injured, two of them seriously, in the

WJ
KD 1
firing. However, when contacted, the Collector of Dhar denied this, saying they had been hit by pellets fired from countrymade weapons and not by the .303-rifles used by police.

Hindu activists earlier in the day burnt two police vehicles, one at Amjhera and another on the Indore-Dhar road.

A State Transport Corporation bus was also set on fire.

The Collector said the Manch had extended its agitation into interior areas. The administration was doing everything within its command to ensure that the "two main communities" did not come into a direct confrontation.

There was considerable tension in Dhar even on Tuesday, and the district authorities had to enforce prohibitory orders under Section 144 to prevent the Manch activists and others from entering the Bhojshala.

On February 6, coinciding with 'Basant Panchami', the Manch had mobilised

96 MD
thousands of devotees for offering prayers here.

In a related development, the Assembly was twice adjourned today, once briefly and then up to the lunch recess, as the Opposition BJP members began demanding that the Chief Minister, Digvijay Singh, be present when the House took up for discussion an adjournment motion on the cow slaughter issue.

Mr. Singh could not attend the House as he had gone to Betul along with the Leader of the Opposition, Babulal Gaur, for a first-hand assessment of damage caused by a massive storm on Monday that claimed several lives and caused damage to standing crops and property.

In the post-lunch session, the BJP member, Kailash Vijayvargiya, tried to raise the Dhar issue and his colleague, Sitasharan Sharma, raised the issue of cow slaughter but in the din that followed the Deputy Speaker, Ishwardas Rohani, adjourned the House till Thursday.

THE HINDU

20 FEB 2003

Ban threat on Bhojshala brigade

RASHEED KIDWAI

Bhopal, Feb. 19: As the rest of India was glued to the television, watching India cruise to victory against Zimbabwe, Madhya Pradesh chief minister Digvijay Singh was trying to figure out how to prevent the state from going the Gujarat way after the Bhojshala dispute led to violence, firing and curfew.

Digvijay is not ruling out banning the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and other saffron outfits to arrest the spread of violence beyond Dhar and its neighbourhood.

Riot police had to resort to several rounds of firing in three places today to disperse belligerent Hindu Jagran Manch ac-

tivists, who made another bid to storm and "liberate" the 11th century Bhojshala. Four persons were grievously wounded in the firing and several policemen suffered injuries.

"If they (the VHP and the Jagran Manch) do not mend their ways, I will give a thought to banning their activities in the state," the chief minister warned.

But sources close to Digvijay dubbed his remarks as a "threat" to the saffron outfits rather than a policy statement. "The experience of banning extremist outfits has not proved beneficial in many parts of the country," the sources added. Digvijay reiterated that he would not let the state go the Gujarat way.

"I may remain chief minister

or not, but I will not tolerate communal riots in my state," said Digvijay, who is eyeing a third term in office after the Assembly polls later this year.

The Jagran Manch, an umbrella organisation of the saffron brigade, is in no mood to relent, promising more such attempts till the Bhojshala, which Muslims consider to be a mosque, is "liberated".

The echo of Dhar was heard in the Assembly, which failed to transact any business after noon.

The Jagran Manch has called for a bandh in Indore, Jhabua, Dewas, Dhar and Barwani districts tomorrow. These five districts make up an influential tribal belt bordering Gujarat.

The BJP, which had so far kept out of the Dhar agitation, is now coming forward to back the Jagran Manch. Uma Bharti, Venkaiah Naidu and the local BJP unit expressed their support for opening of locks.

Digvijay iterated his government's stand that it was up to the Centre and the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to lift the restrictions that permitted Muslims to pray every Friday and Hindus to visit once a year on Basant Panchmi.

"It was the Centre under Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Murlimanohar Joshi, Sumitra Mahajan and Uma Bharti that had imposed restrictions and now it is for them to ease restrictions if they wish to," Digvijay said, pointing to an

affidavit submitted in Indore High Court that questioned the veracity of Bhojshala.

Curfew was imposed in Dhar since morning after a bandh called by the Jagran Manch turned violent, leaving many policemen injured. The rioters spread to smaller villages around Dhar, raising provocative slogans and forcing minority community members to close establishments.

Inspector-general of police (Indore range) V.M. Kanwar said Rapid Action Force has been deployed. Traffic was disrupted and shops remained closed in Dhar in response to the bandh jointly called by the Jagran Manch, the VHP, the BJP and allied organisations, he said.

No more Ayodhyas

In an election year, the real test of Digvijay Singh's leadership will be at Dhar

THE situation, reports from Madhya Pradesh tell us, is tense but under control. Why is it, then, that all those who've anxiously watched the drama unfold in recent days in the sleepy town of Dhar near Indore, are still holding their breath? Why does the failure of assorted self-styled dharam rakshaks (protectors of the faith) to storm the 'disputed site' — the 11th century bhojshala that both Hindu and Muslim 'leaders' have claimed as their own — not reassure? That failed bid in MP on Tuesday morning, even as the 'Ayodhya issue' raised its head on the floor of the House and threatened to overtake yet another session in Parliament, echoes ominously like a memory and a portent.

Far from the national capital, at the margins of the media's frame, the tensions have been inexorably building up at Dhar. There was communal rioting in 1944 and then again in 1984. In 1952, the monument was taken over by the Archaeological Survey of India, and after years of negotiating increasingly fraught claims by both communities, it declared the monument a restricted area in 1998, open to the public on Fridays for namaz and once a year for Basant Panchami. But this year on Basant Panchami, the Hindu Jagran Manch made a bid for the Page One headline. At the end of a year-long 'satyagraha', it announced its readiness for 'an-

dolan'. To 'liberate' the site, to presumably wreak at Dhar the destruction the rampaging kar sevaks brought at the site of another 'disputed structure' more than a decade ago in Uttar Pradesh. This year, with assembly elections around the corner, VHP's Praveen Togadia, still fevered by the electoral success he famously helped fashion in Gujarat, has threatened an Ayodhya in Madhya Pradesh. Digvijay Singh's government must pick up the gauntlet.

The nation will be watching how the much-promoted Congress chief minister fights this one. Much has been said and heard about Singh's strategy of 'soft Hindutva', his attempts to subtly steal Hindutva issues from the BJP, all the better for his own party to play them for electoral gain. So will Diggy Raja prove equal to this unobvious challenge? Can he summon the unambiguous commitment to peace required to fend off the hate brigade? There is no room for ambiguity in this battle, no call for the fine political manoeuvre. All those who threaten the peace between communities in Madhya Pradesh must be clearly told they will not be granted a free run. Because India cannot afford another lingering, festering communal sore. Because in a nation still searching for the leadership and vision to confront and solve old problems, new ones cannot be allowed to build up. They must be urgently nipped in the bud.

19 FEB 2003

INDIAN EXPRESS

'Bhojshala poses law and order problem'

112-11 187 ✓

By Our Staff Correspondent

BHOPAL, FEB. 17. After the Bharatiya Janata Party's Madhya Pradesh unit took the stand that it fully supports the Hindu Jagran Manch's efforts to secure "unhindered" rights for Hindus to worship Goddess Saraswati at Dhar's Bhojshala, the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister, Digvijay Singh, has described the Bhojshala issue as a law and order affair and advised the Dhar Collector to convene an all-party meeting to find a consensus.

In a reply to the Union Minister, Jagmohan's letter on the withdrawal of restrictions for visiting the Bhojshala in Dhar district, the Chief Minister has said that the matter pertains to law and order in Dhar proper as well as in the district.

He has further stated that the Collector has been

advised to convene an all-party meeting to arrive at a consensus.

The Chief Minister informed Mr. Jagmohan that he expects the Collector to submit a report in a fortnight.

The Bajrang Dal, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad and other Hindu organisations have been criticising the Dhar district administration during the last few years for restricting the entry of ordinary citizens at Bhojshala. It was on their demand that Hindus were allowed entry at Bhojshala every Tuesday to offer prayers.

Meanwhile, the national convener of Durga Vahini, Sadhvi Rithambara, had even been arrested at the time of the last Assembly election after she delivered a provocative speech while on her way to Dhar.

On February 6, the Vishwa Hindu Parishad leader,

Praveen Togadia, visited Dhar where he gave a fiery speech at a huge public rally organised to coincide with the massive mobilisation of devotees at Bhojshala on the occasion of Basant Panchami. Immediately after this, the State unit of the BJP went ahead and announced its full support to the Hindu Jagran Manch's efforts to secure unhindered rights for Hindus to worship at the Bhojshala. The BJP's posture on Bhojshala is significant, especially in view of the Assembly election to be held later this year.

Dhar's Bhojshala, where both Muslims and Hindus have continued to offer prayers on fixed days under the same structure, became a sensitive spot in the post-Ayodhya phase after Hindu organisations began demanding that Bhojshala be opened to Hindus for offering prayers on all week days.

18 FEB 2003

THE HINDU

Death for Dara

12 get life sentence in Staines case

HT Correspondent & AFP
Bhubaneswar/Melbourne,
September 22

A TEARFUL Dara Singh was sentenced to death on Monday for the murder of Australian missionary Graham Stewart Staines and his two minor sons, Philip (11) and Timothy (7). The 12 others convicted with him on September 15 got life terms.

"The death penalty will be carried out after being approved by the High Court," Khurda district and sessions judge Mahendra Nath Patnaik said as he sentenced Dara under Sec. 302 of IPC.

As the sentence was read out, Dara's mask of confidence slipped for a moment and he broke down in tears. He recovered to declare: "Everything depends on God's wish. Let's see what happens next." The other convicts didn't betray much emotion.

Dara will not appeal the sentence "for the present", defence lawyer Bana Mohanty said. "Dara has asked me not to appeal against the decision in the High Court," Mohanty told reporters and insisted that his client was "innocent".

Gladys Staines, Graham's widow, said in Baripada that she had forgiven the killers. But "forgiveness and the consequences of the crime should not be mixed up", she emphasised in her statement. "No individual is above the law of the land. I have no comments regarding the law taking its own course in crime and punishment."

In Melbourne, Staines' relations were dismayed by the death sentence. "I didn't want to see the man put to death," said John Staines, Graham's elder brother, who had earlier demanded mercy for all the accused, including Dara. "You would never get over what happened if you can't forgive."

The Congress welcomed the



Dara being escorted to court for the sentencing on Monday.

What they said

Dara Singh

Everything depends on God's wish. Let's see what happens next

Gladys Staines (Graham's widow)

I have forgiven the killers, but forgiveness and the consequences of the crime should not be mixed up. No individual is above the law of the land. I have no comments regarding the law taking its own course in crime and punishment

John Staines (Graham's brother)

I didn't want to see the man (Dara) put to death. He has to answer to God for what he did

Congress

No heinous crime (Staines murder or Gujarat riots) must go unpunished. In all such cases, there should be exemplary punishment

"judicious" sentence and lost no time in demanding similar punishment for the Gujarat rioters. "Any heinous crime must not go

unpunished. In all such cases, there should be exemplary punishment," party spokesman Anand Sharma said. The Staines murder and the Gujarat riots had "unmasked the character and intent of the Sangh Parivar organisations, which have been misusing religion to inject venom," Sharma told reporters.

To the All-India Christian Council, the death sentence was "vindication of the faith of the common man, and especially of the Christian community in the judicial system". Council general secretary Dr Abraham Mathai said in Mumbai: "The common man may be pleased with the fact that all is not lost; and in small measures it is possible to wage a war through the existing political and judicial system against those who threaten to run amok on the brute strength of violence."

CBI lawyer K. Sudhakar had pleaded for "extreme punishment" to all the convicts. The defence lawyer prayed for less severe punishments on grounds of compassion. The CBI objected to the plea, saying: "Taking into consideration the nature of the cold-blooded murder in which Graham Staines and his two minor sons were burnt inside their vehicle, no mercy should be done to the convicts."

Staines and his sons were killed on January 22, 1999. The CBI took over the investigations from the state crime branch on March 28 that year. The trial began on March 1, 2001.

There were eighteen accused, three of whom are still eluding arrest. A juvenile accused, Sudershan Hansda alias Chenchu, was referred to the Juvenile Board, which sentenced him to life imprisonment. Anirudha Dandapath alias Andha Naik was acquitted by the trial court on September 15 for lack of evidence against him.

Orissa floods worsen

BHUBANESWAR, Sept. 6. — The state government today extended relief operations by 15 days as the flood situation worsened following heavy rains in the catchment areas of all major rivers, including the Mahanadi, Indravati, Vanshadhara, Rushikulya, Brahmani, Baitarani, Subarnarekha and Budhabalang.

The government had earlier announced that it would provide emergency relief for a week. The chief secretary, Mr PK Mohanty, said the government had decided to provide emergency relief to the flood-affected for another week. He said the situation had shown signs of a let-up yesterday, but it worsened with flash floods inundating vast areas of Kalahandi and Bolangir districts. The situation may worsen as the met office has forecast heavy rains at isolated places and rainfall at most places in all catchment areas dur-

ing the next 48 hours.

The number of districts affected has gone up to 19 with three blocks of Nuapada district reeling under flash floods. Over 29.27 lakh people in 5,161 villages of 96 blocks and 99 wards in 14 urban local bodies across 19 districts have been affected. The floods have so far claimed 33 lives.

A report from Bhawanipatna said the Tel, Rahul, Utei, Udanti and Hati rivers had been inundated in a flash flood today. Heavy rains in the catchment areas played havoc in these places. Heavy showers caused irreparable loss of property in Balangir. According to a Berhampur report, torrential rains due to a low pressure have created panic in Rayagada, Gajapati, Kandhamal and Ganjam districts in south Orissa. The overflow of water of Jabakhala Nala has submerged the road between Rayagada and Koraput. — SNS

THE STATESMAN

7 SEP 2003

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Orissa seeks Rs 97 crore

BHUBANESWAR, Sept. 2. — The state government today requested the Centre to depute a team for assessment of the flood situation and release the second installment of the Rs 97-crore Central share from the Calamity Relief Fund.

Chief secretary Mr PK Mohanty said the state had so far released Rs 8.24 crore from the Calamity Relief Fund. He also announced that emergency relief

would be provided to "deserving cases" for a week.

Special relief commissioner Mr R Balkrishnan said DMs had been authorised to use funds and food material available under other schemes instead of waiting for any special allocation. Describing the flood situation as "grave", Mr Mohanty said there had been approximately 70 mm rainfall on the upstream of Hirakud in the past 24 hours. — SNS

Chhattisgarh flood

RAIPUR, Sept. 2. — Road links between Chhattisgarh and other states have been cut off following heavy rains that spawned floods which have left at least 10 dead, besides affecting 400,000 people in 1,050 villages. Rains blocked traffic on the Mumbai-Kolkata NH-6 at many places and flooded Mahasamund district. — PTI

THE STATESMAN

3 SEP 2003

8 killed, lakhs affected in Orissa floods

By Prafulla Das

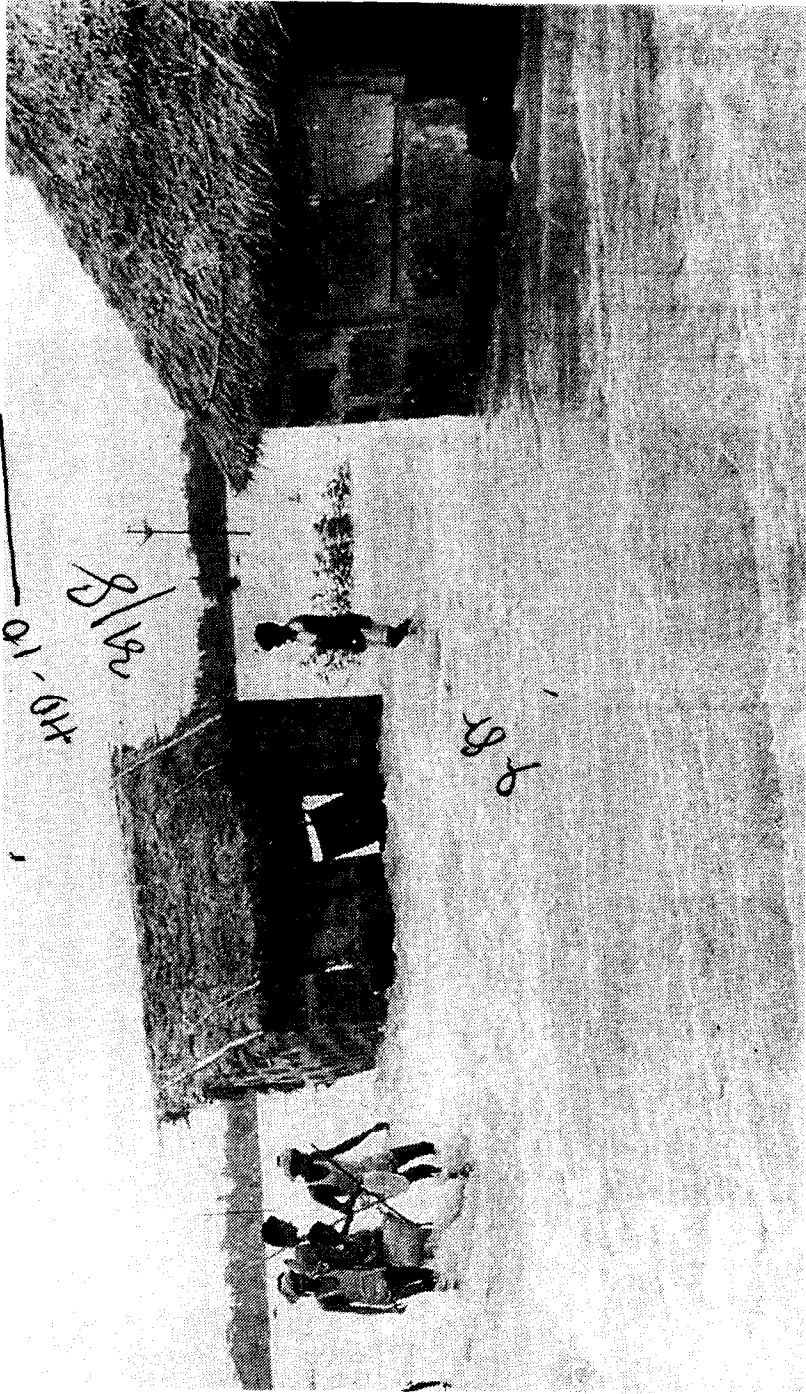
BHUBANESWAR, AUG. 30. At least eight persons have died and more than 26 lakh people been affected by the floods in the Mahanadi and other rivers in Orissa.

A total of 2231 villages in as many as 59 blocks spread over 11 districts of the State have been affected by the floods in the Mahanadi river system and other rivers, the Special Relief Commissioner, R. Balakrishnan, told presspersons here today.

The five coastal districts that were witnessing heavy floods since Friday were Cuttack, Jagatsinghpur, Puri, Kendrapara and Jajpur. The Mahanadi and its branch rivers — the Kathajodi, the Chitropala, the Devi, the Bhargavi, the Kuakhai, the Kusabhadra and the Daya — were flowing above the danger level at various places posing danger to the river embankments.

Around 20 breaches had already occurred at various embankments, including two major ones at Gobardhanpur and Palada. More breaches were likely to occur as over 13 lakh cusecs of water was passing at the Naraj gauge station near Cuttack. The embankments in the Mahanadi river system had the capacity to cope with the flow of 10 lakh cusecs.

The interior districts such as Bolangir, Boudh, Nayagarh, Angul and Khurda were affected by floods. Of the eight deaths reported, five had been from Bolangir and three from Cuttack district.



Villagers stranded in the flood-waters at Padmapur village in Orissa on Saturday. — PTI

The situation was likely to remain critical in the coastal districts for a couple of days as more and more water was being released from the Hirakud reservoir on the Mahanadi. The water level at Hirakud was 629.5 ft this evening, against its storage capacity of 630 ft.

The Chief Secretary, Pratip Kumar Mohanty, said that while flood-affected region. They will be assisting the civil authorities in the relief and rescue operations from tomorrow. He informed that diver teams of Navy had started work in the flood-hit areas. While one naval unit was working in Banki area, one each had gone to Cuttack and Jagat-singhpur districts. All efforts were on to send re-

lief to the affected people in time. At least 10 medical teams have left for different affected areas to provide medical aid to the people and more such teams will be sent tomorrow. The State Government has ordered all Government offices in the flood-affected coastal districts to remain open on Sunday and Monday.